



# The Magpie's Nest

## A story from the United Kingdom

Once upon a time, a long time ago, the birds did not know how to build nests. None, except the Magpie. The magpie's nest kept her covered and well protected. The other birds admired Magpie's nest. They twittered and chirped about her wonderful nest and wished that they could build a similar nest to keep their own babies safe. So one day they all came to ask the magpie to teach them how to build nests.

The Magpie agreed to help, and she gathered all of the birds around her to show them how to build a clever nest. First, she took some mud, and made a round mud cake with it.

"Oh! That's how it's done!" cried the thrush, and away it flew. That is why thrushes build nests out of mud!

Next, the Magpie took some twigs, and she arranged them around the mud cake.

"Ah! Now I know all about it!" said the blackbird, and away it flew. And that is how blackbirds build their nests to this very day.



Then, the magpie got some more mud, and packed it all around and over the twigs.

“Ohh, that’s quite obvious!” said the wise old owl, and away he flew. And owls have never made better nests than that since.

After this, the magpie took some more twigs, and wove and twined them around the outside of the nest.

“The very thing!” said the sparrow, and off he went. And to this day, sparrows make rather messy, slovenly nests.

Well, next the magpie took some of her own feathers, and lined the nest with them, to make it nice and comfortable inside.

“That suits me!” cried the starling, and off it flew. So the starlings have very comfortable nests.

And so on and on it went. Each bird learned a thing or two from the magpie, but none of them waited until the very end to hear all of the magpie’s instructions. The magpie continued working and working – she didn’t notice the birds flying off one by one.

At last, the only bird that remained was the silly turtle-dove. The turtle-dove is a little absent-minded, and hadn’t really been paying close attention to anything that the magpie had done. All along, the turtle-dove just kept on saying its silly cry: “Take two, Taffy, take two-o-o-o.”

Finally, the magpie heard the turtle-dove’s silly song, just as she picked up one twig to lay across the nest. So, the magpie said to the turtle-dove, “No, one is enough!”

But of course, the silly turtle-dove kept on crying, “Take two, Taffy, take two-o-o-o.”

Well, the magpie could tell that the turtle-dove wasn’t listening, and she started to get frustrated. She said in a strong voice, “One's enough, I tell you.”

Still, the turtle-dove cried, “Take two, Taffy, take two-o-o-o.”

At last, and at last, the magpie looked up and saw nobody near her but the silly turtle-dove, and then she got rarely angry and flew away and refused to tell the birds how to build nests again. And that is why different birds build their nests differently.

