



Transcript



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Paraglider survives eagle attack

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Reporter: Michael Vincent

LISA MILLAR: Being attacked by a pair of birds is not a pleasant experience at the best of times, but imagine being two-and-a-half kilometres above the ground and the birds in question, wedge-tail eagles, are not only clawing at you, but also tearing into your parachute.

British paraglider, Nicky Moss, lived to tell the tale, surviving the attack in the skies above the northern New South Wales town of Manilla.

It happened while she was training for the world titles.

Nicky Moss has been telling reporter Michael Vincent it was a rare attack and she thinks the birds were probably just "having a bad day".

NICKY MOSS: I was in a competition in Queensland, heading out towards Golve (phonetic) that must have been set in New South Wales, having a very nice time having had some really nice climbs.

I was gliding up to 2,500 metres when I heard a screeching behind me which I recognised as an eagle, so I looked around and couldn't see anything and then the next moment the top surface of my wing deformed as the eagle flew straight into the top of me.

MICHAEL VINCENT: When you say deformed, you mean it tore?

NICKY MOSS: I don't actually know whether it tore on the first strike, but yes the bird crashed into the top of my wing and quite

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possibly ripped it then and then wheeled round and continued to have other goes for quite a long period of time.

Another eagle actually came in and joined it. There was a pair of them. So I was getting bombarded by two wedge tails.

MICHAEL VINCENT: They were trying to tear your parachute apart or were they trying to tear you apart?

NICKY MOSS: They have torn my glider. I've had some quite big rips in that from their talons, but at one point one of them dived at me from behind and actually hit me on the back of the head and flew through the lines of my glider and got all tangled up.

MICHAEL VINCENT: This is while you are two and a half kilometres in the air?

NICKY MOSS: (laughs)

MICHAEL VINCENT: What were you thinking?

NICKY MOSS: Why me?

It's one of those, I think most people would say if you have moments of stress like that, it is very, very clear, adrenaline takes over and I actually wasn't particularly scared at that moment in time, you just deal with it.

I mean, I was wishing they would go away and I was doing some manoeuvres and collapsing parts of my glider to try and scare them off but they weren't going to be deterred.

MICHAEL VINCENT: Did you drop much, because of the damage?

NICKY MOSS: Fortunately, my glider was still flying reasonably well. I actually fell. Without actually flying, I was in free fall for a while, while the wedgie was actually wrapped up in the line, because obviously it collapsed the glider completely.

So we were plummeting for probably 500 feet, something like that, not too much, before the wedgie got himself out again and then I was able to reinflate the glider and carry on.

I did consider throwing my reserve parachute at one point, but I wasn't entirely sure of the wisdom of that because that was just going to give me two canopies for the birds to attack.

MICHEAL VINCENT: But you did have a backup you could rely on?

NICKY MOSS: Yeah, I did have a backup and I did consider it while the wedgie was in the lines, that I might have to do that if I couldn't get the glider flying again.

The thing I was concerned about was actually having another canopy flying that was another target for the eagles, and I didn't want to be in the situation of having nothing as a backup.

MICHAEL VINCENT: What did you do in the end?

NICKY MOSS: I just, well I screamed at the wedgies quite a bit.

No, I just had to carry on flying. I got out of the sky as quickly as I could by doing some manoeuvres and about 100 metres above the ground they left me alone and I landed quite easily and safely in a paddock.

MICHEAL VINCENT: What did everyone say once they saw what the birds had done?

NICKY MOSS: That I was very lucky, lucky to get away with it, but unlucky for it to have happened in the first place.

It was quite an amazing experience for sure, and a bit scary.

MICHEAL VINCENT: You've happily taken to the air again?

NICKY MOSS: Oh for sure, I was flying again the next day. There is no way that it's going to stop me flying (laughs).

MICHAEL VINCENT: But some might have described this sort of a, well, was it near-death do you believe?

NICKY MOSS: No, I was unfortunate to be in the wrong place at the wrong time with some territorial birds.

This really is quite an unusual attack. It is very, very rare for them to actually have a go at a person, so, either the wedgies were having a bad day or there was some issue with territory going on that obviously I was unaware of.

To be honest, it was actually in some ways an amazing experience and fantastic to see them so close up. I would've preferred them to be slightly further away that they weren't attacking me, but it was quite amazing really in hindsight.

MICHAEL VINCENT: And it hasn't put you off going back in the air?

NICKY MOSS: No, for sure, I can't wait.

We often get to fly with eagles, here in Manilla, who are a lot more friendly and I've had some of my most memorable flying has been soaring along with eagles at my wing tips, I just can't wait to fly with the birds again.

LISA MILLAR: How very Alfred Hitchcock, that's member of the British paragliding team, Nicky Moss, speaking with Michael Vincent.

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