

# Birds of the Mar Menor

This month I have chosen to write about two birds both classed as "Waders". The Avocet and Black-Winged Stilt are both common around the Mar Menor. Like other Waders they have very long legs in proportion to their bodies, this enables them to wade out into the water to feed.

Avocets actually have much in common with Flamingos, though you wouldn't think so to look at them. Both Flamingos and Avocets are found in very saline water and feed off brine shrimp and tiny invertebrates which live in it. Both have hooked bills, designed to sweep through the water to catch food. Finally, both have very long legs and like to stand on only one to relax!

As you can see from the picture they are very elegant birds, quite distinct in appearance from any other. They are often seen in large groups, though this is not always the case. Although you will be more likely to see them on the Salinas in San Pedro or Playa Paraiso, you may also see them on the Mar Menor.



The second bird I am going to consider today is the Black-Winged Stilt. I have chosen this bird as it is found in similar situations to the Avocet and has similar colouring. The Black-winged Stilt has exceptionally long legs for its body size. It can wade out into quite deep water to feed. It then picks insects off the water surface with its long pointed bill.



Although my RSPB bird book tells me both of these birds are only in this area during the summer, a resident, who has been keeping records for the past few years, informs me that they may be seen here all year round.

The Salinas are great places to go bird watching. Unfortunately, the Salinas de Marchamalo (Playa Paraiso) are frequently allowed to dry out, this means there is less life in the water and therefore less birds come to feed. It takes a long time for the birds to return even when the water levels are back to normal.

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