

**Question on Notice
No. 788
Asked on 17 August 2004**

QUESTION:

MR FENLON asked the Minister for the Environment (Mr Mickel)-

- (1) With the magpie breeding season now approaching, is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) aware of any increase in the magpie population?
- (2) Does the EPA have an awareness program underway?

ANSWER:

- (1) Magpies are territorial and their numbers are largely determined by the availability of suitable habitat and food. They need areas of short grass dotted with a few trees for habitat and these are well catered for in the suburban and rural landscape.

Magpie populations did increase in the past in response to land clearing for human settlement and agriculture but are now stable and have been for many years. Current suburban developments are now predominantly on land that has been cleared in the past and is therefore already inhabited by magpies.

It is important to remember that these birds are highly territorial and defend their territories against invasion by other magpies. As each pair of magpies defends its territory it is, in effect, helping to maintain magpie densities at a constant level across the landscape.

We will never have to live with large numbers of magpies — but nor are we likely to live without them. The important thing is to learn how to live safely alongside them and, at the same time, enjoy their beautiful calls and stark black and white markings, and appreciate them as one of the quintessential elements of the Australian landscape.

- (2) The EPA has an effective public awareness program that is informed by several years of research and monitoring conducted by Griffith University in partnership with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

Information on how to live safely alongside magpies, particularly during the breeding season, can be obtained from the EPA's website and "Living with magpies" wildlife information sheets are available from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service offices. Templates for nesting-area warning signs can also be obtained from these offices and are used by schools to inform their students where magpies are nesting.

The EPA is also piloting a new wildlife information hotline in South-east Queensland. This hotline is another way of ensuring that information about magpies and other wildlife is readily available to the public. The EPA regularly uses other media to make the public aware of magpies and other wildlife with the "Ranger's Diary" section each Friday in The Courier-Mail. This section recently informed readers of the onset of the magpie breeding season.

The EPA's public awareness program has contributed towards making the magpie breeding season one of the most well-known events on Queensland's nature calendar.