

Agonistic behaviour from Noisy Miners *Manorina melanocephala* toward Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen* swooping humans

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Animals may display agonistic behaviour, especially when there is a need to distract predators or drive them away (Ostreiher 2003; Mo *et al.* 2016). Both the Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* and Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala* are well adapted to urban environments, thus readily observed, and are well documented to exhibit agonistic behaviours (Cilento and Jones 1999; Koboroff *et al.* 2013; Fountain and McDonald 2022). Swooping of humans by Australian Magpies presents an important urban wildlife management issue but is generally restricted to their nesting season (Van Vuuren *et al.* 2016; Kaplan 2019). Noisy Miners are also documented to swoop humans during their nesting season but these events are infrequent (Mo 2019).

This note reports on observations of Noisy Miners displaying agonistic behaviour toward Australian Magpies immediately following the latter species performing swooping toward humans in defence of their nests. The observations were made in public parklands within 10 km of the Adelaide central business district, South Australia, over a period of four days during September 2022.

I observed 32 events in which nesting Australian Magpies swooped humans, either myself or another person. In eight of those events, magpies were set upon by flocks of three to seven Noisy Miners within five to 20 seconds of magpies commencing swooping. In six observations, magpies remained at the same perch throughout



Figure 1. Two Noisy Miners that have followed an Australian Magpie to tree perch.
Image Matthew Mo

the time they were subjected to agonistic behaviour from three to five Noisy Miners, and in three of those events, magpies retaliated by performing snaps at the Noisy Miners (Figure 1). In the other two observations, harassment from six to seven Noisy Miners caused magpies to flee.

In these observations, it appeared that active nest defence by magpies was almost immediately met by agonistic behaviour from Noisy Miners, which suspended the magpies' swooping. Although my sample size of eight observations was small, the period in which they were made was also small. Thus, I consider that instances in which swooping magpies are in turn subjected to harassment from Noisy Miners are possibly common occurrences. I should acknowledge that there were also 122 other observations of Noisy Miners harassing magpies that were not preceded by magpies performing swooping.

With no obvious adaptive advantage to Noisy Miners of aggression towards magpies that are swooping humans, questions remain concerning this interesting behaviour, for example how common is it, and does it occur only when miners themselves are nesting? Further observations may provide some answers.

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