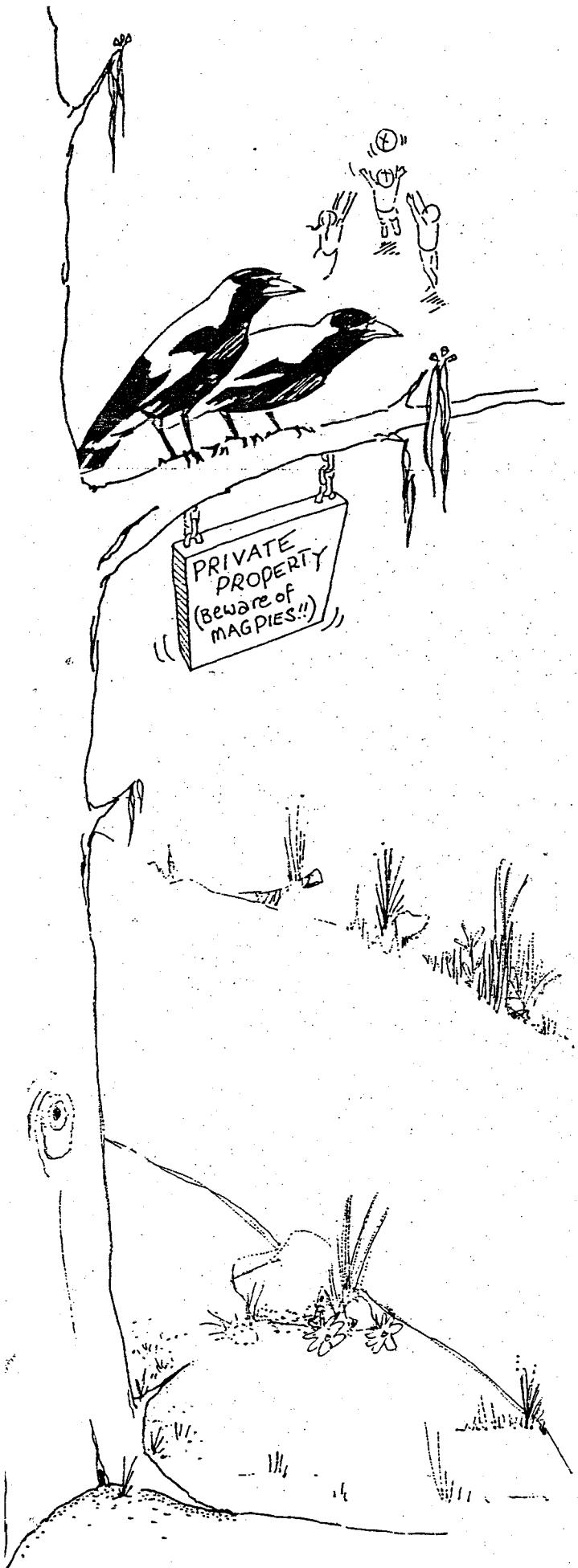


# Let's Talk Magpies

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**August to November can be a very uncomfortable time if you are living in Magpie territory. This is the period in which attacks can occur, causing a great deal of distress, especially to those not expecting it. This pamphlet has been produced to explain the reasons why these attacks occur and what you can do about them.**

**After being dive-bombed by a threatening magpie, it's not a great comfort to know that the attacks will soon stop at the end of the breeding season. Nevertheless, an understanding of why the magpie has just given you the shock of your life may reassure you that the problem is not really as bad as it seems.**

## **Why They Attack**

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Magpies attack people because they have a strong innate sense to defend their territory, particularly at nesting time. They are protecting their nests, eggs or young from potential intruders, irrespective of whether they are other magpies, predators or people.

Their territory may include your backyard, the park across the road or the local schoolyard. It doesn't matter to the magpie, as long as you are a potential threat. However, the probability of an attack is increased by interfering with or teasing the magpie.

### **The scare tactics of magpies vary:**

- Swooping is the most common attack method. The bird is only threatening or bluffing, and only means to scare the intruder. It is unlikely to attack if you walk confidently on, keeping an eye on it.
- Beak clacking as a bird swoops overhead is another form of bluff. Like some dogs, magpies can sense fear and will capitalize on it by continuing to attack.
- In a strike attack, a magpie usually swoops, hovers momentarily and then strikes. The fluttering of wings as the bird hovers can be a warning for adults and older children to duck their heads and avoid the attack.

## What to do

Keep in mind that most birds attack only during the nesting and rearing period, that most of the supposed attacks are really bluff and that the bird rarely has any intention of actually striking.

There are many avenues open to avoid the impact of magpie season.

- Try to stop children and others interfering with magpies.
- Befriending the birds by feeding is by far the most effective and the most pleasant way of minimizing attack problems. Birds fed regularly with household scraps, particularly bread and meat, soon get to know you and will accept you without fear right throughout the breeding season. However, this method may only be possible if the bird lives in the vicinity of your house.



- After being swooped if you stand your ground and glare defiantly at the bird it will usually retreat to a nearby tree.
- Wearing a hat while working or playing in the backyard and garden is one of the simplest and most effective means of protection, especially for children. The hat deters much of the magpie activity and also deflects any accidental or intentional strike by the bird should this occur.
- Magpies hate being watched, so children playing in the yard could try wearing a hat or an ice-cream container with 'eyes' painted on the back of it - sunglasses worn backwards have a similar effect.

- Waving a hat, stick or umbrella will often cause the bird to retreat.



## If Nothing Works

If you find that none of these solutions work, and you cannot tolerate severe attacks, contact your nearest Conservation, Forests and Lands office to discuss your problem and a possible solution.

Birds will be destroyed only in the most extreme circumstances and only where it can be shown that all other tactics have failed.

Because the magpie is a protected bird, no person is permitted to take the law into his or her own hands. Penalties of \$500 apply for destroying protected wildlife.

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NOTE: Butcher-birds have also been known to attack humans. The reason why they attack, and the solutions open to you, are the same as those applying to magpies.

## Information

For further information contact the following regional offices of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

Alexandra: Tel. (057) 72 1633  
Bairnsdale: Tel. (051) 52 6211  
Ballarat: Tel. (053) 37 0783  
Benalla: Tel. (057) 61 1611  
Bendigo: Tel. (054) 43 8911  
Central Gippsland: Tel. (051) 74 6166  
Colac: Tel. (052) 31 5799  
Dandenong: Tel. (03) 706 7000

Geelong: Tel. (052) 26 4667  
Horsham: Tel. (053) 82 5011  
Melbourne: Tel. (03) 651 3038  
Mildura: Tel. (050) 23 2906  
North East: Tel. (060) 55 6111  
Orbost: Tel. (051) 54 1393  
Portland: Tel. (055) 23 3232  
Yarram: Tel. (051) 82 5155