

Swoop

AUTHOR

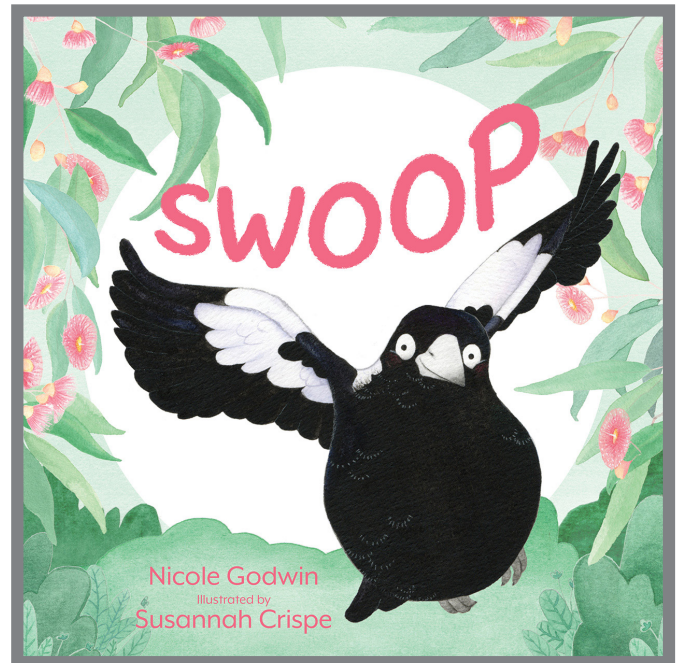
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SYNOPSIS

Magpie has one job, one desire, one purpose: KEEP THE EGGS SAFE.

Always on alert for danger, will Magpie's determination be enough when rock-carrying intruders arrive?

Why do magpies swoop and why do we have such a fascination with them? Discover more about these clever, cheeky and charming songbirds through this delightful book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicole Godwin is an award-winning children's author. She shines a light on environmental and animal rights issues and helps people think more deeply about the interconnected world around them.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Susannah Crispe is an Australian children's book and wildlife illustrator. Largely self-taught, she works primarily in watercolour and digital collage. Susannah studied Art History at the University of Sydney and Zoology at the University of New England.

THEMES

- Australian magpies
- Animal behaviour

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading, discuss the following questions:
 - What do you already know about magpies?
 - Watch this clip about magpies and one of their springtime behaviours: <https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/swooping-season/10524074>. Have you ever been swooped by a protective magpie? Are there any special things you do to keep yourself safe? What has worked, and what hasn't worked?

SCIENCE

- Take a minute on your own to write down three things about birds that help us to distinguish them from other creatures. Once you have your three things, share them with the class. Do any of the them match?

- The ability that some animals have to impersonate other creatures is called mimicry. Watch this magpie who duplicated the sound of a fire engine during the Australian bushfires in 2020: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/video/2020/jan/02/australian-magpie-mimics-emergency-siren-during-nsw-bushfires-video>. How quickly do you think this magpie learned to mimic an emergency vehicle siren?
 - Have you heard of magpies replicating other sounds? Listen carefully through this next clip for magpies and other birds that can be heard in the suburbs: <https://www.abc.net.au/kidslisten/noisy-by-nature/warbling-magpies/12159484>. What have the magpies learnt from their neighbours? Just as magpies copy other sounds, humans try to fool the swooping magpies by using various tricks. What are some of those efforts that humans in the book make?

SCIENCE

- Why are the 'new egg thieves' different from the people who came before? What is their intent?
- Should animals be free to behave in ways that may harm humans but that are driven by the need to protect their young or their territory? Do you think that if the community understood why magpies swooped they would be more sympathetic to this sometimes frightening behaviour?
- From the book and from other sources, create a timeline of a magpie's life. What time of year are the eggs laid? How long does the mother brood? How long do the hatched babies stay in the nest? When does swooping mostly occur? At what point do the parents force the young to leave the area?

ENGLISH

- Magpies are very clever birds. They can recognise familiar faces, they can play, they can learn and imitate, and these behaviours have been noticed by people for a long time. Here are four old reports on some of the tricks and antics that magpies get up to:
 - 1947 – FRIENDLY MAGPIE: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/206036708>
 - 1926 – THE CHEEKY MAGPIE: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/115653299>
 - 1905 – ATTACKED BY A MAGPIE: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/144923110>
 - 1937 – A MISCHIEVOUS MAGPIE: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/206726914>
 - What sort of texts are these? How can you tell that? What are some of the phrases and words that are unfamiliar to you, and how do you think they would be reported today?
 - Do you think it is just and fair that a man tried to shoot a magpie? Discuss the dramas that are conveyed in these short paragraphs, such as theft, retaliation and playfulness.
- Here are some words for 'magpie' in Indigenous languages.
 - Gurahmburuhn/gulamburan – Bundjalung language (New South Wales/Queensland)
 - Kuluruku – Paakantyi language (New South Wales)
 - Garru – Wiradjuri language (New South Wales)
 - Kurrparu/kurparu – Diyari language (South Australia)
 - Warndurla – Yindjibarndi language (Western Australia)
 - Arrpwere – Eastern Arrernte language (Northern Territory)

From the language groups mentioned in the book plus the extra groups provided here, can you locate the language group that is closest to you? This map might help you: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>.