Gymnorhina tibicen **System:** Terrestrial

Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family
Animalia	Chordata	Aves	Passeriformes	Cracticidae

Common name

Synonym *Coracias tibicen*

Similar species *Grallina cyanoleuca, Cracticus nigrogularis*

Summary Gymnorhina tibicen (the Australian magpie) was originally introduced to New Zealand around the 1860s in an attempt to combat pastoral pests. It is known to be extremely territorial, especially during the breeding season, and is known to assault other avian species and even humans. Magpies potentially threaten a number of indigenous avian fauna, as well as putting humans at risk of injury.

view this species on IUCN Red List

Species Description
The Australian magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*), is a medium-sized ground-feeding passerine found throughout much of the Australian continent. They range from 36-44cm in length and weigh 280-340g with black and white plumage, black heads, wings and underparts together with white napes and shoulders (NRC, 1998). The iris of the adult magpie is red, whereas the juveniles' eyes are dark brown in colour. Minor differences exist between the male and female magpies, though in general, magpies are not considered to be sexually dimorphic (Simpson *et al.*, 1993).

Notes
Although Australian magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) have been known to have detrimental impacts on some birds, they can actually be beneficial to others. They do this by attacking and displacing common avian predators, such as harrier hawks and ravens, which in turn provides safe nesting grounds for a number of rural birds (Morgan *et al*, 2005).

Lifecycle Stages
The average life span of the Australian magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) has not been studied in detail, but is estimated to be around 24 years, with some individuals living up to 30 years of age (Reilly, 1988).

Uses
The Australian magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) possesses exceptional hearing, and is capable of locating well-camouflaged lawn invertebrates. This makes them the ideal natural management method for eradication of garden pests (ATSB, 2004).

Habitat Description
The Australian magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) is commonly associated with suburban habitats, avoiding dense forests and arid deserts where possible (Rollison and Jones, 2002). They prefer open grassland and cultivated paddocks with trees nearby which are utilised as nests and shelters (NRC, 1998).

Reproduction
The breeding period for the Australian magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) is geographically dependent, but general lies between the months of June and December. The construction of a nest is carried out by the female using a variety of materials, such as sticks and twigs, as well as hair, wool and leaves. The clutch size is typically 2-3 eggs (ATSB, 2004). One study found that magpies in a suburban environment initiates breeding significantly earlier than its rural counterpart (Rollison and Jones, 2002). This was primarily attributed to the increase in abundance of food in suburban regions. For example, the process of watering and fertilising lawns accommodates a greater number of insects and invertibrates, which directly leads to an increase in food availability for the magpies (Rollison and Jones, 2002).

Nutrition
The principle diet of the Australian magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) consists of insects, such as crickets, and invertebrates, such as worms. In addition, they are occasionally known to consume seeds and meat (ATSB, 2004).

General Impacts
Australian magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) are highly territorial and aggressive, especially during breeding seasons and will actively defend their nests by attacking perceived threats with a swooping motion (EW, 2008). Australian magpies have the potential to displace native bird species by attacking them in key feeding sites as well as predating on their chicks and eggs (EW, 2008). One preliminary study showed that by controlling the magpie population, the number of the gradually declining kereru *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), increased. Due to their preference of low grasslands, *G. tibicen* are considered to pose a significant strike risk to aircrafts. Juveniles are more likely to collide with an aircraft due to their inexperience to avoid them (ATSB, 2004).

Management Info
Removal of the Australian magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) is difficult as they are very fast learners, meaning that if a control method fails to capture them the first time, it is highly unlikely that it will succeed in subsequent attempts.
Physical: Physical removal of magpies can be achieved by shooting or trapping. Trapping often utilises mutton fat as a lure and a Larsen trap or a modified possum trap, which is essentially a spring loaded door that shuts as the bird enters the cage. Once inside, the trapped magpie can then be used as a lure for other birds which can then be put down by shooting (NRC, 1998).
Chemical: Poison is often used as a control, although it is not the most effective method. The poisonous bait consists of alphachloralose mixed with mutton fat, which renders the magpies unconscious and can then be easily killed (NRC, 1998).

Pathway
Australian magpies were introduced as a control for pastoral insect pests.

Principal source:

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ALIEN RANGE

[10] NEW ZEALAND

Red List assessed species 3: EN = 1; LC = 2;

Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae **LC**
Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae **LC**
Sterna albostriata **EN**

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