

Birds of the Mar Menor

You may have noticed a rather unusual sight in several areas around the Mar Menor, wild Parrots! We first noticed them when sitting in our garden, as they seemed to take a particular liking to one of our trees. In fact they are Monk Parakeet which been living wild in Spain since the 1970's. Monk Parakeet are extremely adaptable and have wild colonies in many countries throughout the world including the UK (mainly in the S.E. Surrey, Kent, London) and USA.

Originally from South America they were brought to other countries in captivity and then broke free. As they are not naturally found in those countries they often have no predators and the birds thrive. In some areas, colonies have grown so large that they have become a agricultural pest, particularly in parts of the USA.

Monk Parakeet make their nests in trees, out of sticks. These nests can be huge and house several pairs of Parakeet. They particularly like sharp twigs and we often see them in our garden during spring time picking spiky twigs from our Mount Etna Broom Tree (*Genista aetnensis*—for those of you who like the Latin names). The twigs they pick are often three times the length of the bird! As you can see from the picture they are very enterprising and if no tree is available a handy pylon will do.



Although beautiful to look at, these birds are very noisy and those who live near their nesting sites will certainly know that they are there. They announce their presence with loud squawking. Monk



Parakeet are very intelligent and those kept in captivity can develop a wide vocabulary. Take care if you have a nest near your bedroom window, you never know what they may pick up.

These birds are brightly coloured. For the most part they are bright green, however, when they fly they display amazing blue flight feathers on their wings. They feed on plant buds, weeds, fruit, berries and seeds. They are not fussy about which plants they feed off which is why they have been so successful colonising in the wild.

They may be seen in Mar de Cristal as they nest the palm trees which line the main road through the urbanisation.

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