

## LARGER GARDEN BIRDS by Dave and Gill Shearing

A close relative of the Blackbird is the **Song Thrush** who has a very similar song although a lot of the phrases are repeated several times. A thrushes favourite food is a snail and to get at the juicy bits they smash the snail shell on a regularly used stone called a Thrushes anvil. Their nests are unusual in that they are lined with mud and not grass and leaves like the Blackbirds.



The next two birds are both members of the Crow family and deserve a mention because of their very colourful plumage. The **Jay** and **Magpie** are very quick to find food put out for other birds, and both possess the unpleasant skill of being able to catch young birds and eat them as well as eggs.



In the Autumn you may see **Jays** collecting fallen acorns. They carry several at once in their crop and then spend time burying them for future food in the Winter. Apparently, they have a phenomenal ability to remember where they buried each acorn although some are missed and may go on to grow eventually into a splendid Oak tree.

**Magpies** build an enormous domed nest made of sticks lined with clay, which is virtually impregnable to attack. These are usually built in large thorn bushes.



One of the prettiest birds to visit our gardens is the **Goldfinch**. They love Sunflower hearts and Niger seed but the best way to attract them is to grow Cornflowers. Their nest is a small cup fairly high up in a tree such as a fruit tree and is made of moss, twigs and cobwebs. They are also known to decorate the nest with flowers.

