

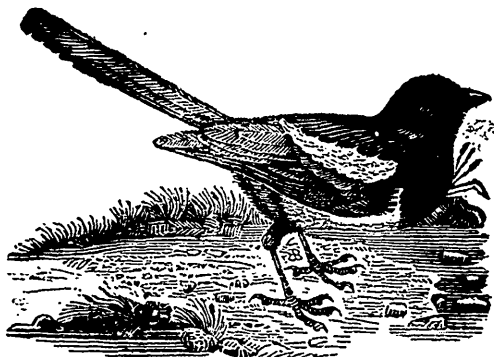
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NATURAL HISTORY.



THE MAGPIE.

The Magpie is too well known to need a description. Indeed, were its other accomplishments equal to its beauty, few birds could be put in competition. Its black, its white, its green and purple, with the rich and gilded combination of the glosses on its tail, are as fine as any that adorn the most beautiful of the feathered tribe. But it has too many of the qualities of a beau to deprecate these natural perfections: vain, restless, loud, and quarrelsome, it is an unwelcome intruder everywhere; and never misses an opportunity, when it finds one, of doing mischief.

A wounded lark, or a young chicken separated from the hen, are sure plunder; and the magpie will even sometimes set upon and strike a blackbird.

The same insolence prompts it to seize the largest animals when its insults can be offered with security. They often are seen perched upon the back of an ox or a sheep, pecking up the insects to be found there, chattering and

tormenting the poor animal at the same time, and stretching out their necks for combat, if the beast turns its head backward to apprehend them. They seek out also the nests of birds; and, if the parent escapes, the eggs make up for the deficiency: the thrush and the blackbird are but too frequently robbed by this assassin, and this in some measure causes their scarcity.

No food seems to come amiss to this bird; it shares with ravens in their carrion, with rooks in their grain, and with the cuckoo in their eggs: but it seems possessed of a providence seldom usual with gluttony; for when it is satisfied for the present, it lays up the remainder of the feast for another occasion. It will even in a tame state hide its food when it has done eating, and after a time return to the secret board with renewed appetite and voracity.

This bird, in its domestic state, preserves its natural character with strict propriety.