

Birds of the Mar Menor

Despite the fact that the last couple of weeks have been rather cool and wet spring is here, honestly! We will start to see a number of migrant species return from Africa and others will leave us to travel north.

This week I will look at the Chiffchaff and the Willow Warbler, both migratory species. They are very similar in appearance and the easiest way to tell them apart is by their song.

Willow Warblers are the Hollywood stars of the bird world! Their song is often used in movies to enhance a summer scene. It is a cascading, trilling warble within which you can distinguish a repeated "hoo-eet". The Chiffchaff is also a keen singer and gets its name from the sound of its song, a repeated "chiff-chaff".



Willow Warblers over-winter in Sub-Saharan Africa and travel to Central and Northern Europe to breed. They pass through Southern Spain on migration

during spring and autumn.

Chiffchaffs may be seen around the Mar Menor all year round. They over-winter here and although many will migrate



north for the summer some will remain. They are most common in bushy areas near the coast. Chiffchaffs are one of the first birds to migrate in the springtime

and one of the last to return in the autumn.

Both Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs make grassy nests within bushes or thick scrub. Willow Warblers are often found in areas of open woodland with Birch or Willow Trees (hence their name).

As I mentioned previously they are very

hard to tell apart, you will have to look quite closely to tell. Chiffchaffs are dumpy in shape, whereas Willow Warblers are longer and more elegant. Chiffchaffs have blackish coloured legs and Willow Warblers' are a lighter colour. Chiffchaffs tend to have a more intense green/yellow colouring whereas Willow Warblers are a more muted grey/green. This however, does change with the season and the age of the bird.

Name: **Chiffchaff**
Phylloscopus collybita



Length: ~4" (11 cm)
Wingspan: ~7" (19 cm)
Under body: yellow-green buff
Upper body: olive-green
Legs: blackish

Name: **Willow Warbler**
Phylloscopus trochilus
Length: ~4" (11 cm)
Wingspan: ~7.5" (20 cm)



Under body: buff-white, pale yellow
Upper body: grey-green, olive-brown
Legs: yellowish-brown

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