

# Living with magpies

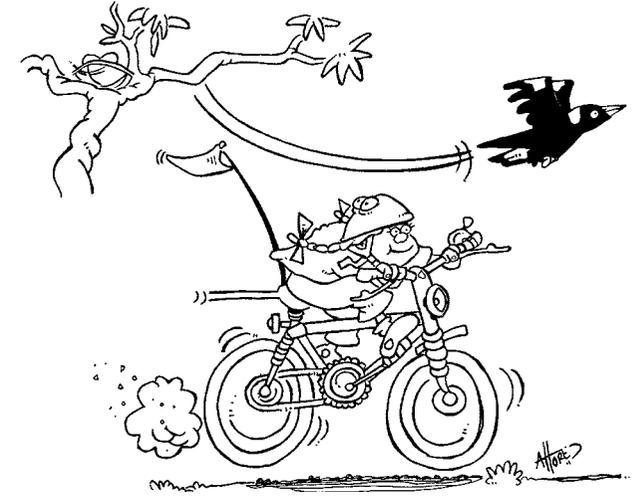


For most of the year magpies are a wonderful feature of life in the bush capital. Their distinctive chortling sounds can help lift our spirits whilst their ability to consume vast quantities of insects, particularly damaging lawn scarab grubs, makes them a welcome visitor to our gardens.

## Why do magpies swoop?

From July to November each year, magpies build their nests and raise their young in a limited area known as a territory. When there are eggs or young in the nest, the male and sometimes the female birds defend their territory from intruders. Some birds do this by swooping. Swooping occurs for around six weeks.

- Only a few magpies see people as a threat. Most will not swoop you.
- Magpies see cats, dogs and other magpies as intruders - it's not just people they swoop.
- Harassment by humans causes some magpies to start swooping. Please do not chase magpies or throw things at them.
- Picking up a fledgling bird (a young bird that has just left the nest) could be seen by the parent bird as threatening its young and it may trigger swooping behaviour.
- Sometimes the colour of people's clothes, a noise they make or the speed they are travelling at, triggers a magpie to swoop.



## Living with swooping magpies

If there is a swooping magpie in your neighbourhood, take these simple measures to protect yourself and others:

- walk through the magpie's territory quickly - don't run;
- take a different route next time;
- protect your head with an umbrella, hat or helmet;
- wear glasses to protect your eyes;
- watch the magpies while walking away quickly from the area - magpies are less likely to swoop if you look at them;
- attach a flag or streamers on a stick to your bike or backpack; and
- walk your bike through the magpie's territory - don't ride.



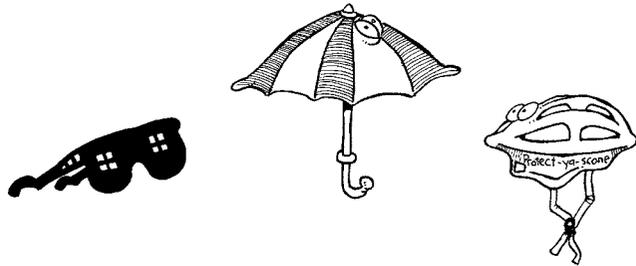
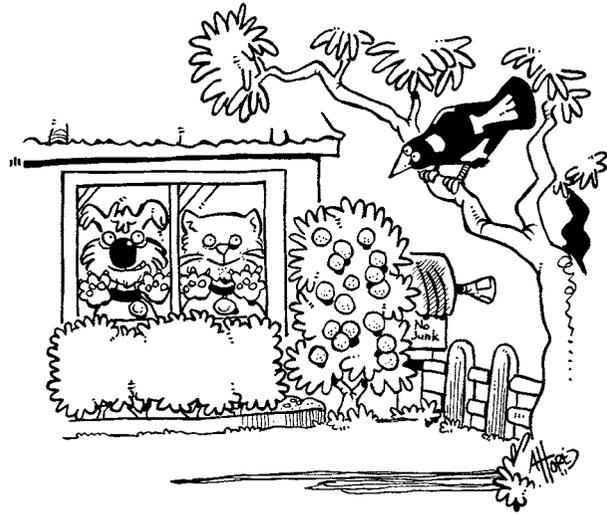
ACT  
Government



## Protecting pets

Pets are often targets for swooping magpies. Protect your pets by:

- putting them in a safe place in your house, garage, kennel or hutch;
- putting your dog on a lead when walking through the magpie's territory;
- not allowing your pets to attack magpies, as magpies that are attacked may become aggressive; and
- not leaving dog or cat food out in the yard.



## Are swooping magpies dangerous?

Yes, they can be. When magpies swoop, they beat their wings, clack their beaks and occasionally peck or scratch. Accidents can occur because people, particularly children, panic. Remember, magpies are simply trying to protect their territory.

Stay calm, protect your face and walk away quickly.

## Aggressive magpies

A magpie may become aggressive towards people because it has been harassed in the past. Please do not throw things at magpies or chase them. Stay away from their nests and young, especially birds that are learning to fly. This will help reduce magpie swooping. Magpies usually swoop from behind, just clearing the top of your head. Some may strike the top of your head or ears with their beak or claws.

Particularly aggressive magpies can attack from any angle and should be reported to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service as soon as possible.

## ACT Parks and Conservation Service can help by:

- giving more detailed advice about how you can live with magpies;
- providing swooping bird warning signs; and
- in extreme cases, and as a last resort, removing problem birds.

## Further information

Contact the ACT Parks and Conservation Service rangers on:

Mitchell Depot (northside) (02) 6207 2113

Athllon Depot (southside) (02) 6207 2087

Enquiries: phone Canberra Connect on 13 22 81

Website: [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)

To report sick or injured wildlife or for information on becoming an RSPCA wildlife carer, phone:

Business hours: (02) 6287 8113

After hours: 0413 495 031

Do not attempt to look after sick or injured wildlife if you are not a licensed and trained carer with RSPCA Wildlife.

