



Sightings Record

Viking Sun World Cruise

Miami to Los Angeles



As the Chair of Trustees of the Sea Watch Foundation it is my great pleasure to share with you the sightings throughout this Viking Sun inaugural World Cruise, Miami to Los Angeles. The report also includes a few of the photographs Kris and I have taken. These sightings will be used to help understand the distribution of marine wildlife around the world.

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.

It was an amazing experience to be a part of this voyage and we hope you have continued to enjoy good wildlife sightings. I am also delighted to be able to let you know that we will be onboard for most of the next World Cruise too, all the way from Miami to Durban! We look forward to seeing some of you again in 2019.

If you've enjoyed the photography from the voyage, some of which is included in this report, I have created a DVD of my final "wildlife slideshow". This also has some added scenery shots to provide context and is available for £20 to UK customers and \$30 to the US, including P&P and a donation to the Sea Watch Foundation. Order through TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk where you can also make donations to the charity.

15/12/17 Miami, Florida, USA

Laughing Gulls were busy around the harbour, some resting on our mooring lines

16/12/18 At Sea

A quiet start with just a few Flying Fish

1615 A Brown Booby was photographed catching Flying Fish and gliding alongside. A Frigatebird, Tern and immature Gull also spotted during the afternoon



17/12/17 At Sea and Cienfuegos sail-in

- 0915 Assorted seabirds during the sail-in, including Royal Terns, Laughing Gulls, a Magnificent Frigatebird and Brown Pelicans. A Great Egret and numerous Vultures were also spotted nearer the shore.
- 1130 A major “feeding frenzy” near the shoreline, two or three miles up the bay. Lots of Pelicans diving in with Gulls and Terns dipping too. Dolphins were possibly also present but it was too far to be sure.

18/12/17 - 19/12/17 At anchor, Cienfuegos, Cuba

More seabirds of the same species around the anchorage throughout our stay.

19/12/17 At Sea

- 1453 18+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins seen ahead then leaping in to the port bow and surfing alongside.



20/12/17 Ocho Rios, Jamaica

All the usual seabird suspects around the port... Magnificent Frigatebirds Laughing Gulls and the occasional Brown Pelican and Royal Tern.

21/12/17 At Sea

- 1420 6+ Dolphins seen from the stern, later confirmed as 10+ by a guest forward on Deck 7 port side. Probably Pantropical Spotted but possible Spinner Dolphins
- 1537 Up to 5 Masked Boobies and a Brown Booby flew alongside for most of the day, swooping after Flying Fish.

22/12/17 Puerto Limón, Costa Rica

Brown Pelicans, Magnificent Frigatebirds and Turkey Vultures and distant Gulls and Terns around the harbour. Wildlife in the Tortuguero Canals included Howler Monkeys, Two- and Three-toed Sloths, Little Blue Herons, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Snowy Egrets, Green Iguanas, a Crocodile, Great Kiskadee and a Kingfisher or two. I'm sure others spotted different things too!

23/12/17 Colon, Panama

Male and female Magnificent Frigatebirds, Black and Turkey Vultures, Royal Terns, Brown Pelicans and unidentified (probably Laughing) Gulls around the port. Much more wildlife seen by guests on rainforest tours I'm sure!

24/12/17 Panama Canal Transit

Amazing views of Magnificent Frigatebirds, very close to the aft deck in the first lock. Turkey and Black Vultures, a few Brown Pelicans, an Osprey, a large blue coloured Hawk which I couldn't identify, Egrets and a Great Blue Heron all seen during the morning.

A couple of quite distant Crocodiles in the afternoon and a few Swallows in and around the locks and another large Hawk around the Miraflores Locks. Many more of both types of Vulture seen, as well Frigatebirds again, feeding in the wake. White-tailed Deer were feeding at the edge of the forest as we left Miraflores.

25/12/17 Sea Day

Guests reported a small passerine bird hopping around near the Sun Deck railings with a greenish back and eye stripe. Its not unusual to find migrating birds, and a variety of seabirds too, like this on the deck from time to time!

- 0917 A Sea Turtle was spotted by a guest, coming up for air then diving as three Boobies landed close by
- 1000 50+ Brown Boobies and a Red-footed Bobby soaring on our updraft and hunting Flying Fish
- 1013 Sea Turtle photographed by Kris, to starboard. Guests have seen at least 10 today!
- 1113 30+ Dolphins feeding over a mile to starboard. Some leaping observed,
- 1205 Many Dolphins, probably feeding, 3 miles to starboard, some big splashes
- 1215 12 Dolphins reported by guests in 5001, swimming close along the starboard side and leaping from time to time (which may be part of the 1226 group)
- 1226 15+ Bottlenose Dolphins, leaping in to starboard bow
- 1228 8+ Risso's Dolphins swimming slowly to starboard and parallel to our course, ½ mile distant. Some then leaping in our wake.
- 1314 10+ Common Dolphins 1½ miles to starboard. Some leaping and possible feeding behaviour.
- 1430 A Sea Turtle spotted by a guest, only 20 feet from the side.
We then had a quiet period with just one distant sighting of splashing but no definite animals.
Booby and Flying Fish activity continued and a massive cleaning job began on the foredeck with first 2, then 4 then 6 deck crew using first mops, then scrubbing brushes and finally a power washer!
- 1721 15+ Common Dolphins surfing and leaping in the wake, port side aft
- 1730 20+ Common Dolphins photographed in the gloom, leaping high, port side aft. Up to 11 were airborne at once! These were also reported by guests in 4082.



26/12/17 Puntarenas, Costa Rica

- 1420 Unidentified leaping "gamefish" and a few seabirds during the sail-in, including Royal Terns, Magnificent Frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans.
Wildlife ashore included Howler Monkeys, Sloths, Blue Herons Snowy Egrets, a Raccoon and a Crocodile

26/12/17 Corinto, Nicaragua (sail-in)

- 0948 8+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins, leaping in towards the port bow
- 0955 4+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins, leaping in to port bow then swimming alongside

- 0957 3+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins, leaping to the port side (others now in the wake)
- c1000 2 Sea Turtles, probably mating, reported by the Jamisons
- 1010-1020 Guests in 5001 reported seeing 20+ Porpoises but these will certainly have been Dolphins. One young one was reported as being chased by an adult back to the pod
- 1020 Shearwater rescued and “flown” from Ann’s balcony on Deck 4 after guests in 5110 alerted me. Thanks!
- 1030 Leaping Manta Ray seen and photographed by Paul Franklin (3028)



Other Sea Turtles were reported during the day, as well as Brown Boobies, Brown Pelicans, Royal Terns and others including a Great White Egret near the shore.

28/12/17 Guatemala

At least 5 Green Iguanas on the rocks alongside the jetty and lots of birds flitting around the trees in the park. Guests also reported a few Shore Crabs in the area.

29/12/17 Sea Day (Stormy seas, Sea State 9&10, 50mph winds until mid-afternoon)

- 0630 Whale seen surfacing and blowing three times by a guest. Three Dolphins, possibly Spinners, were also seen by another guest, jumping clear of the water.
- 0830 4-5 Dolphins seen astern by a guest
- 0955 Shearwaters and Storm-petrels seen skimming over the waves from time to time
- 1040 Shearwater released from a balcony, Deck 3 starboard
- 1200-1600 Only casual watching but an immature Red-footed Booby, a Masked Booby, a couple of Shearwaters and a couple of Sea Turtles were spotted including an Olive Ridley to starboard at 1529. Guests spotted a whale on the surface and blowing about 3 miles to starboard at c.1500.
- 1607 75+ Dolphins in 8 or 10 groups leaping, surging and probably feeding about 2 miles to port. Guests reported seeing some “spinning” at 1615 but we did not observe this behaviour, just leaping and twisting. They may have been Spinner, we believe possibly Common Dolphins but firm ID was impossible.
- 1633 Olive Ridley Sea Turtle to starboard
- 1645 The first of 20 or more large flocks of birds were seen, between 1 and 3 miles to starboard on a parallel course. Each flock was of 30/40 to 100+ birds so thousands were seen! Probably Storm Petrels but impossible to be sure.
- 1720 Dolphins leaping astern, to port of the wake, possibly 15+ Common Dolphins
- 1757 4+ Dolphins to starboard, far distance
- 1804 2+ Dolphins, again to starboard and in the far distance
- 1809 4+ Dolphins to starboard, mother and calf photographed but quite distant

30/12/17 Sea Day

- 0610 Dolphins seen on the port side by guests
- 0635 20+ Dolphins seen on the starboard side by guests in 5001
- 0655 Brown fish reported by a guest, smooth with a fin on top, about 18in long
- 0700 Dolphins seen to starboard by guests
- 0710 Brown coloured Sea Turtle, with 18in diameter shell reported by a guest
- 0740 A number of Brown Boobies, including an immature and an immature Red-footed Booby hunting Flying Fish around the ship.
- 1000 8+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins to port (during my lecture and seen by Kris!) with more dolphins in the far distance
- 1205 Large Sailfish or similar seen leaping to port
- 1208 Sea Turtle, close to starboard, also reported by a guest
- 1213 Sea Turtle, close to port
- 1222 Sea Turtle close to starboard
- 1235 Sea Turtle spotted by guests on Deck 8, close to starboard aft
- 1310 Sea Turtle reported by guest
- 1400 Shark close to port side, also seen by guests
- 1413 Sea Turtle, close to starboard
- 1434 40-50 Pantropical Spotted Dolphins, including at least 4 mothers with calves leaping in to starboard bow
- 1512 Whale seen surfacing and then diving 2 miles to port, possibly Bryde's but hard to be sure with such a brief, distant sighting. Other possibilities include Minke or Sei.
- 1544 Distant Dolphins seen 2 miles or more to starboard, with a Frigatebird above.
- 1634 4+ Dolphins, one leaping, 2 miles to starboard
- 1733 60+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins leaping in to the starboard bow from starboard and ahead just as light was failing!
- 1735 15+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins leaping in to the port bow
- 1739 6+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins leaping in to the port bow
An amazing end to a busy and exciting day!

31/12/17 Sea Day

- c0800 2 Whales seen to port by guests walking on Deck 2
 - c0855 4-5 Dolphins to port, observed by guests on their balcony and 2 seen to starboard from Deck 2. Guests reported a dozen more a little later, again to port
 - c0900 Sea Turtle reported to port by a guest
 - 0915 5 Dolphins reported alongside the ship by guests
My watch began at 0945 so I just missed the Dolphins!
 - c0930-1000 4 Seals or Sea Lions* seen through binoculars, some lying on their backs
 - 1045 6+ Pantropical Spotted Dolphins appeared, leaping at port bow, then in the wake
 - 1124 Seals*, one photographed close alongside to port, one further away
 - 1206 A couple of immature Red-footed Boobies flying with us and occasionally hunting
- * The only "pinnipeds" found on this coast are California Sea Lions and Guadalupe Fur Seals. The large distant animals seen and photographed by some guests are the former, the smaller animal I photographed at 1124 is the latter.

There were no further sightings in the afternoon. This was a great end to the year and I look forward to sailing with Viking again in 2018 and beyond. Lets hope we all enjoy many more great adventures and wonderful wildlife in the future.

01/01/18 Cabo San Lucas, Mexico

The ship's "Land's End and Whale Watching" tour was a great success with 3 Humpback Whales seen, often quite close. Our vessel, and another similar large vessel were well handled around the whales and some good information was provided as well as drinks and music for those that wanted it! The smaller "taxi" vessels and others around us however were often too close and too fast.

- 1245 2 Whales on the horizon, followed by 8 boats, were observed by guests ashore and reported to me. Sadly, the small "taxi" boats do not behave well around the whales and certainly are harassing and disturbing the whales. This pattern was repeated throughout the day, we watched it ourselves from the ship and counted up to 15 vessels in close proximity to as many as 5 Humpback Whales. A much larger blow was seen twice, 5 miles offshore which may have been a Blue Whale!

02/01/18 Sea Day

- 0908 2 or 3 blows, 2 miles off port bow
0914 Whale surfaced, 2 miles to port. Possibly a Minke as no blow was seen
0917 Fur Seal or Sea Lion close to port side, probably a Guadalupe Fur Seal
1301 Blow, 2 miles to starboard
1350 2 big splashes, probably a whale breaching, 1½ miles to starboard

03/01/18 Sea Day

- 0958 2 Humpback Whales, one tail-slapping, 1 mile ahead and then to starboard
Announced by Captain Knutson and enjoyed by many guests!
1035 10+ Common Dolphins near starboard bow
20+ Common Dolphins feeding 1 mile+ to starboard
1114 2 Common Dolphins swimming quietly to port aft, then leaping in the wake
1138 4+ probable Common Dolphins, ½ mile to port
20+ probable Common Dolphins, 1 mile+ to port
1204 Humpback Whale surfaced ½ mile ahead of the ship twice then dived, tail-up, 250yds ahead
1255 12+ Common Dolphins, including mother and juvenile, swimming quickly to port bow and from ahead to both sides then some leaping in the wake
1330 Large, pale-coloured Sunfish close to port

04/01/18 Los Angeles, California, USA

A foggy morning and we said goodbye to those only booked for the first leg of the voyage, Miami to Los Angeles. It was a pleasure sailing with you!

I hope you enjoy the report and the photographs, it was a pleasure to be part of your cruise on the Viking Sun. FYI, I am also working on a DVD of images, including many from this cruise!

Please consider making a donation to www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk on their website or via mine at www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk

Viking Sun, Cuba, Panama and The Pacific

Pantropical Spotted Dolphin, leaving Cuba



Masked Booby, Sea Day 21/12/17



Three-toed Sloth, Costa Rica



Two-toed Sloth, Costa Rica



Howler Monkey, Costa Rica



Turkey Vulture, Panama



Black Vulture, Panama



Magnificent Frigatebird, Panama Canal



Brown Pelican, Panama Canal



White-tailed Deer, Panama Canal



Red-footed Booby, Sea Day 25/12/17



Brown Booby with Flying Fish, Sea Day 25/12/17



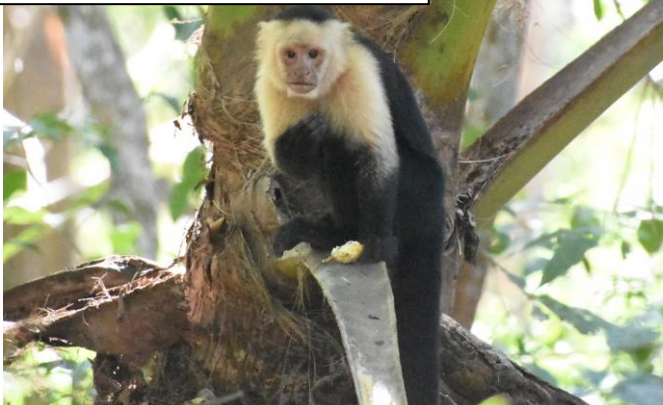
Bottlenose Dolphin, Sea Day 25/12/17



Crocodile, Costa Rica



White-faced Capuchin, Costa Rica



Raccoon, Costa Rica



These images are also available as larger copies and electronic images or on a World Cruise Wildlife DVD, £20 (UK, PAL) or \$30 (US, NTSC) available to purchase from:

Robin Petch, aka TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk

Shearwater on balcony, Sea Day 27/12/17



Sea Turtle, Sea Day 30/12/17



Pantropical Spotted Dolphin & calf, Sea Day 30/12/17



Guadalupe Fur Seal, Sea Day 31/12/17



Humpback Whale Tail, Cabo San Lucas



Humpback Whale, Cabo San Lucas



Humpback Whale tail slapping, Sea Day 03/01/18



Common Dolphin, Sea Day 03/01/18



I hope you enjoy the report and the photographs, it was a pleasure to be part of your cruise on the Viking Sun. Please keep checking my website for new Wildlife DVDs and conservation news.

Please consider making a donation to www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk on their website or via mine at www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk