

Birds of the Mar Menor

Since many people are now starting to enjoy the warmer weather at the beach, my topic this week is bird watching while sunbathing! I have chosen two birds which you should see while relaxing on a beach by the Mar Menor; Little Terns and Crested Larks.



Little Turn

You will notice Little Terns flying over the water close to the beach looking for fish. When they spot one, they will dive head first into the water to catch it. They are about the size of a Starling, though have similar colouring to a seagull and nest by the edge of the sea in a shallow scoop on a sand or shingle beach.

Since these birds nest on the ground their young are very vulnerable and the birds are currently in decline due to them losing habitat to humans.



My second bird this week is the Crested Lark. You will see this bird on the sand running (or hopping) around looking for food; they feed on insects, shoots and seeds. They are brown and speckled in colour and are well camouflaged on the sand, however they are quite easy to spot and distinguish as they have a spiky crest on the top of their head (rather like a Punk Mohican). They are slightly larger than a Sparrow.



Crested Lark

This week I have a bit of a problem for you. There is another Lark which is very similar, that you may also see in the area. It is less common and it is very difficult to tell the two apart. Below I will describe the differences between the Crested Lark and its cousin the Thekla Lark.

Thekla Larks are similar in appearance to Crested Larks, but with more pronounced markings on the throat, a shorter straighter bill and the underside of its wings are grey. In fact

the entire colouring of the bird is greyer than the Crested Lark. Since the most obvious difference between the two types of lark is on the underside of their wings the best chance of telling the difference will be when they are flying and then of course they are much harder to see! Both of these Larks are sedentary (do not migrate) you should therefore be able to see them all year round.



Thekla Lark

I hope you enjoy your time at the beach and manage to spot these birds as well.
Lesley Singleton, AQUA ADICTA

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