

Birds of the Mar Menor

This week I will continue to look at Songbirds. The two birds I will consider today are the Dartford Warbler and the Marmora's Warbler.

The Dartford Warbler could be considered to be an expatriate, similar to many of us who now live in Spain! The Dartford Warbler takes its name from Dartford Heath in N.W Kent. They used to be common in the UK, however the cold winters got the better of them. They are now pretty rare in the UK, preferring the mild winters and hot summers of Spain and North Africa.

Dartford Warblers breed in S.E Europe and N. Africa and do not tend to stray far from their breeding ground. A small number will migrate further north for the summer.



As you can see from the picture, these birds are very attractive with large heads and long tails. They are very small, normally one or two centimetres smaller than a robin. Their colouring is also very distinctive with a reddish-brown underbelly, grey-brown upper body and red eyes.

Dartford Warblers like to live on heath land with scrub including spiky bushes and heathers. They particularly like a warm (south facing) slope near the coast (I said they were very like us!). There are plenty of suitable locations near the Mar Menor.

These Warblers can be hard to see, as they tend to hide within bushes, however when the weather is warm they will sit on top of the bush and sing. Their song is a quick rattling warble that has a buzzing sound to it.

The Marmora's Warbler is a much rarer bird. They normally breed in the Balearics, Corsica and Sardinia though some vagrants will stray further field. They are named after an Italian Naturalist Alberto Della Marmora.

The Marmora's Warbler looks very similar

to the Dartford Warbler with a large head and long tail, though their colouring is almost entirely grey. They enjoy the same habitat as the Dartford Warbler.

The Marmora's Warbler and Dartford Warbler mainly eat insects, sometimes catching flies in flight. They will also eat some berries.

Name: **Dartford Warbler**
Sylvia undata
Length: ~5" (13 cm)
Wingspan: ~6" (15 cm)



Under body: reddish-brown
Upper body: brownish-grey
Eyes: red

Name: **Marmora's Warbler**
Sylvia sarda
Size similar to Dartford Warbler
Body: smoky grey



Throat: White
Top of head: dark grey
Eyes & Legs: Red

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