

Birds of the Mar Menor

I recently noticed the arrival of a new bird to the area. I didn't know what they were and initially they looked like pretty normal LGBs (Little Grey Birds). However, when they took off I spotted a bright flash of red from their tails. I now know that these birds are Redstarts, or Black Redstarts to be precise.



Black Redstarts like to feed on rough or waste ground, often choosing a building site or derelict land with brick and concrete rubble. This area must seem like heaven to them! They feed on insects, spiders, worms and some berries and seeds. They leap and sometimes fly to catch their prey. Black Redstarts also have another rather strange hunting habit. I have seen them sitting on telephone wires, they will then suddenly jump off and drop to the ground, not flying at all just in freefall. When I asked a friend what sort of bird would do that he replied "A Suicide Warbler", well I was nearly taken in...

Common Redstarts may also be seen in the area; however, they are actually less common around the Mar Menor than Black Redstarts. This is because they are really woodland birds and there is rather a lack of that type of habitat around here. They like to feed using foliage as cover, but will use areas of scrub as a substitute for woodland when it is not available. Their diet is very similar to the Black Redstart. Both birds make grassy nests in a hole or crevice. Black Redstarts will normally nest in an old building or in a pile of rocks or bricks, whereas Common Redstarts prefer to nest within woodland.



This week I will also write about the Robin, a bird familiar to all of us. It is roughly the same size as the Redstart and its red colouring makes it an obvious choice as a comparison. Robins are naturally woodland birds though frequent visitors to parks and gardens. They like to forage for food in undergrowth rather than on open land and tend to follow animals (and gardeners) as they disturb the ground and unearth worms and other insects for them to eat.

Robins make nests from grass and leaves, normally in dense bushes or hedges. They can however be pretty enterprising and an old kettle may do just the trick!

Keep your eyes peeled for those Suicide Warblers!
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