

Common Garden Bird 2: Oriental Magpie-Robin (Murai-Kampung Biasa) *Copsychus saularis*

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The Oriental Magpie-Robin is a handsome bluish-black and white bird who is one of our best songsters in the garden. Females have a duller colour compared to males and note that males in Sabah have more black plumage. They have a large repertoire of songs and love to sing. They often sing early in the mornings and at various times during the day. Often you can mimic their songs back to them and they will take this up as a challenge to sing back to you or even scold you. Magpie Robins use their songs for many reasons but an important one is to win a mate.

Magpie Robins are one of the most intelligent birds in the garden. We consider them the 'intelligentsia' of the garden. Nothing happens without them being aware of it. They like to eat worms, caterpillars and even some fruit. Nests are not that easy to find, often tucked in a niche at the road side or in rotten tree stump; occasionally they will use an old letter box.

Sadly, they are diminishing due to the illegal bird trade. Some Malaysians like to cage them to hear their songs and Indonesia has a thriving bird trade. See [this report from](#) TRAFFIC Southeast Asia Regional Office. There is no need to cage them. If you keep a green garden with a water feature, you'd easily see and hear them sing many times in the day.



A male from Sabah (left) & a pair checking out an unused mailbox as potential nesting site