

Media Release

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Watch out for swooping birds this breeding season

Gladstone Regional Council is advising residents the breeding season for most swooping birds has arrived 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 Darryl Branthwaite said it is important for residents to be mindful of swooping birds over the coming months.

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

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

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

“The best thing concerned residents can do is visit Council’s website where they can find 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,” he said.

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

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

MORE

While being swooped can be unpleasant, there are some simple steps that can be taken to reduce safety risks:

- 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 or sunglasses to protect your eyes
- Team up with others and walk in a group
- Attach a flag on a long pole to your bike
- Avoid threatening or scaring nesting birds, as this will increase the intensity of swooping

Visit www.gladstone.qld.gov.au/wildlife for more information about swooping birds.

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