Magpies

Magpie Species Photo Gallery

Formosan Blue Magpie Parents with young in nest (Urocissa caerulea)

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**Magpies** are passerine birds of the **crow** family, Corvidae.

In Europe, "magpie" is often used by English speakers as a synonym for the **European Magpie**, as there are no other magpies in Europe outside Iberia. That bird was referred to as a "pie" until the late sixteenth century when the feminine name "mag" was added to the beginning.

The **European Magpie** is one of the few animal species known to be able to recognize itself in a mirror test.

**Systematics and species**

According to analysis, magpies do not form the monophyletic group they are traditionally believed to be—a long tail has certainly elongated (or shortened) independently in multiple lineages of corvid birds.

Among the traditional magpies, there appear to be two distinct lineages: one consists of Holarctic species with black/white coloration and is probably closely related to **crows** and Eurasian **jays**. The other contains several species from South to East Asia with vivid coloration which is predominantly green or blue.

The Azure-winged Magpie is a species with a most peculiar distribution and unclear relationships. It may be the single survivor of a long extinct group of corvid genera.

Other research has cast doubt on the taxonomy of the *Pica* magpies, since it appears that *P. hudsonia* and *P. nuttalli* may not be different species, whereas the Korean race of *P. pica* is genetically very distinct from the other Eurasian (as well as the North American) forms. Either the North American, Korean, and remaining Eurasian forms are accepted as three or four separate species, or there exists only a single species, *Pica pica*. 
Holarctic (black-and-white) magpies

- Genus **Pica**
  - **European Magpie**, *Pica pica*
  - **Black-billed Magpie**, *Pica hudsonia* (may be conspecific [one species] with *P. pica*)
  - **Yellow-billed Magpie**, *Pica nuttalli* (may be conspecific with *P. pica*/*P. hudsonia*)
  - **Korean Magpie**, *Pica sericea* (may be conspecific with *P. pica*)

Oriental (blue/green) magpies

- Genus **Urocissa**
  - **Formosan Blue Magpie**, *Urocissa caerulea*
  - **Red-billed Blue Magpie**, *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*
  - **Gold-billed Magpie**, *Urocissa flavirostris*
  - **White-winged Magpie**, *Urocissa whiteheadi*
  - **Sri Lanka Blue Magpie**, *Urocissa ornata*

- Genus **Cissa**
  - **Green Magpie**, *Cissa chinensis*
  - **Yellow-breasted Magpie**, *Cissa hypoleuca*
  - **Short-tailed Magpie**, *Cissa thalassina*

Azure-winged Magpie

- Genus **Cyanopica**
  - **Azure-winged Magpie**, *Cyanopica cyana*

Other "magpies"

- The **Black Magpie**, *Platysmurus leucopterus*, despite its name, is neither a magpie nor, as was long believed, a jay, but a treepie. Treepies are a distinct group of corvids externally similar to magpies.

- The **Australian Magpie**, *Cracticus tibicen*, is conspicuously piebald, with black and white plumage reminiscent of a European Magpie. It is a member of the family Artamidae, and not a corvid.
References


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