

Magpies (*Gymnorhina Tibicen*)

Breeding

The Magpie breeding season peaks from August to October but nesting can take place anytime from July to December. Magpies only swoop when they have chicks in their nests. This is a natural behavior, typically performed by the male magpie to ward off perceived intruders. Magpies will usually only defend an area of approximately 100m radius - concentrating their activity on the zone around the nest tree.

Swooping

Where magpie swooping is occurring, the Environmental Protection Agency advises residents to:

- ⇒ Stay well clear of areas where magpies are known to be swooping, particularly the nesting tree
- ⇒ If you must enter the area, move through it quickly
- ⇒ Wear a hat and sunglasses or carry an umbrella
- ⇒ Cyclists should dismount and walk through the territory. Cyclists can also attach large cable ties to the back of their helmet - use two black ties, sticking up like antennae.
- ⇒ Magpies generally attack from behind. Painting or sticking eyes on the back of your hat or helmet may confuse the bird and dissuade it from swooping
- ⇒ Please be patient - swooping magpies are only trying to be good parents

Council actively installs 'magpie alert' signage where nesting has or is occurring on public land, and relies on information from the general public about the location of active nesting sites.

Translocating

Council is sometimes asked to remove swooping male magpies. Translocating the male bird leaves the female and her chicks on their own and defenceless. Studies by Tom Neilson from the Griffith University have shown that when this occurs, an unattached male will often take on the role of male carer by defending the nest site and helping the female to feed the chicks.

This behaviour suggests that translocation is not a very effective solution to magpie swooping. If no male appears, the female will struggle to feed her hungry chicks, and they may die - a situation that raises serious ethical questions. Translocation is a last resort action used to remove only very aggressive individuals - specifically those that have caused injury.



Fact Sheet

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For nuisance magpies on private property, contact:

⇒ Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service - 1300 130 372

Related links: [Department Environment and Resource Management](#)

For further information please contact:

Public Health and Environmental Services Unit at Mount Isa City Council on 4747 3200