

Media Release

29 August 2022

Don't let these birds swoop you off your feet

Gladstone Regional Council is advising residents the breeding season for most swooping birds is here and to take precautions where necessary.

The breeding season for most swooping birds – including magpies, plovers, crows and butcherbirds – is July to November, peaking between August to October.

Gladstone Region Councillor Rick Hansen said Council receives swooping bird reports each spring and it is important that our community take precautions for their safety.

“Nesting parents are protective of their eggs and chicks, and some will swoop to scare away what they believe to be threats,” Councillor Hansen said.

“The swooping zone around a nest can be up to 150m, but this varies depending on how protective the parents are.”

Cr Hansen said only a small proportion of birds swoop and the intensity of swooping is dependent on where the nest is located, what the parents are fearful of and how close the chicks are to leaving the nest.

“Parents are most protective right before the chicks are about to leave the nest as this is when they are most vulnerable,” Cr Hansen said.

“It is important to avoid threatening or scaring nesting birds, as this will increase the intensity of swooping.

“Most swooping birds found in the Gladstone Region are native animals, and it is an offence to harm, interfere or relocate them without state department authorisation.”

Cr Hansen added that Council manages swooping birds by providing information, undertaking swooping bird assessments and implementing an appropriate response on Council controlled land, such as installing warning signs.

“Generally, it is the male parent that swoops. It is important to acknowledge that relocating the bird often does not resolve the swooping behaviour as another male will join the nest, who is also likely to swoop,” he said.

“The best thing concerned residents can do is visit Council’s website where they can find plenty of information about swooping birds, including an easy-to-understand animated video, tips to avoid being swooped, a ‘Living with Magpies’ fact sheet and an interactive swooping bird hotspot map.

MORE

“The interactive map allows residents to view hotspot areas for that season and add their own hotspots so that alternative walking or cycling routes can be made.”

The best way to avoid being swooped is to:

- Avoid swooping hotspots by finding an alternative route
- If you are riding your bike, dismount and walk when passing through a swooping zone; birds view fast-moving persons such as cyclists as a threat
- If walking, keep an eye on the bird; most birds swoop when your back is turned
- Protect yourself by wearing a broad brimmed hat or using an umbrella, or holding your school bag above your head
- Wear glasses to protect your eyes
- Team up with others and walk in a group
- Attach a flag on a long pole to your bike.

Council does not monitor the map for new reports, to report swooping birds contact Council online or by phoning 4970 0700.

Please visit www.gladstone.qld.gov.au/wildlife#swooping for more information.

ENDS