



A short story by Leo Schoof, Kelmscott, Western Australia

The Lost Magpie

Magpies are quite noisy birds. They have black and white feathers and are fairly large birds. They can sing really well and their sound is very beautiful. They often sing at night too especially when the moon is shining brightly.





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When they sing they lift their heads up and sing for joy. When two or three magpies sing together it sounds beautiful. Did you know that the singing of the magpies is sometimes called carolling? Magpies often stay together in groups, sometimes even twenty in a group. They always stay in their own territory.



One day in the spring a father and mother magpie made a nest high up in a tree. They made quite a large nest all made of sticks.



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During nesting time the father magpie often catches insects and feeds the mother magpie.



The mother lays about two to six eggs but often only two eggs will hatch. It takes about twenty days for the baby magpies to come out of the eggs. The mother magpie usually can't look after more than two or three babies. Often the brothers and sisters, who were born the previous season, help with finding food for the new babies. If the parents can't get much help the new babies will not grow very strong. The one year old brothers and sisters also help with defending the nest. This is a very good thing because often hawks will try and eat the little birds. So they are all kept quite busy



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watching over the little ones in the nest. Every day they have to chase hawks and cats away.



Yes, cats will also sometimes try and eat the baby birds. Did you know that cats are very good at climbing trees? With their sharp claws they hang onto the branches and they won't fall out of the tree. They are very smart and they sneak up to the nest very quietly.

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Feeding the young babies is quite hard work. Father and mother bird catch insects or little lizards and bring these to the nest.

The little birds stay in the nest for about four weeks. When they leave the nest they can flutter their wings and they can't yet fly properly.

It still takes a few more months, though, before they can look after themselves.

One night there was a bad storm. It was so bad that the tree where the birds were sleeping fell over and the whole nest fell onto the ground.

It was a good thing that the baby birds were nearly ready to leave the nest. Therefore they could already fly a little bit.



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So the two young birds and the mother quickly found another tree and sat there quietly waiting for the sun to come up.



The song of the birds and the rising of the sun every morning are wonders of God's creation. This morning, too, the mother bird sang her happy song, thankful for another day. But suddenly she stopped singing for she realised that she had not seen or heard father bird for quite a while. Now the sun is up he should also be singing.

What could have happened to him? She was very worried about him. Perhaps he was eaten by a cat or maybe he got hurt in the storm.

The mother did not sing much more after that. She was too worried about father bird and so were the two babies. They could fly fairly well by now and they flew around looking for father bird. But they could not find him anywhere.



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What had happened? Father bird was very much hurt. A branch had fallen right on top of him. He had just managed to crawl away after a while but one of his legs was broken and he could not run very fast. Also one of his wings did not feel right. So he could not fly very well either. Poor thing!

He was lying in the grass close to the fallen tree and suddenly he saw a cat sneaking up on him. He knew that he could not fly very well, but he was so frightened that suddenly he managed to fly up on to a high branch. This way the cat could not catch him. He waited for the cat to go away. But, oh no, the cat just sat there waiting patiently for his chance.

He tried to fly onto another tree but he could not go very far because he was so sore. He stayed on that branch for a long time. Finally the cat could not wait any longer and went home.

The magpie was very glad about that.

In the meantime the father magpie got so tired. He could hardly stay on that branch. He did not want to fall off because then the cat would find him for sure.



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After a while he became so sore, and weak and tired. He fluttered down carefully and just lay there on the grass. He could not even fly away. What if the cat found him now while he was lying on the ground?



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What was that? Did he hear that cat again?



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He tried to look up but did not see a cat. But what he did see he didn't like either. There was a young boy and he came straight for him.

"I hope he doesn't see me", the magpie thought, "for then I'm in trouble".

But the boy saw him straight away.

"Oh you poor thing", the boy said.

"What has happened to you?"

The boy, whose name was Carl, bent over to pick up the bird.

But the bird tried to get away from him. Lucky for him he couldn't fly away because the boy did not want to hurt him. He only wanted to help him.

So Carl carefully picked up the injured bird and walked home with it.

The magpie tried to wriggle out of Carl's hands but he couldn't. He didn't understand that Carl wanted to help him.

"Don't worry, birdie", said Carl, "I am not going to hurt you. I just want to help you. I will see what my Mum can do for you, OK?"

The magpie didn't understand, of course.



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After a few minutes Carl walked into the home and his mother was very surprised and said: “What have you got there now?”

“Can we help this poor magpie, Mum?” asked Carl.

“I don’t think I can do much for him”, Carl’s Mum said.

“But you know what we can do? We can take him to the animal hospital. They can help him and fix his broken wing”.

“I think he also has a broken leg, Mum”, said Carl.

“Ok, let’s go to the animal hospital - immediately”, Mum said.



They got into the car and after a few minutes they arrived at the animal hospital. Fortunately the animal doctor was there already.



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“Do you know what they call an animal doctor?”, Mum asked Carl.

“I have no idea”, he said.

“They call him a vet”, his Mum explained.

“Let me have a look at this poor bird”, said the vet.

“He doesn’t look very happy”, the vet said. And after looking him all over the vet said: “It looks like he has one broken wing and one broken leg”.

“The poor thing”, Carl said. “Can you fix him up for us, please?”

“I will see what I can do”, the vet said. “I will have to keep him here for a few weeks, I think, before he is ready to fly again”.

The vet looked after the magpie very well. The bird even became a bit tame. And, of course, when the bird was ready to fly out the vet was sorry to see him go. But he knew very well that it doesn’t belong in the hospital. It would rather be flying amongst the trees and live with other magpies.

Perhaps he might be missing his family.



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At first the magpie didn't know what to do. He had been looked after so well. Now he has to find his food himself.

It didn't take him long, though, and when he suddenly spotted an insect he quickly snapped it up.



But now the next problem. Where would his family be?

He looked everywhere and called out to them. He saw quite a few other magpies. But they chased him away because he was in their territory, their space. So he moved on and flew a long way.

By the end of the day he was so tired of flying and calling out all day. So he decided to settle down for the night and have a good rest.

The next day, as soon as the sun came up, he straightaway started looking for his family again. And guess what? Suddenly he recognised the sounds of his family. They can't



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be far off now, he thought. And sure enough there they were.

Can you imagine how happy the mother bird was to meet the father bird again? And, of course, so was the rest of the family. They must have plenty to talk about, don't you think?



Leo Schoof - 31st December 2016

itschoof@inet.net.au