



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

# A Taste of Iceland

## Black Watch Sightings Record

Robin Petch - [www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk](http://www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk)



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

As the former Chair of Trustees, now Ambassador for the Sea Watch Foundation it is my great pleasure to share with you the sightings throughout this Black Watch cruise, from Liverpool to Arctic Norway and back, along with a few of the photographs I have taken. The Hebrides

proved to be the richest area for sightings but there were some nice encounters throughout the trip.

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.

I hope you enjoy this report on sightings during the voyage, as well as the photographs we took. If you would like to make a donation to Sea Watch Foundation to help us study and protect our UK whales, dolphins and porpoises you can do so on either of two websites:

[www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk](http://www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk) or [www.seawatchfoundation.co.uk](http://www.seawatchfoundation.co.uk)

### **28<sup>th</sup> June 2019 Leaving Liverpool**

Lots of Herring Gulls in the river and also half a dozen Common Terns feeding, a few more later. A flock of 75+ Great Cormorants were resting on a sandbank beyond the river mouth and later a few Gannets and a solitary Manx Shearwater were seen as well as one or two Great Black-backed Gulls.

### **29<sup>th</sup> June 2019 Sea of the Hebrides**

- 0755 A passenger reported seeing "a large black fish arching out of the water" and then...  
0805 "Large black fish with large fin arching out of water"

- 0845 Minke Whale reported, 150 yards off starboard side, travelling towards the bow (Dorsal fin and back seen from Deck 10)
- 0910 A pod of approximately 10 dolphins reported to port by another passenger
- 0915 A pod of 5 small dolphins reported swimming alongside by the first passenger
- 1018 3 White-beaked Dolphins, 400 yards to port, 2 swimming slowly, 1 investigating the ship (*right*)
- 1220 Whale with a small fin, port aft, reported by a guest as well as...
- 1300 Several dolphins to starboard
- c.1300 Probable Minke Whale spotted 100 yards to starboard by Dawn Williams
- 1355 2-3 probable Cuvier's Beaked Whales (or possibly Northern Bottlenose but certainly brown in colour), 500 yards ahead of starboard bow. One surfaced twice with a visible blow then all dived.
- c.1400 2 Dolphins spotted by Charles
- 1443 2 probable Cuvier's Beaked Whales to port, then port aft. Barely visible through waves and swell, 500 yards away
- 1450 8+ Bottlenose Dolphins surging to port bow, 6 turning and surfing ahead, 2+ down port side (*right*). They all then surged away to port strongly and quickly "vanished."
- c.1800 2 Minke Whales seen by passengers



### 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 At Sea, North Atlantic

Very rough conditions, F8 at times, but Gannets and Fulmars (*below*) seen from time to time and one or two Great Skuas. As conditions settled in the afternoon, more were seen including Kittiwakes (adults and juveniles) and Great Black-backed Gulls. A few possible Herring Gulls or Lesser Black-backed Gulls were further out to sea than often seen.



- c.1100 Whale seen blowing and briefly surfacing by Charles
- c.1300 Dolphin seen surfacing by a passenger

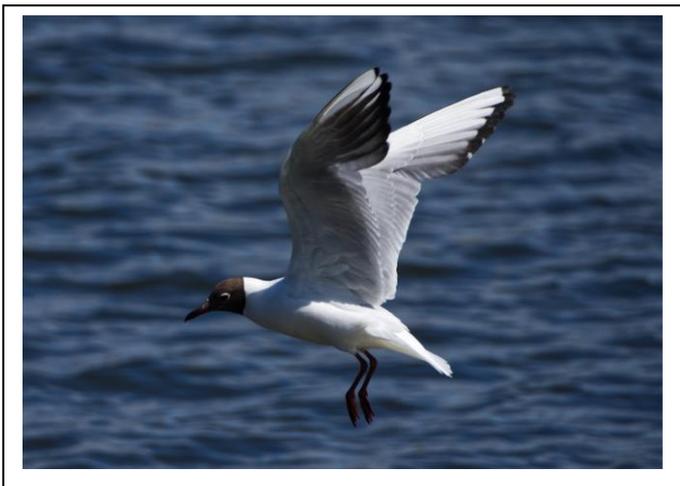
c.1600 Whale seen surfacing, port side

As we approached Surtsey and the Westerman Islands, 75+ Fulmars were skimming the waves, mainly to port with Gannets and Great Black-backed Gulls in attendance. Later...

1908 Great Skua chasing and then attacking a Gannet, forcing it down to the surface of the sea!

**1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 Reykjavik, Iceland**

Many Lesser Black-backed Gulls (left, top) around the port and in the city on the lake where we also photographed Arctic Terns (right, top) and Black-headed Gulls (left, bottom) and a Redwing (right,, bottom) in the park, singing beautifully!



Choppy seas on sailaway restricted sightings to a glimpse of back and fin, probably one of the group of 3-4 probable White-beaked Dolphins seen by a passenger.

Kittiwakes, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 2 Great Skuas and a few Puffins were also seen.

2000 Dolphin (probably White-beaked) spotted by a passenger c.15 metres to starboard

2125 Minke Whale reported to starboard by Table 19

2130 Whale fin spotted by a passenger, off the port bow

2133 Minke Whale surfaced c.75 yards to port, also seen by passengers Hill (5047) on Table L, amongst zig-zag splashes like a bird taking off

2138 Humpback Whale surfaced c.50 yards to port, then turned towards ship and surfaced again right alongside! Again, also seen and reported by the same passengers

2145 3 fins going away from starboard side reported by Rosalind Stuart-Menteth (3093)  
Lots of Fulmars throughout, certainly until I left the deck at 2255, as well as quite a few Puffins flying and swimming away from the ship.

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 Isafjordur, Iceland

- 0600 Whale dived off Bolungarvik as we entered the fjord, reported by a passenger, 4 small local boats changing direction to have a look!
- 0630 Whale spotted at the surface by a passenger, reported as 3-4 metres long with no fins visible but these features would not match any possible species  
100+ Fulmar were feeding around the harbour, mainly on fish offal from the trawlers.  
Ravens (*below left*) and Eider Ducks (*below right*) were also seen.



- 1515 Seal surfaced twice alongside ship, also seen by passengers

- 1717 Humpback Whale (*right*) blowing ahead, fine on starboard bow then on the surface, fluking up and diving. The whale surfaced again, 500 yards to starboard, twice then again fluked up and dived. One gentleman saw a second whale astern at this time.

- 1730 Probable Minke Whale near bow then to port aft



Lots of bird activity – many Fulmars, Terns (probably Arctic), Glaucous Gulls (*left*), Kittiwakes, Black-headed Gulls, Eider Ducks, Puffins, Guillemots and a few Black Guillemots  
2350-0015 Numerous whales seen, a group of 4 then 2 single ones to starboard, and 2 behind as well as 2 reported to port. Described as having “white tails with black tips@ these will have been Humpbacks. In the distance, at least 10 “spouts” were seen.

This was all reported by G Davies, C Moorhead and others... thanks everyone!  
Rosalind Stuart-Menteth reported seeing a distant spout twice, off Hornstrandir, at “around solar midnight” ... again, thanks for the information.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 Akureyri, Iceland

- 0615 Humpback Whale surfaced twice, heading seaward to starboard, barely breaking the surface with no blow visible
- 0653 Humpback Whale close to shore, starboard side, very slowly heading south when last seen diving, again barely showing  
A number of Fulmars and a Skua were also seen and we hoped fervently for more sightings during the evening, this being a major hotspot for Humpbacks and others!
- 1915-1929 2 Humpback Whales, 1 repeatedly breaching and slapping its pectoral fin near the whale-watching boat, ahead and then to port. This was possibly a sign of irritation



- 1936 2 more Humpback Whales, ¼ mile to port on a reciprocal course, fluked up and dived
- 1939 Humpback Whale, fine on the port bow
- 1949 Humpback Whale to port, off tip of Hrisey Island
- 2010 4 White-beaked Dolphins observed near the bow
- 2050 3-4 White-beaked Dolphins crossing the bow, starboard to port  
On the way to Skjalfandi Bay, further whales were seen including 2 Orca crossing the stern, starboard to port at around 2110. Then, entering Skjalfandi Bay...
- 2152 3 Humpback Whales surfacing, blowing and repeatedly diving so clearly feeding, the first diving only 200 yards from the port bow.  
Then, as the Captain slowly took Black Watch round in a large circle through the bay, a further 3-5 Humpback Whales were spotted, also surfacing just a couple of times before diving once again. Repeated sightings of tails, some quite close.
- 2228 As we ventured further across the bay, a small whale-watching RIB was seen, observing a further 3+ Humpback Whales and the Captain again circled Black Watch in the area allowing repeated opportunities to observe these amazing creatures.
- 2317 Humpback Whale spotted from the Observatory, diving off the port bow



That's at least 10, probably 12+ Humpback Whales in Skjalfandi Bay and at least 6 in the fjord leaving Akureyri. A huge debt of gratitude is owed our Captain who handled the ship superbly and literally went out of his way to provide this wonderful opportunity. So our total... 16-20 Humpback Whales, 7-8 White-beaked Dolphins and a couple of Orca (Killer Whales). Not a bad tally for the evening.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019 Seydisfjordur, Iceland

- 0908 Large dark-coloured whale seen from the tea station, Deck 6 port, by Rosalind Stuart-Menteth, fin and back seen
- 0950 Humpback Whale, on a reciprocal course, spotted to port by passengers in the Observatory
- 1022 Large "blow" off port bow then again with back showing port aft. Unknown species as 2-3 miles away and not showing well.
- 1041 Humpback Whale reported crossing the stern, <50 yards, probably the same one seen to port a couple of minutes earlier
- 1100 Whale reported in the fjord by a passenger, possibly a Humpback Around the harbour, birds included Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls (*right*), Fulmars and Eider Ducks



#### 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019 At Sea, North Atlantic

- 0947 2 probable Humpback Whales seen by guests, crossing bow from starboard to port
- 0950 3 Whales (unidentified) seen by passengers from Brigadoon, Deck 6 port, probably the Humpbacks above. Another guest reported seeing one whale surface 3 times
- 1010 At least 3 possible Orca seen by a passenger, approaching from 45° off port bow and later confirmed as such from the bridge – a pod of 4-5 Orca across the bow!
- 1040 1 whale (unidentified), seen by a passenger in Brigadoon, Deck 6 port
- 1432 2 Fin Whales, blowing strongly 1 mile off port bow, then ½ mile to port
- 1444 Fin Whale (*right*), ½ mile off port bow swimming strongly towards us then diving before reappearing port aft a few minutes later
- 1541 Probable Sowerby's Beaked Whale breached twice, 50 yards to starboard
- 1755 Dolphin seen by a passenger, leaping 5 times to starboard  
A few Gannets during the day, lots of Fulmars, a few Shearwaters and a Kittiwake



## 6<sup>th</sup> July 2019 Sea of the Hebrides

- 0817 3 Dolphins, moving towards port bow, seen by passengers
- c.1350 2 probable Harbour Porpoises, close to port side
- 1400 2 probable Harbour Porpoises, close to port side  
Big rafts of Kittiwakes feeding with a few “Commic Terns” (Common or Arctic), Fulmars and Gannets in attendance as well as Guillemots.
- 1535 3 “long shapes”, “light brownier than the sea” seen under the water off the port side, moving aft by Rosalind Stuart-Menteth
- 1544 Probable Minke Whale blew, close to port bow. Seen diving and briefly below the surface, heading away at 45°  
During the later afternoon, small groups of Manx Shearwaters seen as well as more of the above. Many groups of Gannets diving.
- 1829 Whale seen close to starboard side then surfacing strongly once and moving away from starboard aft. Seemed brownish and with a small fin, possibly Cuvier’s Beaked Whale but this would be unusual, though not impossible, in this location. Certainly no larger than a small Minke but not enough time to identify fully.

## 7<sup>th</sup> July 2019 Port of Liverpool, time to go home!

I hope you enjoyed the cruise, the amazing wildlife and scenery and my lectures and Wildlife Deck Watches. It was a pleasure sailing with you and finally completing this Sightings Report for you as promised! If you would like to keep in touch, and perhaps support my work and that of the Sea Watch Foundation, the website addresses are below. Donations are always welcome, you can AdoptaDolphin and wildlife photographs and DVDs are also available, including those from this cruise.

Best Wishes from Robin Petch: [www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk](http://www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk)

Ambassador for: [www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk](http://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk)  
[www.adoptadolphin.org.uk](http://www.adoptadolphin.org.uk)

Black Watch in Akureyri



Humpback Whale



All of the photographs included in this report are available as 6x4” or 7x5” prints.

6x4” prints come in packs of 4 for £15

7x5” prints come in packs of 2 for £12.50

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