

Birds of the Mar Menor

This week's birds are both quite small and easily missed if you don't know what you are looking for, they are Shrike. Although present in the area all year round, they will be seen in greater numbers once the migrating birds have returned. The **Woodchat Shrike** is slightly smaller than a Starling and the **Great Grey Shrike** is a little larger.



Shrike perch on wires, bushes and treetops, where they can watch out for their next meal. They eat large insects, lizards, small birds and rodents. Shrikes are commonly known as "Butcher Birds" as they impale their prey on a thorn or sharp stick once it has been caught.

When sitting on their perch they are quite easy to see, however they spend some of the time on the ground seeking out food and once among the undergrowth, they are virtually impossible to see.

Woodchat Shrike have very distinctive colouring and are easily identified when spotted. Imagine a small Magpie with an orange hat on and you have it!! Their wings and tail appear black when perching but black and white when flying.

As their name implies Great Grey Shrikes are predominantly grey, with black markings around the eyes, wings and tail. When perching they look like white balls of fluff from a distance.

With both species the females have slightly different colouring to the male birds, similar, though more muted in tone. The juvenile Woodchat Shrike are very hard to identify unless they are with their parents as they are speckled brown in colour like many other young birds.

Both birds may be seen in many locations around the Mar Menor, mainly where there is open countryside with various bushes and shrubs for them to perch on.



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