

Swooping Magpies

**August to October
means magpie
swooping season.**

Magpie's protective swooping behaviour is in full force while they breed from August to October each year, but there are ways you can reduce the chances of attack.

For more information please contact
Paroo Shire Council on 07 4655 8400.



Where do magpies live?

Magpies adapt well to open, cleared environments and thrive in locations that have a combination of large tracts of lawn for foraging, scattered trees for nesting and protection, and water. They are very territorial birds, but are often found in groups of up to 20 in rural areas outside the breeding season. There is one known nest in the Telstra tower located behind the Cunnamulla Post Office.

Are magpies a protected species?

Yes. As a native bird, the magpie is protected under State Wildlife Legislation (Nature Conversation Act 1992) (NCA). As such, it is a serious offence to harm, take, keep or move them, unless authorised under the NCA or a Damage Mitigation Permit (DMP) is obtained for a relocation to be conducted by an authorised person or local authority. Hefty fines can be imposed on anyone found to be in contravention of the Act.

Why are magpies protected when they are known to attack people?

The magpie plays an important role in natural pest management as it preys on small insects such as mosquitoes and midges. They may be beneficial to agriculture and gardens in some areas because they feed on pest insects. Long-term conservation of this species is necessary for maintaining biodiversity.

Why do magpies attack?

Most magpies will accept the presence of people within their territories. Only a small percentage of male magpies act aggressively in the defence of their nest. This behaviour usually occurs within 100m of the tree containing the nest and only occurs when chicks are present, usually lasting only 6 - 8 weeks. Research suggests that most aggressive magpies have previously had negative interaction with humans, where people have thrown stones or sticks at them, their chicks or nests.

How do I reduce the chance of being swoop attacked?

There are a few techniques that can be used to avoid or minimise the chance of a magpie attack:

- If possible, avoid areas where magpies are breeding and nesting for the duration of the breeding season. Magpies swoop to scare the intruder away from the nest, not to cause injury. Leave the area as quickly as possible and the bird should stop swooping;
- Remove unnecessary sources of water from the backyard;
- If you must enter the area, keep the bird under constant observation as it is less likely to swoop when it is being watched. Also, wear a hat or helmet or carry an umbrella;
- Do not feed magpies. Ensure no scraps of food or rubbish are left lying around;
- If you are swooped upon, do not crouch in fear, or stop. Move on quickly but don't run. Most importantly, never deliberately provoke a magpie as this usually results in greater defensive behaviour;
- Expect an elevated level of swooping activity during the breeding season, between July and December (peaking August to October). Swooping lasts about 6 - 8 weeks, while the chicks are in the nest;
- Cyclists should dismount their bikes and walk away. It is believed the birds respond mainly to movement;
- Never harass or provoke magpies as this may lead to a worse attack next time;
- Do not try and kill or cause injury to the magpies;
- Do not remove nests or eggs;
- Do not touch young birds on the ground; and
- Do not disturb the birds when there are fledglings in the nest.