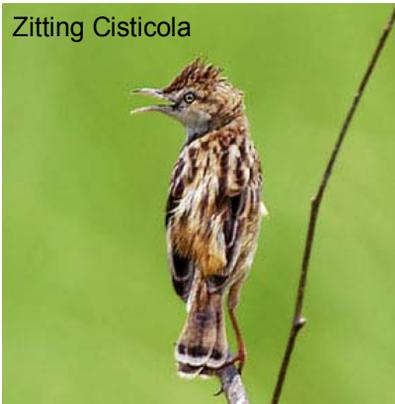


Birds of the Mar Menor

This week my chosen birds are very hard to spot, you tend to know they are there by their song, which means I will have to try and describe how they sing...tricky! The birds in question are Warblers; they are all rather small and tend to hang out in reed beds, bushes and long grass, hence why they are so hard to spot.

Zitting Cisticola



Firstly the Zitting Cisticola, (what a name!) originally called the Fan-tailed Warbler (and I'm sure most of you would prefer to go on calling it that). It lives and breeds in the Mar Menor area and enjoys a habitat of long grass or reeds close to water. It nests and feeds within the cover of the grass and since it is brown and well camouflaged with black streaks on its back, it disappears into the undergrowth.

The reason for the new name, Zitting Cisticola, is that it is a member of the genus Cisticola and its song sounds like "zit-zit-zit", or "zeet, zeet, zeet". It sings when in flight, making one single, short, sharp, penetrating note with each swoop. They feed on insects, spiders and seeds.

Another Warbler commonly found in this area is the Cetti's Warbler. Here again the name of the bird is a clue to its identification as when it sings it makes a loud, metallic and explosive, "plit" or "chich". Several notes will always come together in the following rhythm, "What's my name, Cetti-cetti-cetti, that's it".

Actually, the bird is named after an Italian zoologist Francesco Cetti, however the fact regarding the rhythm of its song is true, test it!

The Zitting Cisticola tends to make an outburst of song and then move to another location before it sings again. It sings very low down within the vegetation as it moves, so you will rarely see it.

The Cetti's Warbler likes to feed and nest in dense vegetation close to water, reed beds are a typical habitat. They feed on insects, spiders, snails and seeds.



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