



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

Floral Funchal and Canaries Boudicca Sightings Record

_Robin Petch - www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk



Thank you for joining me on Deck 7&8 throughout the cruise and helping to spot and record whales, dolphins, porpoises and other marine life.

As the Chair of Trustees for the Sea Watch Foundation it is my great pleasure to share with you the sightings throughout this Boudicca cruise, from Dover to the Canaries and Madeira and back, along with a few of the photographs Kris and I have taken.

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.

13/04/18 Leaving Dover

Assorted seabirds including Guillemots, Kittiwakes, a Great Skua, Gannets and various Gulls (Herring, Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls)

14/04/18 At Sea

More seabirds – Manx Shearwaters, a possible (but unlikely) Sooty Shearwater, Gannets, Kittiwakes, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and reports of Great Skua and Fulmar. Sadly no cetaceans during our watch which ended at 1815 due to wind and poor sea conditions.

1900 2 small Dolphins with central erect fins, reported from Deck 9 by passengers, moving E-W across the bow.

David Ballance is collecting seabird data for the Royal Navy Birdwatching Society and has kindly shared some of his records. His tally for 14th April is 20 Gannets, 7 Great Skuas, 1 Greater Black-backed Gull, 16 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 1 Herring Gull, 3 Fulmars, 2 Guillemots and 3 Manx Shearwaters as well as a suspiciously large Shearwater which may have been a Balearic Shearwater.

15/04/18 At Sea (Sea State 6-7! And lots of swell!)

A few Gannets and then...

- 1058 3+ Dolphins (Striped or Common) leaping close to port side aft and in the wake
- 1251 3+ Dolphins (again either Striped or Common) leaping alongside to port (seen by Kris through our portholes!)
- 1257 2 Dolphins leaping together then a third, spotted on the port side by Peter Gillespie
- 1446 A fin and back spotted to port, about 100yds, very briefly before disappearing in the swell. Possibly a Minke Whale, probably a Dolphin but we'll never know!
A quiet afternoon for birds, with just a Gannet reported by passengers at 12:40

16/04/18 Vigo, Spain (sail-away)

Only a few Gulls (mainly Yellow-legged with a few Lesser and Greater Black-backed). A glimpse of a Shearwater and either Kittiwakes or Terns in the distance. Sea conditions and wind again made it difficult!

David's bird count today was 4 Gannets, 3 Shags, 1 "Commic" Tern, 18 Yellow-legged Gulls, 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a Cory's Shearwater. A "Commic" Tern is either a Common or Arctic Tern which are difficult to tell apart from a distance!

17/04/18 Lisbon, Spain (sail-away)

A great evening on deck! Yellow-legged Gulls, Gannets, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and...

- 1834 Large whale, probably a Sperm Whale, fine on the port bow about 300yds
- 1852 4+ Striped Dolphins 200yds off port bow, 1 leaping
- 1854 Ocean Sunfish, close to port side
- 1904 Fin Whale, large blow then surfaced twice, 500yds off port bow
- 1958 Fin Whale surfaced 150yds off port bow

18/04/18 At Sea

- 0915 30+ Dolphins off the bow, seen by passengers from the Observatory Lounge
- 0935 3 Dolphins reported by passengers, starboard side
- 0944 Blow to starboard, unidentified whale
- 0945 2 almost simultaneous blows reported starboard aft by passengers
- 0948 Blow 200yds to starboard, possible Sei or Humpback Whale?
- 1002 Sperm Whale blow, 1 o'clock, ¾ mile
- 1007 8+ Striped Dolphins to the bow and alongside (*below*)
- 1045 Whale reported blowing to starboard by Andrew Green
- 1126 6+ Striped Dolphins, possibly in company with Pilot Whales, to the port bow then into the wake alongside
- 1144 4+ Pilot Whales, close to the port bow and ahead
- 1152 3+ Striped Dolphins to the port bow then alongside
- 1154 4 Striped Dolphins to the port bow then across to starboard



- 1211 Small (12-18") Sea Turtle close to starboard
- 1214 Sea Turtle close to starboard
- 1222 20+ Striped Dolphins off starboard bow and then away to starboard, including 2 mothers with juveniles. Some leaping and a few more seen to port by passengers.
- 1300 Whale with curved fin reported starboard side by a passenger
- 1415 4 Dolphins reported leaping along the starboard side by a passenger
- 1555 Possible large whale ahead, reported by a passenger
- 1633 15+ Striped Dolphins a mile to port, 6+ more quite close but leaping away
- 1714 A small whale close to the port side and moving away was later identified as a rarely seen Pygmy Sperm Whale (*right*). Thanks to Sarah Friend for her amazing photographs which are probably the best ever taken of this species in European waters!
- 1822 6 Pilot Whales (*below*) very close to the port bow and down the side



- 1930 12+ Dolphins off the bow, reported by passengers in the Observatory Lounge
- 2020 12+ Dolphins off the bow, again seen from the Observatory Lounge. Thanks! Multiple sightings of Shearwaters as well as a Tree Pipit and 2 Common or possibly Baird's Sandpipers around the ship! A small bird of prey, possibly a Kestrel, was reported attacking two of these smaller birds late in the day

19/04/18 Las Palmas, Gran Canaria (sail-in)

Surprisingly, no whales or dolphins were spotted despite 3½ hours on deck, pretty good conditions and lots of passenger involvement. The many rigs and drilling ships are allegedly mainly there for servicing and repair so hopefully are not impacting on the local whale and dolphin population. Lots of Cory's, and possibly other, Shearwaters and I successfully released a Bulwer's Petrel from Deck 8 port side forward. Yesterday's Kestrel is apparently still onboard! Common Terns (*left*) were seen around the harbour.

20/04/18 Santa Cruz, Tenerife

It was dark during sail-in and sail-away so no sightings!



21/04/18 Santa Cruz, La Palma

Only a few Yellow-legged Gulls around the harbour but lots of Cory's Shearwaters (*left*) out at sea, often up to half a dozen at a time

1652 30+ Atlantic Spotted Dolphins (*below*)



leaping and surging into the starboard bow and alongside, including at least 2 juveniles close to us. Ten or more Cory's Shearwaters were in close association.

22/04/18 Funchal, Madeira

Lots of Cory's Shearwaters during the sail-in with 20 or more in easy view much of the time. Over 25,000 pairs nest on the nearby Islas Desertas!

0759 A splash very close to the starboard bow was almost certainly an unseen dolphin

0812 6-7 Bottlenose Dolphins apparently feeding ½ mile ahead and to starboard before sweeping round behind us in an arc

David's bird tally for the sail-in was 331 Cory's Shearwaters, 1 Skua (probably Pomarine), 24 Yellow-legged Gulls and a Lesser Black-backed Gull

23/04/18 Funchal, Madeira

A little Egret was spotted by a passenger on the slipway and there were plenty of Yellow-legged Gulls and at least 3 Common Terns in Funchal harbour.

David counted the following around the harbour over both days... 500+ Yellow-legged Gulls, 3 Common Terns, 1 Kestrel, 2 Little Egrets and a Roseate Tern in the fishing harbour to the west.

The conditions on sail-away quickly turned against us and the deck was closed but not before sighting hundreds of Cory's Shearwaters, over 200 in sight at a time!

1435 5 Dolphins very briefly spotted in the waves to port

1505 A Great Skua was spotted just before we retired to the shelter of Deck 7 aft!

David's tally for the sail-away was 2943 Cory's Shearwaters, 1 Macaronesian (Little) Shearwater, 1 Great Skua and 95 Yellow-legged Gulls! Not bad at all for the conditions and only being able to watch on one side of the ship!

24/04/18 At Sea (Sea State 7 and big swell!)

1119 A brief view of fin and back, 400yds to starboard – an unidentified medium to large whale

1128 A whale seen by a passenger blowing then diving very close to the port side aft

25/04/18 Leixoes, Portugal

Hundreds of Yellow-legged Gulls in and around the port

David logged 959 Yellow-legged Gulls on the sail-in, as well as 32 Gannets, 3 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 1 Cory's Shearwater, 4 Sandwich Terns and a "Commic" Tern.

On sail-away he recorded 91 Yellow-legged Gulls, 2 Gannets, 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 2 "Commic" Terns

26/04/18 At Sea (Sea State 7 and big swell!)

- c.0700 3+ Whales blowing, ½ mile from port side, seen by David Ballance
- 0850 3 Dolphins jumping close to starboard side
- 1052 5 Common Dolphins surging and leaping into port bow then 3 more
- 1056 5 Common Dolphins leaping in to starboard bow
- 1106 4 Common Dolphins surging in to starboard bow and 2 more ½ mile to starboard
- 1110 2 Common Dolphins ahead then 3+2 approached to within 50yds of starboard bow
- 1115 5 Common Dolphins close to port bow
That's over 30 Common Dolphins close to the ship, with others in the distance!
- 1122 Whale breach (totally airborne) 250yds ahead. Unidentified but not a Humpback
- 1417 Birds, possibly Manx Shearwaters, and Dolphins, 1 mile to port
- 1518 15+ Dolphins in 5+ groups ½ mile off starboard bow
- 1529 15+ Common Dolphins, passing ½ mile to port with 4 more briefly close to the ship
- 1601 1 Pilot Whale close to starboard, 4+ more off the port bow
- 1610 20-30 Common Dolphins with 6 Gannets and 40+ probably Manx Shearwaters circling above
- 1728 20+ Dolphins (maybe many more) spread out and about 2 miles to port
- 1736 2 Dolphins leaping high, ½ mile off port bow
- 1738 10+ Common Dolphins leaping and surging to the port bow and then surfing in the wake alongside and aft
- 1739 8+ Common Dolphins leaping and surging in to the starboard bow and then surfing in the wake alongside and aft
- 1822 A Fulmar, the only one we saw today!
- 1933 15+ Common Dolphins, with at least one calf and a juvenile, surging and leaping to the starboard bow and alongside with 30+ Manx Shearwaters overhead
- 1938 8+ Common Dolphins to the port bow and side
- 1939 5 Common Dolphins to the bow from ahead
- 1942 25+ Common Dolphins ahead and slightly to port of the bow and then chasing in
- 1943 10+ Common Dolphins surging and leaping to the starboard bow
- 1953 4 Dolphins to port on a reciprocal course, 100yds away



That's over 200 Dolphins today, mainly Common and often quite close to the ship! Pilot Whales and larger species have also been spotted and lots of birds too. Not a bad final day!

A big thank-you to David Balance who has added bird records to the report, including today... a Gannet, 10 Whimbrels, a Madeiran Storm Petrel and a stowaway Chiffchaff!

I hope you enjoyed the cruise and reading through this Sightings Report. I have included a few photographs to illustrate the most important sightings and these and many more will be available for purchase as prints or as DVD slide shows to support my work and that of the charity so do keep checking.

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

I hope we meet again on a future cruise, Best Wishes, *Robin*



Striped Dolphin 18/04/18 Robin Petch / TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk
These dolphins are found worldwide in warm temperate and tropical waters.



Pilot Whale 18/04/18 Robin Petch / TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk
These whales tend to be found in deeper waters and at the shelf edge.



Pygmy Sperm Whale 18/04/18 Sarah Friend This is a rare and important sighting, and even rarer photograph, which I have already reported!



Atlantic Spotted Dolphin 21/04/18 R Petch TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk
These are found in warm Atlantic waters only, south of the Azores