

Birds of the Mar Menor

There are a huge number of different birds to be seen on and around the Mar Menor. From September onwards migratory birds start to return to the area from their summer



excursions in Northern Europe. Keep your eyes open and you should be able to spot the different birds I write about in each edition. This time I will look at the two largest birds to

be found on the Mar Menor, the Grey Heron and the Flamingo.

Flamingos are incredibly easy to spot (I'm sure you've all seen them). They stand in groups (colonies) in open, shallow, salty water. Their unusual pink colour comes from the food they eat which contains carotene (also found in carrots). Young flamingo are grey in colour and take 3-4 years to become pink.



The Flamingos we see on the Mar Menor are not as bright in colour as those seen in some other parts of the world. This is due to the fact that their food source does not contain as much carotene. They feed on brine shrimp, algae, insects, crustaceans and small fish. They feed by drawing tiny animals out of water and mud, by filtering the water through their bill. Most are seen on the salt lakes at San Pedro but they may also be seen on the salt lakes at Playa Paraiso.



Grey Heron although large are much harder to spot. They stand very still at the edge of the water usually surrounded by reeds waiting to catch their food. They tend to be alone to avoid competition while feeding. When prey is spotted they will stab or catch it with their strong pointed bills. They are most active at dawn and dusk.

Grey Heron are native to southern Spain and may be seen in the Mar Menor throughout the year. Flamingos on the other hand are migratory and most only spend the winter on the Mar Menor. They normally arrive in September and leave again in Spring to travel to the lakes where they breed. They feed on fish, insects, amphibians, small rodents and birds. Herons tend to feed alone but nest in colonies in the reed beds around the Mar Menor. They make their nests out of branches and sticks.

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