

**Common Name/Scientific name: Magpie-lark / *Grallina cyanoleuca***

Magpie-larks are often seen in parks, gardens and streetscapes in built-up areas, but it is equally common in farmland and more open bushland. In the Maroochy gardens, they occasionally are seen around the open lawn areas and nearby trees. Magpie-larks build robust nests made from mud and rootlets, which male birds sometimes defend surprisingly vigorously. They are not closely related to either magpies or larks.



**Description:** The Magpie-lark is distinctively marked in black and white. The thin whitish bill and pale iris separate it from other similarly coloured species. The adult male Magpie-lark has a white eyebrow and black face, while the female has an all-white face with no white eyebrow. Young birds have a black forehead, a white eyebrow and a white throat. The Magpie-lark is often referred to as a Peewee or Pee Wee, after the sound of its distinctive calls.

**Feeding & Behaviour in the gardens:** The Magpie-lark is mostly ground-dwelling, and is usually seen slowly searching on the ground for a variety of insects and their larvae, as well as earthworms and freshwater invertebrates.

**Breeding and Nesting:** Magpie-larks build an unusual mud nest. During the breeding season both the male and female gather wet mud and construct a bowl-shaped nest on a horizontal branch, or similar site, often up to 20m above the ground. The bowl is lined with feathers and grasses. The male and female birds often sit side by side and call alternately, each raising and lowering their wings as they do so. Magpie-larks aggressively defend their nest and territory, which may occupy up to 10 ha. Both parents share the incubation duties and care for the young. If conditions are favourable, more than one brood may be reared in a year.

**Similar species seen in the gardens:** Although not related, the Magpie-lark can be confused with the Australian Magpie, *Cracticus tibicen* (often seen in the Maroochy gardens). While both species are black and white, the Magpie-lark is noticeably smaller than the Australian Magpie. [Magpie image and more information.](#)