

Juvenile Plumage of the Magpie-Lark

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It is strange that the immature plumage of such a common and conspicuous bird as the Magpie-Lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) appears never to have been described, or to put the matter more correctly, has been quite wrongly described. Gould in his *Hand Book*, Vol. 1, page 188, states: "The young on leaving the nest resemble their parents, but are of course far less brilliant in colour." North, in *Nests and Eggs*, Vol. I, page 81, after describing a difference in the proportion of the black and white in the tails of mature and immature birds, says: "Fledglings are similar to adults, but duller in colour." Mathews in his *Birds of Australia*, gives details of plumage of both adult sexes, but makes no mention whatever of the immature state. Again in *The Emu*, Vol. XXIX, p. 152, Mr. N. Chaffer, R.A.O.U., has an article on this species which he concludes by stating: "The young birds don the adult plumage before leaving the nest, the sexes being readily distinguished."

These statements regarding the plumage of the young are, apart from the mention of dullness, very misleading, for whereas adult male Magpie-Larks have black faces, forehead, chin and throat, and adult females have white faces, forehead, chin and throat, the young of both sexes, until they are rising six months old, have the *black forehead* of the male parent and the *white chin and throat* of the female. Also, both sexes of the young have a very conspicuous white eyebrow which, in the adult is confined to the male; and further, the young of both sexes have a well-defined black shoulder strap connecting the black pectoral bib with the black scapulars, which is also a distinction of the adult male.

For the first few months there is little change in the plumage of the young. The earliest indication in either sex of coming maturity will be seen in the females, the black of whose forehead becomes mottled with white till the black is driven right off, while at the same time the black shoulder strap disappears. The white eyebrow in the female is the last indication of youth to go, the black of the crown of the head extends down till reaching the eye it divides the white eyebrow, pushing it forward on to the forehead and back to the ear. The young male is somewhat later than the female in changing, and then the white throat becomes mottled and striped with black until all white is driven from it, at the same time the black shoulder strap becomes more developed. A good photograph of a female at the nest with two young shows very well the features, black forehead and white throat and big eyebrow, that I have referred to.

The black of the young bird differs from that of its parents in being dull black minus any steel-blue sheen. The irides are brown, feet and legs lead colour, bill blackish-horn.

Birds of a Bowral Garden.—I write this under the above heading, but must point out that the first two birds mentioned were not actually in the garden, although only a few yards from it. In November, 1931, it was my good fortune to stay a night and part of a day at that beautiful old home (which is now a boarding house), Arran Camp, which is owned and run by Miss Brenan, and is situated about one mile from Bowral, N.S.W. Miss Brenan is a bird-lover to her finger-tips. To see her in the early morning among her feathered friends is a delight. Quite a number are fed every morning and evening. Before I give a list of the birds noted, I must mention the garden. It is quite an acre and a half in extent, I should say, and it was really glorious, the number and variety of the flowers and shrubs being amazing. I understand that Miss Brenan has often taken prizes with her roses against all comers, and when one has seen the garden one would not be surprised.

Cacomantis pyrrhophanus. Brush Cuckoo.—Only one of these birds seen. It was just outside the garden fence where the timber had not been cleared.

Turnix varia? Painted Quail.—Only one seen. I have put a query mark alongside this species, as I am not quite sure, but from its flight and colour and the class of country it was flushed from, the Quail I put up I have listed as the above. It was thick brush country, also quite close to this garden.

Gymnorhina tibicen. Black-backed Magpie.—About four or five pairs of these seen, in fact, they were so tame they used to be fed about the house.

Coracina novæ-hollandiæ. Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike.—Two pairs seen about the garden.

Dacelo gigas. Laughing Kookaburra.—Several pairs of these came every morning to be fed with the Magpies.

Zosterops halmaturina. Grey-backed Silvereye.—Quite a number of these were very busy among the flowers, feeding on the grubs, etc.

Microeca fascians. Jacky Winter.—Two of these were seen. They seemed quite busy doing their share towards cleaning the garden of pests.

Rhipidura leucophrys. Willie Wagtail.—Two pairs of these restless favourites were seen.

Colluricincla harmonica. Grey Thrush.—Eight or ten of these delightful songsters came every morning to be fed. Their whistling, when waiting for their food, was well worth listening to.

Rhipidura flabellifera. Grey Fantail.—Two of these were seen quite close to the house.

Lamprococyx minutillus. Little Bronze-Cuckoo*.—Only a single bird seen.

Pachycephala rufiventris. Rufous Whistler.—A pair was seen in the pine trees near the house.

Artamus superciliosus. White-browed Wood-Swallow.—Several pairs seen busy among the flying insects.

Geopelia placida. Peaceful Dove.—Quite a number of these friendly

*Probably *Chalcites basalis* or *Lamprococyx plagosus*.—Ed.