

Columbus Sightings Record

A record of Whales, Dolphins, Porpoises and other Marine Life

Robin Petch - www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk



I hope you enjoyed joining me on deck throughout the cruise and helping to spot and record whales, dolphins, porpoises and other marine life. There were amazing opportunities throughout to spot many different species and these are all recorded on the following pages. Thank you for your support.

If you would like a 7x5 (or larger) print of any of the photographs included in the report, these are available to order from my website. Sales support my own work and also include a donation of at least 20% to Sea Watch Foundation.

The detailed records kept of position, sea conditions and sightings add to the global record and knowledge of these magnificent creatures. I have the honour of serving as Chair of Sea Watch Foundation, the leading UK cetacean research charity which 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



To keep in touch with my activities, please request to be added to my free mailing list. Check out the latest news on the websites below.

Columbus - Canaries and Madeira (12/10/18 – 27/10/18)

12/10/18 TILBURY

Great Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed, Herring and Black-headed Gulls were all seen during sail-away, as well as a flight of Rooks crossing ahead of us. Unfortunately there was no sign of “Benny the Beluga” or any of the Harbour Porpoises which can be found in the Thames!

13/10/18 AMSTERDAM

Many Mallard Ducks and Coots as well as Mute Swans, Herons, Black-headed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and Cormorants were seen in the canal. Anthony Prewett reported a Great Crested Grebe earlier in the day, near the Royal Netherlands Bank. Only seabirds were seen as we entered the North Sea, no Harbour Porpoises!

14/10/18 SEA DAY, ENGLISH CHANNEL

1610 Around 20 Dolphins were reported on the starboard side by a number of passengers. The likely species were either Common Dolphins (often seen in the Channel Approaches) or Bottlenose Dolphins (from the Channel Islands/Brittany population or maybe even the Devon/Dorset Population). Thanks everyone!

1752 6+ (probably) Common Dolphins leaping in towards the port bow which we saw from The Dome. These were probably part of a much larger, unseen, group.

1822 4+ (probably) Common Dolphins leaping towards the port bow.

1826 10+ (probably) Common Dolphins c.¾ mile to port on a reciprocal course.

1855 15+ (probably) Common Dolphins feeding close to the port bow and alongside.

Note: Sightings are classified as Definite, Probable or Possible depending on the degree of confidence in the identification which is affected by distance, light, sea conditions and other factors. Unless indicated otherwise, identifications should be regarded as Definite.

15/10/18 SEA DAY, BAY OF BISCAY (SOUTH)

There were no cetacean sightings during the 1000-1200 Deck Watch, just a few Gannets and Great Black-backed Gulls and two Grey (or Pied?) Wagtails onboard! We arrived at the edge of the continental shelf at about 1400 where depths reduced from 4-5000 meters to 1000 meters and less.

1503 Fin Whale blowing, spotted by Kris during my lecture along with the following:

1506 2 Fin Whales, blowing and surfacing.

to 1525 4 more large whales blowing, probably Fin Whales (almost certainly in fact!)

1535 Whale blowing, possibly a smaller species.

1611 10+ Common Dolphins leaping and surging to the port and starboard bow, including a mum and juvenile.

1615 15+ Common Dolphins, 100 metres to port, travelling NE

1515-1535 Shearwaters sighted regularly, as well as a number of Gannets. A Robin, a Thrush and a Wagtail were spotted around the deck by passengers during the day!

1658 (Probable) Sperm Whale 1 mile to starboard, another 2 miles to starboard.

1710 8+ Dolphins 2 miles to port, riding crests and swells, species unidentified.

1805-1810 2 Fin Whales close together 1 mile to port. Two other unidentified whales at 2 miles and 4 miles.

1814 1 Fin or Sei Whale close to the port bow, 2 other whales further away.

1824 2 (possible) Sperm Whales 2 miles off the port quarter.

1837 2 Fin Whales fine on the port bow, and another a mile away. One approached close to the port side and may have dived under the ship. (See right)

1843 2 distant blows to starboard, another in the far distance.

1855 Whale blowing and splashing ½ mile to starboard. Possible Beaked Whale species.

1945 6+ Dolphins quite close to the starboard side, species unidentified.

c.2000 Dolphins seen on the starboard side, perhaps 10-12, by Ad Verschoor.

c.2015 Whale seen blowing 5 times to starboard, by Ad Verschoor.



16/10/18 SEA DAY, NORTH ATLANTIC

1210 6+ Striped Dolphins near the bow, as reported by the Captain.

There were lots of Cory's Shearwaters throughout the day, including one flock of 50+ feeding with Gannets. Gannets were seen regularly, including one being attacked by a Great Skua aka "Bonxie." Onboard sightings included a Redstart, Blackcap and Eurasian Skylark, our Robin, and Wagtails!

17/10/18 GIBRALTAR

0710 2 Dolphins in the dark, starboard side.

0815 2 (probably) Common Dolphins, swimming lazily from ahead to the bow.

0816 2 Common Dolphins, heading towards starboard bow.

0818 Common Dolphin, swimming to the starboard bow.

0849 3+ Common Dolphins, one leaping to starboard bow.

0851 2+ Common Dolphins, swimming close to port bow.

0854 4+ Common Dolphins to port.

0858 5+ more to starboard and 3+ to port, including a mother and calf.

0902 6 Common Dolphins to port, some leaping.

0903 10+ Common Dolphins ahead and to both sides.

Many Gulls and quite a few Shearwaters during the sail-in too, with numbers of the latter around the port during the day. There were also glimpses of dolphins in the dark as we sailed away.

18/10/18 SEA DAY, NORTH ATLANTIC (AFRICAN COAST)

Difficult conditions for spotting but quite a few Cory's (or possibly Scopoli's) Shearwaters including dozens around a fishing boat) and some Gannets. More birds were spotted onboard including a Grey Wagtail and a couple of Quails!

1235 Large Shark close to the bow, possibly a Basking Shark as it is a little too far north for Whale Sharks.

c.1400 c.30 Dolphins spotted by passengers. Well done!

19/10/18 LANZAROTE

0919 8+ Striped Dolphins to the starboard, and then port, bow.

1030 Flying Fish gliding away from the ship.

20/10/18 GRAN CANARIA

No sightings, dark during sail-in and sail-away!

21/10/18 TENERIFE

The photograph to the right was taken on the Dolphin Watching shore tour and shows a male Short-finned Pilot Whale in the foreground and a female with calf behind.



1430 20+ Short-finned Pilot Whales, c.1-2 miles off starboard bow.

1445 The same group of 20+ SFPW now less than 1 mile to starboard, swimming slowly.

1502 5 Short-finned Pilot Whales, c.500 metres off the starboard bow.

1507 6+ Short-finned Pilot Whales swimming very closely across the bow from the port side (right).

1509 6 Short-finned Pilot Whales, 300 metres to starboard.

1523 Bryde's Whale, 300 metres to starboard, swimming and surfacing on a reciprocal course (right).



This was a great sail-away with lots of passengers on deck enjoying the whales and scattered Shearwaters throughout.

22/10/18 MADEIRA

1630 Dolphins, 2-3 miles ahead near "Sea the Best" catamaran, moving towards Ihlas Desertas.

1654 6+ (possibly) Bottlenose Dolphins, 1½ miles to port.



1805 20+ Atlantic Spotted Dolphins ahead and down the starboard side in the wake (right).

23/10/18 SEA DAY, NORTH ATLANTIC

1010 5+ Dolphins at the bow.

1016 Whale blowing to port.

1105 Dolphins close to the port bow, reported by passengers.

1201 Whale blowing, 2 miles from the port bow.

24/20/18 LEIXOES

0755 20+ Dolphins, to port side and offshore.

0823 Dolphin briefly at the bow.

Lots of Yellow-legged Gulls, and also Lesser and Great Black-backed Gulls as well as a few Cormorants around the port.

1658 3 Dolphins, briefly close to the port side.

c.1830 Dolphins surfacing and leaping in the sunset, away to port.

25/10/18 SEA DAY, BAY OF BISCAY

c.1100 2-3 Dolphins on the bow, reported by passengers.

There were a few Gannets and also (possibly) Manx Shearwaters during the morning.

1505 12+ Striped Dolphins leaping to port and into the wake (right)

1537 Strong blow ahead of the port bow and then repeated, lower, blows (possibly 2 whales) to port.

1548 Large shoal of fish leaping at the surface (right).

1748 2-3 very large blows, probably a Fin (or even Blue) Whale.

1751 2 Dolphins alongside to port, leaping out of the surf.

26/10/18 AT SEA, ENGLISH CHANNEL

Seabird sightings included Gannets, Gulls and a Great Skua on a blustery final day.



I hope you enjoy the report and the photographs. Copies of the photographs in 7x5" format are available on request (£6 each or 2 for £10) from robin@TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk, every purchase supports my work and the Sea Watch Foundation. Please visit, and perhaps make a donation at, the websites below:

www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk

www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk