



Maggie the Magpie Activities

SWOOPING MAGPIES

Australian magpies sometimes swoop and attack in spring when their chicks are in the nest. This usually occurs between July and November. They are defending the area around the nest.

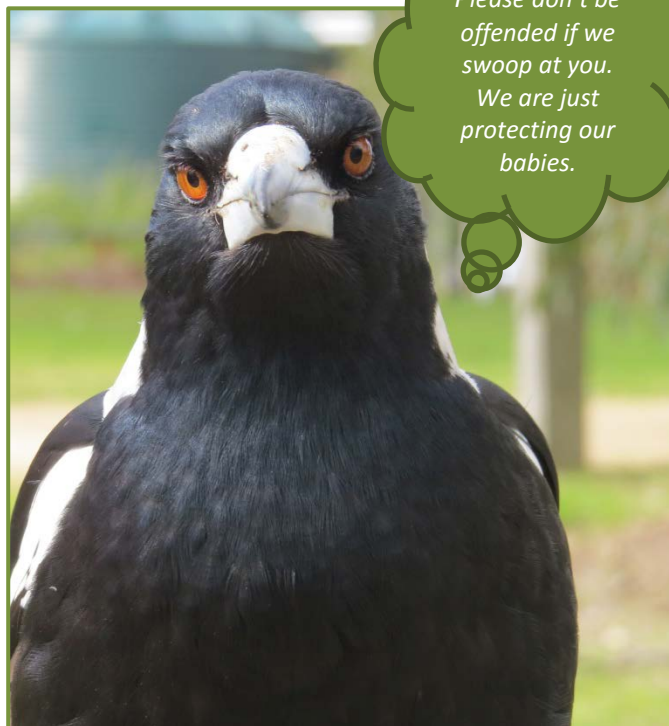
Studies have shown that only a small percentage of male magpies will attack.

Cyclists are particularly prone to attack.

Posties are even more vulnerable to attack, perhaps because they take the same route every day, stopping now and then to deliver the mail.

Magpies have a very good sense of the time and know when to expect the postie!

Here are some tips for dealing with swooping magpies.¹



Please don't be offended if we swoop at you. We are just protecting our babies.

- Avoid being aggressive – throwing sticks or stones will most likely make the magpie even more aggressive, especially for the next person who passes by. There are also hefty fines for injuring wildlife.
- Wear a bike or skateboarding helmet, broad-brimmed hat and sunglasses or use an umbrella to protect your face. Avoid the nesting area by taking a different route during the breeding season.
- If you are cycling, the swooping may stop if you get off your bike and walk.
- If you must enter a 'defence zone', magpies will be less likely to swoop if you are watching them, or if you walk in a group.
- Use signs to warn others of the location of nests and danger zones, particularly in areas used by children and the elderly.
- Carry a stick or umbrella in the air or attaching a brightly coloured flag on a long pole to your bicycle to discourage a swooping magpie.

The Magpies are Swooping – useful activities

- Make yourself a colourful flag for your bike
- Make a hat out of an empty ice cream container – perhaps painting 'eyes' on the back
- Design and post a sign to warn others who may be about to enter the danger zone.
- Perhaps you could write a helpful letter for your postie.

¹The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

THE MAGPIE NEST



A real magpie's nest retrieved and displayed at Potoroo Place Wildlife Sanctuary, NSW.

The Magpie Nest

Close inspection of this photo of a magpie's nest clearly demonstrates how everyday items can impact upon the health and safety of wildlife. A baby magpie became tangled up in the 'decorations' and needed to be rescued.

Discussion

What can we do to prevent unsuitable items from ending up in a magpie's nest or in a forest or waterway where wildlife might be harmed?

Activity

- Jot down your ideas.
- Make an educational poster for display. Perhaps you could gather up some litter – bottle caps, bits of string etc to make a collage or even a 'nest' to show what may happen