

Magpie

Latin: *Pica pica*

Irish: Snag breac



Photo courtesy of Benutzer

The magpie is probably the easiest bird to recognise. It has striking black and white colouring and a long tail. A relatively large bird, it can be seen in the open countryside and in gardens. Its nest is dome-shaped and, made from twigs and mud, it is built up in trees.

Magpies are very sociable birds and can often be seen in pairs or small family groups. A large group of magpies is known as a tiding (other names include gulp, charm and parliament!). In these gatherings they jump about, chase each other and chatter loudly.

Magpies can be unpopular at times as they sometimes eat small birds and eggs. However, it is thought this happens for only a short period of time and that for the rest of the time they take other food.

Many birds feature in nursery rhymes. The magpie has quite a well-known rhyme written about it:

*One for sorrow, two for joy;
Three for a girl, four for a boy;
Five for silver, six for gold;
Seven for a secret, never to be told;
Eight for a wish, nine for a kiss;
Ten for a bird that's best to miss.*



The Relations!

The magpie is a member of the **Crow** family. There are eight members of this family in Ireland and the UK - these are Choughs, Jackdaws, Jays, Magpies, Ravens, Rooks, Hooded Crows and Carrion Crows. Hooded Crows (black and grey) are found in Ireland and NW Scotland, and Carrion Crows (all black) are found in England, Wales and SE Scotland.

Fact File

Colour: Black and white body, with blue-purple sheen on black head and tail and green sheen on its long black tail. Tips of wings and belly are white.

Length: 40-51 cm

Diet: Worms, slugs, seeds, insects, eggs and chicks of other birds and even food left out for cats and dogs.

Habitat: Gardens, along the road, on farms, towns and parks.

No. of eggs: 4-7



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