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Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Australian magpie: pp 271-272.



AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE

Family Cracticidae

Species *Gymnorhina tibicen*

Common name Magpie

Status Introduced from Australia or possibly self-introduced

Abundance Common

Size 410 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Rook 450 mm)

Habitat A bird of the suburbs, parks and open countryside. Especially plentiful in areas of steep sheep country. Seldom in forests.

Worldwide range Australia

New Zealand range Throughout much of New Zealand but absent from Westland.

Discussion Two races of Magpie are found in New Zealand. They are the more

common White-backed Magpie (*G. t. hypoleuca*) (above) and the Black-backed Magpie (*G. t. tibicen*) (below).

Description

Head and underparts Black. **Nape and mantle** White. **Back** (Black-backed Magpie) black, (White-backed Magpie) white. **Wings** Black with conspicuous white patch on secondary feathers. **Uppertail and undertail** White but black tipped. **Bill** White with a black tip.

Description – female birds and juveniles

Upperparts The white areas of the male birds are grey coloured. **Underparts** On juvenile birds brownish-grey. **Bill** On juveniles brownish.

Conspicuous features

- Bold black and white colouring.
- Heavy white bill.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Birds feed on the ground in small parties of up to about 14 birds.
- Aggressive if intruders (including humans) approach a nest.

Call A chuckle of bell notes.

Nest A platform of twigs and grasses, the cup lined with fine grass or wool. Up to 4 green, olive-blotched eggs are laid.

Where to find

Common roadside rural bird. Not in old forests or alpine areas.

General Magpies are disliked by many who believe they plunder the nests of passerine birds. Observations of the plundering of Skylarks and Tui nests have been recorded. Conversely, though, they have been recorded doing environmental good in eating agricultural pests such as black field crickets, porina caterpillar and grass-grubs.

