

Swooping Birds

During the breeding season (spring), some species are protective parents and instinctively protect their territory, nest, and young. Swooping is the most common way of scaring off intruders (whether it is humans or other animals) and this behaviour can last up to six weeks. Once the chicks have fledged, the problem will stop.



The main bird species that display swooping behaviour are the Australian Magpie, Crow, Magpie-larks, Noisy Miner, Grey Butcherbird and Masked Lapwing (Plover) although any nesting bird may swoop people who get too close to their nest. It is important to note that very few birds from the total population show overt aggression towards humans, and of those that have become aggressive very few have actually attacked humans.

In Queensland, the Wildlife Act prevents people from removing or destroying nests without a special permit and authority. If the adult bird is killed, the remaining adult parent cannot feed the chicks by itself and the chicks may all die.

Action you can take:

- Avoid the nesting area if at all possible during the incubation and raising of the chicks. Take a slight detour if possible; most birds will only swoop within a 50 metre range of their nest. Walk quickly away from the area, but **DO NOT RUN**.
- Travel in a group; swooping birds generally target individuals.
- Wear a broad-brimmed hat or other headgear to eliminate the risk of injury during attacks. Paint eyes on the back of the headgear. The bird will think that it is being watched and will not swoop.
- Wear glasses to protect your eyes
- Carry a stick or umbrella at head height to prevent the attacker from getting too close. It is not necessary to wave the stick about. You may hit or harm the birds.
- When on a bike, wear a helmet and/or have a flag attached to the rear of the bicycle when riding through an area where birds are swooping.
- Place warning signs outside of the swooping area to warn others.

If Magpies are attacking young children at pre-schools, aged people's homes, or handicapped children's schools, or if families are not able to exit their own home—front or rear—without the bird drawing blood and all avoidance strategies have failed then the Department of Environment, Heritage and Protection should be contacted for assistance. In these circumstances, DEHP may issue to the landholder a Permit to Destroy Wildlife.