

# Great Whales of the Azores (Pico)

Naturetrek Tour Report

5 - 13 May 2018



Blue Whale by Cathy Harlow



Sperm Whale by Cathy Harlow



Group Photo by Casper Geerinck



Short-beaked Common Dolphins by Cathy Harlow

Report compiled by Cathy Harlow  
Images courtesy of Cathy Harlow and Caspar Geerinck



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Tour participants: Cathy Harlow (Tour leader) with nine Naturetrek clients  
Local Guides: Caspar & Jess; Researchers: Marlene, Marianne; Skipper: Leonildo

## Day 1

Saturday 5th May

### London Heathrow to Lisbon and on to Faial

We met up at London Heathrow Airport for the early morning flight to Lisbon. On arrival, we had a four-hour wait for the onward flight to the Azorean Island of Faial. There was ample seating in the departures area and a good choice of eateries and shops. We had a slight delay on departure, but as we began our descent, there were sweeping views of several of the other islands of the Atlantic archipelago. We arrived about 10 minutes behind schedule at Horta Airport, in sunshine. While waiting for the luggage to be delivered, we spotted a tall straight blow out to sea, which though far away had the hallmark of a Blue Whale. That's got to be a Naturetrek record, to see a target species before the luggage has even left the carousel!

During the short taxi transfer to Hotel do Canal by the harbour in Horta, we saw Blackbird, Common Starling, Collared Dove and House Sparrow. After checking into spacious and comfortable rooms, we set off for a short walk around the town. Cory's Shearwaters were in flight overhead and on the harbour wall. We visited Porto Pim, where Common Terns were flying to and fro and Yellow-legged Gulls soared overhead. A House Sparrow perched on a wire. Several former whaling boats were lined up on the shore and newly painted in preparation for the whaler's festival next weekend. We walked past Peter's Bar and the Scrimshaw Museum. Keith and David climbed Monte Guia and spotted a European Greenfinch. Dinner was at the hotel's restaurant, where we enjoyed a varied menu and a taste of Azorean wines. Everyone was ready for bed after dinner, as we'd had such an early rise.

## Day 2

Sunday 6th May

### Ferry from Faial to Pico; afternoon Whale Watch

It was a beautiful clear and sunny day with a light south-westerly wind and cloud on the mountain summits. Some of the group were up and about early and Trevor and Judy spotted four chaffinches, noting the males' darker plumage than their mainland counterparts; they also spotted a Parrotfish in the port. Madeiran Wall Lizards were darting about on the steps of the hotel. After a copious breakfast we packed, and at 10am took a taxi transfer to the ferry terminal and enjoyed a calm 30-minute crossing to Madalena. Along the way, we passed the prominent islets of Em Pé (standing) and Deitado (lying down), the remains of a crater eroded by wave action. A few Cory's Shearwaters were in flight in the distance.

We were greeted at the ferry terminus at Madalena by Dania and Enrico, co-owners of CW Azores and Caspar, our local guide. After checking into the hotel, we took lunch at a Linu café near the church, where we tucked into enormous pizzas, omelettes, burgers and toasted sandwiches.

At 1.45pm we assembled at CW Azores and Enrico gave us a fascinating talk on the whale and dolphin species we might encounter during our stay. Of particular interest were his observations on the changing migration patterns of the great whales since CW Azores began recording sightings. Fin, Blue, Sei and Humpback Whales migrate between their winter breeding grounds with warmer seas and high-latitude summer feeding areas, and

the Azores provide a convenient re-fuelling stop en route. May, coinciding with the plankton bloom, attracts the greatest number of migrating whales, some of which are seen in the area for just a few days, while others may stay up to two months. Enrico's talk fired us up for the first boat trip and, kitted out with life vests, we walked across the road to the quay, where the RIB was moored.

Heading south from Madalena harbour at 3pm with skipper Leonildo, guide Caspar and researcher Marlene, we soon left the channel dividing Faial from Pico and were cruising the open sea, today blissfully calm. Whale watching on Pico has a high success rate due to the participation of whale spotters, located on land at strategic vantage points along the coast, known locally as 'vigias'. As in the days of whaling, the spotters guide the boats to the whales, using powerful binoculars that can spot blows many miles out to sea.

Our first sighting was the tall blow of a Fin Whale. Caspar explained that Fin Whales, second only to Blue Whales in size, typically do two or three blows on the surface before taking a dive to search for food, staying under for four to six minutes at a time.

We continued further out to sea where the spotters had seen several Sperm Whale blows. Sperm Whales take deeper and longer dives than Fin Whales, apparently attaining depths of over 3000 metres in dives lasting an hour or longer. In the Azores, we were to witness shorter dives, typically lasting 30-40 minutes. Between dives, we found them rafting lethargically at the surface, taking multiple breaths to re-oxygenate. As we approached, the first rewarded us with a high tail fluke, indicating a deep dive. Nearby, a younger one dived without fluking, and two further individuals were observed taking shallow dives and returning to the surface. As we watched the whales to a stunning backdrop of Pico and Faial bathed in afternoon sunshine, Marlene took photos for the id catalogue and notes on the sightings to input into the research project on Sperm Whales.

Today we were also very lucky to see two Loggerhead Turtles. The first was swimming alarmingly close to a piece of drifting plastic sheet. We learned that CW Azores has a policy of collecting any plastic they encounter at sea. The second turtle swam right up to the boat and those seated on the left side enjoyed some very close-up views.

After this rewarding encounter with the Sperm Whales it was time to return to shore. We met up for dinner at A Brasa do Pico, a restaurant right by the hotel, where we ate on the upstairs terrace, watching the sun go down over Faial. As darkness came, a very bright Venus appeared, and Keith helped us to identify some of the many stars speckling the night sky.

## Day 3

Monday 7th May

### Morning and afternoon Whale Watch trips

Today the weather was windy and mostly cloudy in the morning, clearing to give calmer and sunnier conditions in the afternoon. After a 7.30am breakfast at the hotel, we assembled for our second whale watch with Leonildo and Caspar. We went north in slightly choppier seas to where a deep-water canyon divides the islands of Pico and Sao Jorge. The spotters had seen blows here, but as we were 10 miles off the coast, they were struggling to locate our boat to guide us to the whales. Eventually it was Nicola who spotted the blow of a Fin Whale at the surface and we approached gently but it dived. We waited bobbing on a choppy sea for 30 minutes but could not find it again. As the wind was picking up we decided to head for the coast of Pico, where we found groups of

Cory's Shearwaters resting on the surface and several Common Terns in flight. Caspar also pointed out a Macronesian (Little) Shearwater, smaller and darker in colour, with a faster flight. We cruised back in port along impressive black lava cliffs, sprayed by jets of crashing surf.

Some of the group had lunch on the outside terrace at Café Dark, while others bought food at the supermarket for a picnic.

In the afternoon we went out again at 2pm, heading south with Leonildo, guide Jess and researcher Marianne. If this morning's sightings had been slightly disappointing, this afternoon we got a big slice of the whale jackpot! We headed along the south coast of Pico to where the spotters had sighted Sperm Whales. This turned out to be a big gathering of at least 11 individuals, spread out in small groups over a wide area, rafting at the surface and taking shallow dives without showing their tail flukes. The Azores hosts a resident population of female Sperm Whales and their calves, including young bachelor males. At maturity the males moved off to form bachelor groups but become increasingly solitary with age and feeding mostly at high latitudes. Research suggests that social bonds among females are strong and that Sperm Whale 'culture' includes dialects of Morse code like clicks that are unique to each group of animals.

While we were watching the Sperm Whales, we noted a baleen whale blow on the horizon. Soon we were heading further out to sea to check it out and found a Blue Whale travelling at speed in a westerly direction, taking shallow dives with two to three breaths between. We followed alongside for a while, getting excellent views of it while remarking that its slightly falcate dorsal fin was more suggestive of a Fin Whale. There are reports of hybrids but the only way to be sure is to take a DNA sample. Not wanting to outstay our welcome we then headed towards the shore where we encountered first a group of around 40 Short-beaked Common Dolphins bow riding, porpoising, breaching and eliciting squeals of delight from us. Rounding the afternoon off we found a group of around 20 Risso's Dolphins. We noticed how the mature males were heavily scarred with white streaks from raking tooth marks. More sedate than the Common Dolphins, this group of Risso's were very relaxed and easy to follow and photograph at the surface, and all the more stunning with the splendid backdrop of Pico's summit clear of cloud. Travelling back to port along the black lava cliffs, we saw a small Loggerhead Turtle, two Atlantic Flying Fish and a Crab. We stopped to examine some Northern Krill and Marianne explained that these Zooplankton are an important component of Blue Whales' diet. It's not everyday you get to see what's on a Blue Whale's dinner plate!

For our dinner we ate at Atmosfera, an Italian run restaurant located a short drive uphill from Madalena, with gorgeous sunset views over Faial Island. We enjoyed the menu of homemade pasta dishes washed down with local Pico wines.

## Day 4

Tuesday 8th May

### Morning and afternoon Whale Watch trips

Today was breezy, clear and sunny in the morning with increasing wind in the afternoon. Cathy, Keith and David were up at sunrise to go and look for birds in suitable habitat along one of the roads leading out of Madalena. House Sparrows and Starlings were readily seen, and we got good views of Common Chaffinch and several Atlantic Canary pairs frenetically foraging. A male and female Blackcap flitted among the branches of a *Pittosporum* and, in a recently ploughed field, we spotted Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove and Common Blackbird.

Over a copious breakfast at the hotel, we saw Blackbirds and Sparrows foraging on the lawn by the swimming pool. It was another fine day but distinctly breezier than previous days, giving us a bumpier ride through the channel dividing Pico from Faial as we again made our way south with Leonildo and Caspar.

As we approached the imposing cliffs of Monte Guia, a partly submerged crater on Faial, we were joined by a small group of around 10 Risso's Dolphins. Between longer foraging dives, we got good views as they surfaced close to the boat and a perfect photo opportunity – dolphins on a sparkly sea framed by the silhouette of Pico mountain. Just then, news of a baleen whale blow came in over the radio and we headed off at speed towards the horizon, with a stop along the way to enjoy close views of a Loggerhead Turtle, spotted by Judy. As we got closer, we found large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters milling around on and above the waves. Then Nicola called not one but two tall, straight blows. The first, a Fin Whale, took a couple of short dives before arching its back and disappearing into the deep. We now turned our attention to a Blue Whale, surfacing so close to our boat, we could practically smell its whale breath and peer into the blowhole. Caspar explained that the name 'blue whale' may derive not so much from the skin colouring, which is mottled bluish grey, but from the turquoise colour of the water as the whale swims close to the surface. Seeing the extent of the blue water gave us a more accurate impression of its huge size - Blue Whales in the northern hemisphere are typically 23 to 27 metres in length, with females larger than males.

Returning to shore for lunch, we were ready to board the RIB again at 2.30, heading south to a report of a Fin Whale sighting, followed by a second Fin Whale and a Humpback Whale. Caspar told us it was unusual to see the two species feeding so close to one another. For us it was simply mesmerising to watch the shallow dives and contrasting blows of this unlikely tandem whale duo. Already it was 4.30pm and we were 14 miles out to sea, so it was regrettably time to turn back. As we headed for shore we paused to examine a Portuguese Man o'war, cruising on the surface with its bladder inflated. Leonildo plucked it from the sea to show us its long tentacles – brave man! These jellyfish-like animals are known as siphonophores and one individual is actually a colony of four types of animal, each with different functions. The tentacles contain stinging nematocysts that deliver venom to paralyse and kill small fish and crustaceans. In spite of its reputation, the Man o'war's sting is rarely fatal to people, but it causes painful blistering.

The day was not over, as another Blue Whale surfaced right in front of our boat. I think none of us will easily forget this close encounter and the huge blue 'submarine' that approached and swam under our RIB. It was a fitting end to yet another marvellous day of whale watching with CW Azores.

As well as abundant Cory's Shearwaters, we also observed Common Terns and Yellow-legged Gulls.

After a short rest, we set off for dinner at Petisca, an Azorean restaurant popular with locals as well as visitors. The owner treated us to a taste of blackberry liqueur at the end of the meal. On the way back, we were drawn to a garden pond where Perez's Frogs were calling.

## Day 5

Wednesday 9th May

### Morning and Afternoon Whale Watch Trips

The weather today was breezy but sunny in the morning and calm with some cloud in the afternoon. We woke to clear skies and a stunning view of Pico Mountain, embellished with a halo of mist at mid-altitude. This

morning's boat trip gave us sole use of the larger of the two RIBs, offering more space to move around and we were fortunate, as it is normally used for scheduled whale watch trips. We headed out of the harbour with Leonildo at the wheel and Caspar and Jess plus Marlene doing the sightings log for the researchers. We cruised past the half-sunk ferry, which had misjudged its entry to the harbour during a winter storm – a team from South Africa were in the process of dismantling it.

Heading south along the coast of Faial we encountered a Fin Whale. Its behaviour of two to three blows followed by a four- to six-minute dive was indicative of feeding. While we were waiting for it to surface again Caspar and Marlene placed a hydrophone in the sea to listen for Sperm Whale clicks. With a range of about one mile, we were likely to pick up animals in the vicinity, but we drew a blank. However, another vessel radioed in and at exhilarating speed we headed towards 'their' whale, arriving in time to see it blow nine times, arch its back and fluke up in preparation for a deep dive – a real treat for the photographers, with the emerald green slopes of Faial as a backdrop.

The morning brought us sightings of three more Fin Whales, one of which had curious scars on its side that would make it easy to recognise again. Mostly, photo ID work focuses on notches on the dorsal fins of Fin Whales. We could clearly see the asymmetrical white colouring on the right underside of the jaw as it surfaced. We also passed Loggerhead Turtles of varying size and a Portuguese Man o'war. Flocks of Cory's Shearwaters and occasional Common Terns, Yellow-legged Gulls and Little Shearwaters added to this excellent morning of wildlife viewing.

Some of the group had lunch at Café Dark, while others picnicked and soon we were back on board and ready for our next trip. High spirits and low expectations are a good combination and our group had plenty of both, coupled with enthusiasm for whatever the day would bring. This afternoon did not disappoint. Passing a trio of Loggerhead Turtles of varying sizes, we found a large group of Short-beaked Common Dolphins spread over a glass-calm sea. Some of the dolphins jostled for prime spot at the bows, taking turns to ride the bow wave in pairs and threes and by leaning over the front of the RIB, we could see eye-to-eye with them. From time to time, some would leap clear of the water, in spectacular acrobatic formation.

Some of the dolphins were feeding on shoals of Blue Jack Mackerel, rounding it up into a ball. In panic the fish tried to escape at the surface, only to be snatched up by hungry Cory's Shearwaters. Over the side of the boat we saw the fish darting like flashing silver daggers below us. Trying to photograph energetic dolphins is a hit-and-miss affair and we agreed that watching them was more rewarding than failing to get the perfect shot!

We came in closer to the south shore of Pico island and village of São Caetano, where the slopes of the volcano are at their steepest, with precipitous forested gullies leading towards the summit. Feral Pigeons and Starlings were nesting on the lava cliffs and we observed Red Rock Crabs, Marbled Shore Crabs and Limpets in the intertidal zone. As we began to make our way back to Madalena, three more Loggerhead Turtles popped their heads up. Young Loggerheads are the most commonly encountered turtles in the Azores, having drifted there on the Gulf Stream. Reaching maturity at 10 to 12 years of age, they will mate in the open sea but return to the other side of the Atlantic to lay their eggs.

On our way back to port we encountered a group of around 40 Risso's Dolphins. They were spread out in small groups and Caspar wondered if they might be feeding on squid as they appeared to be taking deep and long dives.

Back on land, we had time for a rest before setting out for Ancouradouro Restaurant, a 20-minute walk along the coast, and beautifully situated with sunset views across to Faial Island. Most of the group opted for the splendid fish kebabs, which both looked and tasted amazing and everyone agreed this was a good choice.

At dusk Caspar and Marlene picked us up for a short drive along the coast to a spot where we could watch Cory's Shearwaters come in to land. The sight of these huge, clumsy seabirds flying over our heads was memorable, but the cacophony of calls as they locate their nest sites is unforgettable.

## Day 6

Thursday 10th May

### A tour of the island on land

We arranged to make today our land day as the strong winds and a sea of whitecaps didn't look promising for whale watching; there was also quite low cloud. We set off to explore the island in two vehicles with Caspar and Jess, first making a stop at the fire station! Jess had rescued an injured Cory's Shearwater and was dropping it off there, to await collection by the animal refuge staff.

We passed small fields of maize and potatoes whose soil is brought in from neighbouring Faial to grow such crops. Heading down a dirt road, we arrived at the Vigia Mourato, where spotter Marco was busy guiding a whale-watching boat to a Sperm Whale, under difficult circumstances. We saw a Robin and heard and glimpsed Blackcap but decided to leave Marco to his job and return later. Instead, we drove back to the coast to the spectacular cliffs of Porto do Cachorro (meaning little dog or hot dog), a tiny coastal hamlet, whose name draws from a rock feature in the form of a dog's head. Here we found a fresh-water well and a ramp, where wine barrels were rolled down to the boats from the stores, known as *Adegas*. Walkways gave access to dizzying views of the waves foaming through blowholes. The cliffs were formed by lava from the 1718 eruption on the flank of Pico, the 2,351-metre-high volcano dominating the island. We spotted a Common Buzzard on the way back to the vigia, where Marco showed us the powerful binoculars he uses to locate whales and gave us a taste of a local liqueur – I wondered if this eases the stress of the job! A pair of Atlantic Canaries flew overhead, and we admired the blooms of an Autumn Olive *Eleagnus umbellata*.

At Arcos, we stopped to photograph a cottage built of lava blocks and found a Clouded Yellow butterfly and a Buff-tailed Bumblebee, red-flowering Aloes in bloom, Hottentot Fig *Carpobrotus edulis*, and an endemic *Euphorbia azorica*

At our next stop at Cabrito (little goat) we photographed a 15<sup>th</sup>-century church, built of hewn lava blocks. The cliffs were topped with pahoe-hoe lava, whose cooling surface wrinkles into ropes as lava continues to run below it. We found Rock Samphire *Critbium maritimum*, a local delicacy and Sea Campion. At Santo Antonio, we had our picnic lunch observing a large group of Common Terns perched and in flight around an offshore rock, together with a couple of Roseate Terns and numerous Feral Pigeons. After lunch we had coffee in a nearby café.

From São Roque, we climbed on a winding road, flanked by yellow flowered Kahili Ginger *Hedychium gardneranum*, an invasive Himalayan species threatening the indigenous Laurel forest. Also lining the roadside were hedges of *Hydrangea macrophylla*, just starting to bloom. We stopped to enjoy stunning views back out to sea as we rapidly gained height to the plateau at 800 metres. Frogs were calling loudly from a water trough through we could not see them well enough to identify and Grey Wagtail and Buzzard were noted. A Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* subsp. *azorica* was growing by the roadside.

A short detour brought us to Lago Capitão, a small lake set among gnarled Juniper *Juniperus brevifolia* and Tree Heather *Erica azorica*, with stunning views of Pico's volcanic cone. We got good views of Common Chaffinch while Muscovy duck and a Mallard hybrid were swimming on the lake, where numerous Yellow-legged Gulls were enjoying a freshwater bath. We spotted some Carp in the shallows of the lake. Much of the endemic forest was sadly cleared from the area to create pasture for grazing cows for Pico's dairy industry.

On the descent to Madalena, we saw a Buzzard perched and stopped to walk to a crater row, where we entered a spectacular lava tube, the Furna de Frei Matias. Such tunnels form when lava solidifies on the surface but continues running below the surface in a well-defined channel. When the eruption tails off, the lava empties from the channel, leaving an empty tunnel behind. We entered the tunnel at a point where the roof had collapsed, allowing light to penetrate. In this sheltered spot we found a surprising variety of plants including a Spikemoss *Selaginella kraussiana*, and two ferns *Diplazium caudatum* with a dark stem and a Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*. Caspar showed us silvery bacteria plastering the tunnel walls like glitter. On the rocks near the road we found a fragrant endemic Thyme *Thymus caespititius*.

The last stop on the island tour was the UNESCO World Heritage Site vineyards, where each vine is wedged into crevices in the lava. While soil may be lacking, nutrients are not, and surrounded by their own enclosure of lava walls to protect from the wind, the vines grow well. The dark basalt absorbs heat and helps to promote growth. Viewed from the steps of a bright red windmill, the acres of vineyards stretched to the coast. The different islands of the Azores developed individual styles of windmill and on Pico and neighbouring Faial they have a cone-shaped stone base. This is crowned with an upper timber structure, known as a 'casota' – or little house, accessed by an external staircase. Grey Wagtail were observed on the lava walls of the vineyards.

After this fascinating day spent discovering the landscapes, villages, bird and plant life of Pico, we had time for a rest before walking to Cella Bar located on the outskirts of Madalena in a dramatic spot where the waves crash onto a rocky shoreline. Some of the group opted for a taxi home, while others walked.

## Day 7

Friday 11th May

### Free morning; afternoon swimming with Dolphin tour

Today the weather was much better, breezy with sun and cloud. In the morning we split up to enjoy a variety of different activities. Nicola and Megan took a walk and found Grey Wagtail, Ruddy Turnstone and Atlantic Canary; Robin and Vivien also went exploring and found Blackcap, Grey Wagtail, Ruddy Turnstone, Atlantic Canary, Common Buzzard, Sanderling and Madeiran Wall Lizard. Keith and David hired bikes and cycled along the south coast of Pico to Porto do Calhau, noting Blackcap, Chaffinch, Atlantic Canary, Wood Pigeon and a Clouded Yellow Butterfly. Other group members spent time exploring the town and its shops and enjoying quiet relaxation.

In the afternoon, Megan, Keith, Bev and Cathy got kitted out with wet suits, mask, snorkel and fins and set off with Caspar and the other members of the group to look for dolphins. The Short-beaked Common Dolphins yesterday were super-friendly and all around the boat, but today's were standoff-ish. We tried repeatedly to get in the water with them but at most we got just a fleeting view as they swam off. We had more success with swimming with sardines (Blue Jack Mackerel), which was actually more spectacular than it sounds!

Continuing in the hope of encountering an easier group of dolphins, we came across a Humpback Whale, which was feeding and fluked up as it took a deep dive. Nicola and Megan surprised us with a bag of delicious *Pastéis de nata*, Portuguese custard tarts. As we returned along the south coast, we stopped to pick up a plastic box and found a Guinean Puffer Fish sheltering under it.

Returning to port, we had a quick turnaround as we'd arranged to visit the Wine Factory en route to dinner at Ancouradouro. We had a short tour of the factory, learning about the different wines produced from grapes grown at many vineyards on the island. We tasted both table wines and those best served as an aperitif. At Ancouradouro, we had pre-dinner drinks on the terrace overlooking the sea and then tasted more of the fish specialities and a special vegetarian dish, a bean and vegetable *Cataplana* stew.

## Day 8

Saturday 12th May

### Morning and afternoon Boat Trips

Today was mostly cloudy with sunny intervals and a moderate breeze. We set off at 9am with Leonildo, Caspar and Marlene, heading south to a group of five Fin Whales swimming gently at the surface, taking shallow dives. Caspar explained that this particular spot is a favourite whale snack bar as there is an undersea pinnacle causing upwelling of nutrient-rich water. With cloudy skies the light was rather flat for photography, so this was an opportunity to focus on watching the whales.

We were sharing the encounter with several other whale-watch boats. This was unusual, as we had got used to being the only boat at most of our whale sightings to date. After a while, we moved further south to find a group of Short-beaked Common Dolphins, as 'friendly' as can be, bow riding and swimming all around our boat. Then news came in of a possible Minke Whale sighting and Caspar was keen to check it out. After about 20 minutes searching, we settled instead for another group of around 100 playful Short-beaked Common Dolphins and hundreds of Cory's Shearwaters feeding in tandem. We noticed how the birds stick their heads underwater to scout before plunging and grabbing. On the way back to port we came across two Loggerhead Turtles and an Atlantic Flying Fish.

After a quick bite at Café Dark, we were ready to head off on our last whale watch trip. Exiting the harbour, we immediately hit a rolling swell but with Leonildo's expert handling of the boat, riding the swell added to the excitement. The spotters had seen Sperm Whale blows to the north in the deep-sea channel dividing Pico from the neighbouring island of São Jorge. The swell made spotting from the RIB challenging, but soon we found two Risso's Dolphins and two Sperm Whales, a female and juvenile, taking shallow dives with intervals at the surface. After observing these two we realised there was a second pair in the area and soon all four came together, swimming and diving in close formation.

As the wind was picking up, we made for the shelter of the lava cliffs of the north coast of Pico, enjoying a final encounter with a group of 20 Short-beaked Common Dolphins. We also got a good view of Little Shearwaters in flight and saw several Common Terns, Yellow-legged Gulls and large groups of Cory's Shearwaters.

Entering the harbour, we gave our thanks to Leonildo, Caspar, Jess and the other CW Azores staff who had done so much to make our trip enjoyable and informative.

There was time to pack before having a celebratory drink together as a group. We remarked on how lucky we'd been with the weather and sea conditions, having accomplished all nine of our boat trips, during which we had observed a grand total of 40 great whales and many hundreds of dolphins. The Azores had certainly lived up to its reputation as a whale hot spot. We'd also seen a good variety of other marine life, including 15 Loggerhead Turtles and several Atlantic Flying Fish and Portuguese Man o'wars. Of our bird sightings, the Cory's Shearwaters feeding frenzy and sea and noisy return to their nests at night were especially memorable.

We had also enormously enjoyed one another's good company and benefited from everyone's knowledge and enthusiasm. Nicola deserves a special mention for being an amazing spotter, often finding the whales before the crew!

## Day 9

Sunday 13th May

### Pico to Faial and flight to Lisbon and London

Today was partly cloudy with a light breeze. After an early breakfast, we made our way to the ferry terminal for a final journey across the channel between Faial and Pico. Taking off from Faial Airport on time we arrived in Lisbon with plenty of time to make our onward connection to London Heathrow. Here we said goodbye to Robin and Vivien, who were staying on for a few days in the Portuguese capital.

Once we'd picked up our bags at Heathrow it was time to say our goodbyes - '*Até o próximo*' ('Until the next time').

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## Species Lists

### Mammals (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	May									
			5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
1	Risso's Dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>			20	10	40				2	
2	Short-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>			40		100			35	20	
3	Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>			1	2						
4	Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>		1	1	3	4				5	
5	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeanglia</i>				1				1		
6	Sperm Whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>		4	11			1			4	

### Birds

1	Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris diomedea borealis</i>	4	40	200	200	200			100	100	10
2	Little (Macronesian) Shearwater	<i>Puffinus assimilis</i>		1	1		2			1	8	
3	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo rothschildi</i>							3	1		
4	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>								1		
5	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>			1	1				2		
6	Western Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis atlantis</i>	8	20	10	4	10	2	20	10	4	
7	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1	1	1							
8	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	6	20	10	4	8	20	4	5	2	
9	Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougalli</i>			1			2				
10	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia sp.</i>	1			1						
11	Feral Pigeon/Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus azorica</i>				6				1		
13	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea patriciae</i>			1		1	4	2	1		
14	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula rubecula</i>			1			2				
15	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula azorensis</i>	1	2	8	12	2	6	6	4	2	
16	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla gularis</i>				2		1	10			
17	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris granti</i>	9	✓	✓	4	2	10	2			
18	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs moreletti</i>		6		6		8	2			
20	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	1		2							
21	Atlantic Canary	<i>Serinus canaria</i>				8		2	6			

### Butterflies

1	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>		1								
2	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea failiae</i>			2			1		1		

### Other Invertebrates

1	Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>			1	1	1	1				
2	Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>						4				
3	A Hoverfly	<i>Syrphidae</i>			1							
4	A Dragonfly	<i>Libellulidae</i>			1							

### Amphibians & Reptiles

1	Loggerhead Turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>		2	1	2	8			2		
2	Madeiran Wall Lizard	<i>Lacerta (teira) dugesii</i>		4	10			10	2			
3	Perez's Frog	<i>Pelophylax perezii</i>				2						

	Common Name	Scientific Name	May									
			5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	

## Marine

1	Marbled Shore Crab	<i>Eriphia verrucosa</i>						1				
2	Limpet	<i>Patella piperata</i>					✓					
3	Portuguese Man O'War	<i>Physalia physalia</i>				1	2		1	3		
4	Atlantic Flying Fish	<i>Cypselurus heterurus</i>			2	2			1	1		
5	Red Rock Crab	<i>Grapsus adsensionis</i>		2				20				
6	A Crab				1	3						
7	A Jellyfish			✓						✓		
8	Sea Lice									✓		
9	Northern Krill	<i>Meganyctphanes norvegica</i>			✓							
10	Guinea Pufferfish	<i>Spheroides marmoratus</i>								1		
11	Blue Jack Mackerel	<i>Trachurus picturatus</i>						✓		✓		
12	Parrotfish	<i>Sparisoma cretense</i>		1								

## Freshwater

1	A Carp	<i>Cyprinidae</i>								✓		
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## Plants

1	Soft Shield-fern	<i>Polystichum setiferum</i>								✓		
2	A Fern	<i>Diplazium caudatum</i>								✓		
3	Krauss' Spikemoss	<i>Selaginella kraussiana</i>								✓		
4	Japanese Cedar	<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i>			✓					✓		
5	Norfolk Island Pine	<i>Araucaria heterophylla</i>			✓					✓		
6	Sweet Pittosporum	<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>				✓				✓		
7	Autumn Olive	<i>Eleagnus umbellata</i>								✓		
8	Azorean Tree Heath	<i>Erica azorica</i>								✓		
9	Juniper	<i>Juniperus brevifolia</i>								✓		
10	Lantana	<i>Lantana camara</i>								✓		
11	Common Fig	<i>Ficus carica</i>								✓		
12	Kahili Ginger	<i>Hedychium gardnerianum</i>								✓		
13	Hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i>								✓		
14	Rock Samphire	<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>								✓		
15	Bladder Campion	<i>Silene vulgaris maritima</i>								✓		
16	Spurge	<i>Euphorbia azorica</i>								✓		
17	Yellow Pimpernel	<i>Lysimachia nemorum</i> subsp. <i>azorica</i>								✓		
18	Thyme	<i>Thymus caespititius</i>								✓		
19	Hottentot Fig	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>								✓		
20	Pink Knotweed	<i>Persicaria capitatum</i>								✓		
21	Climbing Snapdragon	<i>Asarina scandens</i>								✓		
22	Garden Nasturtium	<i>Tropaeolum major</i>				✓					✓	
23	An Aloe	<i>Aloe</i> sp.								✓		



Risso's Dolphins by Cathy Harlow