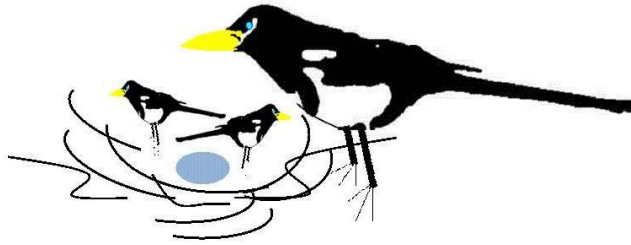


Count Us In!



Magpie Nest Monitoring

March, 2007

Holly Ernest and Scott Crosbie

- Tips on finding nest locations
- How magpies make nests
- Nest Monitoring

You can help with:

- Identifying nest locations
- Determining number of young magpies that fledge
- Determining nest failure rate
- Collecting feathers for DNA analysis

Want to help in another way?

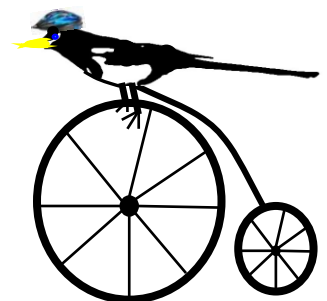
- Seeking Magpie Monitor Email/Volunteer Coordinator

[EMAIL: magpie-mail@magpiemonitor.org](mailto:magpie-mail@magpiemonitor.org)

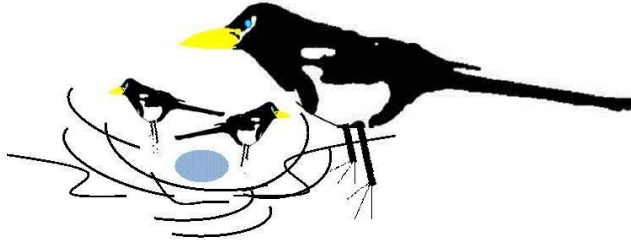
[WEB SITE: magpiemonitor.org](http://magpiemonitor.org)

Detailed Nest Monitoring information at:

http://magpiemonitor.org/nest_count.html



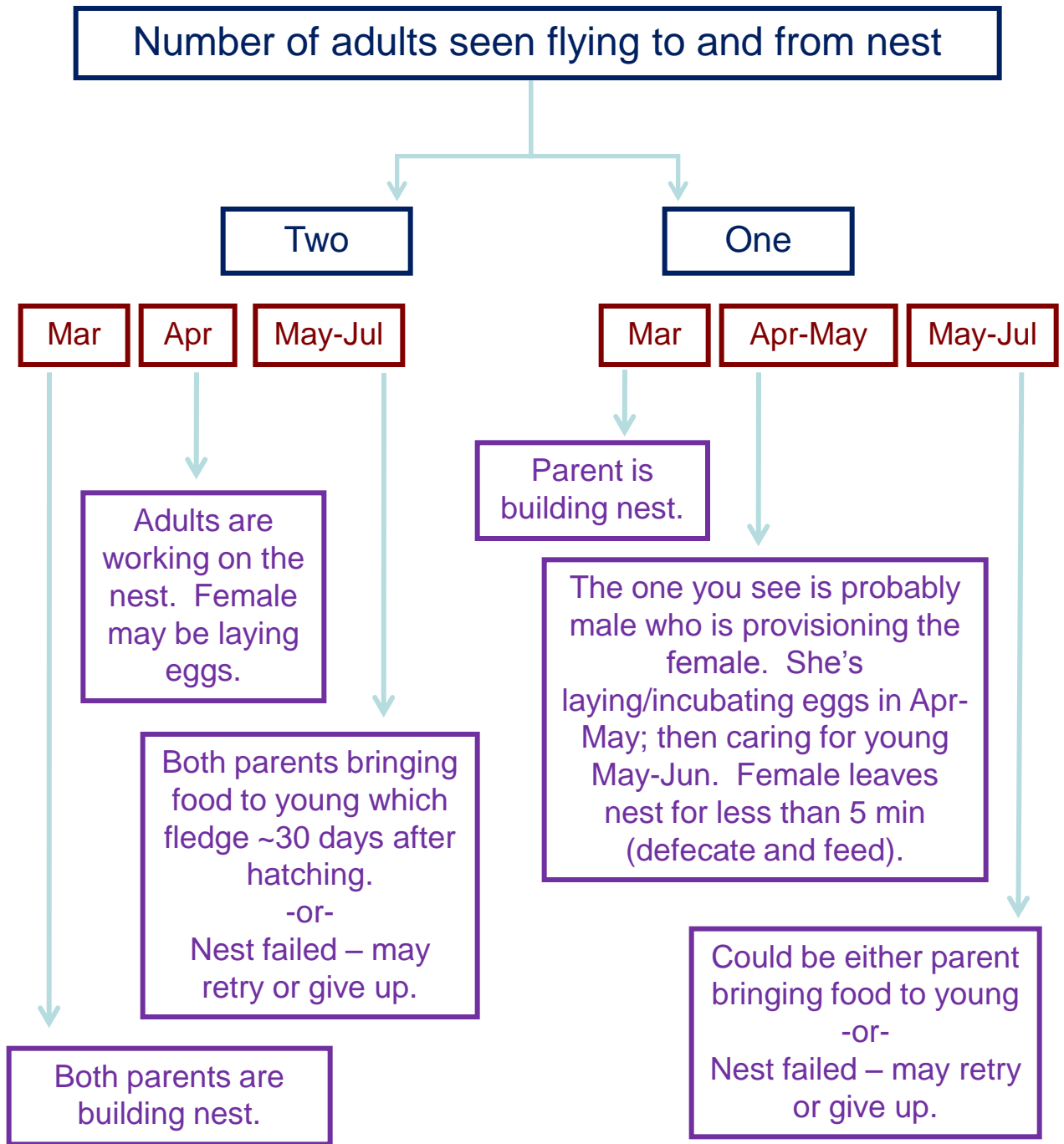
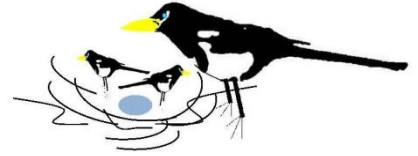
Tips and Notes to help nest monitoring



- **Nest Site:** High in large trees; Mistletoe clumps often used for nest construction
- **Tree Species:** many (>64 species); common species are valley oak, blue oak, coast live oak, sycamore, cottonwood, black locust, blue gum (*Eucalyptus*), commercial fruit trees (walnuts, etc).
- **Nest building begins** between late December to March; by mid-Feb, almost all breeding pairs are involved in nest-building – both sexes work on nest.
- **Nest Structure:** large structure (2-3 feet in diameter) with mud or dung and stick base, stick canopy (dome), and mud bowl lined with animal hair, grass, shredded bark, or rootlets. Continual nest maintenance needed throughout nesting season. Often over 1500 sticks and weighs 20 pounds!
- **May take 6–8 wk to finish building nest,** although nests from previous years are often refurbished for renesting attempts in <2 wk. ~10-day period after nest done before first egg.
- **One brood/season,** but will renest if first nest fails early in the season. Timing and reproductive success related to precipitation, insect availability, and weather conditions, which all affect foraging.
- **Laying of First to Last Eggs in Clutch.** 5-7 eggs. First-egg dates of first nesting attempts range from 15 Mar to 7 May – but variable between years. After first egg, 1 egg/day on subsequent days, but ≥ 1 d may be skipped between later eggs (usually between eggs 5 and 6 or 6 and 7).
- **Eggs:** pale greenish blue, grayish blue, buff, or olive; heavily spotted and speckled. Markings sometimes heavier near one end.
- **Hatching of First Chicks.** Eggs hatch 16–18 d after beginning of incubation.
- **Departure of Young from the Nest or Cessation of Close Parental Care.** Young depart from nest (fledge) about 30 d after hatching. Stay at nest tree 4-5 days – mostly silent except when begging adults for food. May be fed by parents ≤ 50 –55 d after departing nest. Entire brood usually fledges at same time.
- **Fledgling appearance:** shorter tails (1/4 the length of adult tails). Not fly well; hop around; parents feed them for 10-14 days after fledging.

Reference: Reynolds, M. D. 1995. Yellow-billed Magpie (*Pica nuttalli*). In The Birds of North America, No. 180 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Decision Tree for Nest Monitoring



* Dates above are approximate as the magpie nesting cycle has only been studied in one rural area. Nesting cycle may be earlier in urban areas.