

THE MAGPIE-LARK*(Grallina cyanoleuca)*

(Cover Picture)

Although the Magpie-Lark is one of the commonest birds, and the plumage differences between the sexes are well-known, few ornithologists seem to be aware of the distinctive colour pattern of the juvenal (i.e. a young bird in its first teleoptyle plumage). F. L. Berney (Emu, XXXII, 1932, p. 107) first drew attention to this, and noted that often no mention is made of the young bird in the standard works, or else the statements are very misleading and incorrect. Chaffer (Emu, XXIX, 1929, p. 152 and plate 26) published a very good photograph of a female and two young at the nest, but failed to indicate the differences in the young which are visible in his photograph and may be summarised as follows. The young of both sexes have a black forehead (as in the male parent) and a white chin and throat (as in the female). Adult males have black faces and a white eyebrow, and this latter feature is also seen in the young of both sexes.

When assuming adult plumage (? 3 to 6 months), the young female acquires a white forehead, but loses the white eyebrow.

Berney also refers to a "black shoulder strap" which connects the black of the upper back with the black breast, and which is present in males and young birds but absent in females.

Other features of the young bird are that the black plumage lacks the steel-blue sheen of the adult, while the bill and iris is dark instead of yellowish-white as in the adult of both sexes.

Although the call of the Magpie-Lark is given by various authors as "Peewee," "Pee-wit," or "Knee-deep," the strident notes usually heard more closely resemble the words "Per-deet," repeated several times.

The species is described in detail in volume 2, part 6, page 132 of this Journal.

—H.T.C.