



Whales Dolphins, Porpoises and Other Ocean Life from Black Watch a report by Robin Petch - www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk



As the Chair of Trustees of the Sea Watch Foundation it was my great pleasure to be on board for my first cruise on Black Watch to deliver lectures about whales, dolphins, porpoises and their marine environment and to spend time on deck with a number of passengers looking for them.

As we sailed from the Caribbean towards the Azores and then back home there were theoretically great chances of spotting many different species. Normally, if the ship is at sea, you would almost certainly be able to find me (and my wife Kris) on **Deck 7 forward** unless the weather or sea conditions were poor. In this case we would be taking shelter on the leeward side,

away from wind, spray and rain or possibly on the small side decks, forward on Deck 8 or even aft when it's really bad! Unfortunately, some days were too bad to be out at all!

As we sailed, I kept detailed records of position, sea conditions and sightings in order to add to the global record and knowledge of these magnificent creatures. Sea Watch Foundation is the leading UK cetacean research charity and has been collecting sightings data since the 1970s to create Europe's biggest whale, dolphin and porpoise sightings database. This is used to inform EU and national governments, scientific and environmental agencies and NGOs, as well as independent research scientists who have an interest in studying and protecting cetaceans and the marine environment.

- Monitoring the numbers and locations of whales and dolphins in order to gain valuable knowledge of the health of our marine environment, and insight into the effects of chemical pollution, noise disturbance, over-fishing, accidental capture in fishing gear and climate change
- Involving the public in scientific monitoring
- Raising awareness and understanding of marine mammals and the threats they face
- Educating, informing and advising for better environmental protection



Thank you for attending my lectures and joining us on deck. Please do consider supporting my work studying and protecting whales, dolphins and porpoises in the UK by making a donation: www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk



Cetacean Sightings Caribbean - Azores

There were only a few, very brief, sightings during this period, some by us, some by passengers. These were recorded in the Sightings Book. Only one of these was photographed, by Kris, in quite difficult conditions and at a distance of around a mile on 5/12/15 at 1258. It's not conclusive, but we believe it to be either a Gervais' or perhaps Sowerby's Beaked Whale. Beaked whales are only found around deep ocean trenches so are not well known or studied so this is a really interesting sighting.



Cetacean Sightings in the Azores



As expected, there were many more sightings around the Azores. On the sail in, 7/12/15, Bottlenose Dolphins (15+) were photographed alongside at 1208 as we approached Ponta Delgada. *(left)*

There were many more encounters as we left, starting with 20+ Striped Dolphins which charged

towards the bow in line abreast formation before peeling off to starboard before at a distance of about 1/4 mile. Three further encounters with the same species took place during my lecture, at 1451 (12+), 1554 (20+) and 1605 (8+) *(right)*



Then, at 1635, a whale was seen partially breaching off the port bow. It was around 2 miles away and we didn't manage to get a photograph but we are fairly sure it was a beaked whale of some type.



Finally, at 1649 (8+) and 1655 (6+) Common Dolphins came streaking in towards the bow and spent a few minutes bow-riding before drifting down the side of the ship towards the stern. *(left)*

It was not possible to keep a regular watch as we headed home due to poor weather and sea conditions so there were no more sightings before arrival in Greenock.