

BIRD NOTES

UNUSUAL MAGPIE BEHAVIOUR — On April 6, 1974, as I was watching two White-backed Magpies *Gymnorhina tibicen* feeding in the North Parklands they suddenly flattened their tails on the ground and pointed their beaks to the sky remaining motionless in this unusual pose for about twenty seconds. The presence of a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, 32 metres above the magpies, no doubt triggered off such behaviour. This response to such a would-be predator has survival value because, not only could the magpies face and see the falcon, but also, to the falcon's eye, the magpies presented a cryptic prey. The forcing of the magpie's tail hard against the ground

prevented the birds instantly taking flight and presenting a vulnerable target to a stooping falcon.

Although I can find no evidence to suggest that falcons prey on magpies, the fact that one of the birds was a juvenile may have had some bearing on such behaviour. — D. VINCENT.

Accepted January, 1975