

***Cetacean Survey Report – Intended voyage of the Bluefin of Hamble.
from Lagos, Portugal to Hamble, England***



A report for ORCA and the Seamark Trust

by Dr. Bart Donato

Background

During August 2004 Bluefin was to be returned from Spain to England for refitting over the winter months. As part of this voyage BD was invited on board to coordinate a cetacean survey during the passage along the west coast of Portugal and across the outer Bay of Biscay.

Observers on board

For the voyage the Bluefin had a crew of 6:

Mike Stanfield (MS)
Professor Uwe Ackermann (UA)
Will Dunsmure (WD)
Professor Ian Boyd (IB)
Neil Boyd (NB)
Dr Bart Donato (BD)

The crew were divided into three, three hour, watches of two people. Cetacean recording was carried out by all of the crew on board, as part of their watch duties, with BD taking over all responsibility for cetacean recording.

Intended course

The intended course for the voyage would have seen the Bluefin rounding Cape St. Vincent then heading North West to a position about 90 miles offshore. From here the course would have turned north, parallel to the Portuguese coast, as far as Biscay. This course would have seen the Bluefin passing over the continental shelf for much of the journey off the Portuguese coast and, weather permitting, would have included passage over two seamounts. She would then have passed off the Continental Shelf entering Biscay, passed over deep water for a period then come back over the continental shelf approaching the Brittany peninsula. With the primary aim of the voyage being to return the Bluefin to Southampton this would have been a non-stop, largely linear journey, not a dedicated survey with transects across the shelf edge. Significant proportions of the course would also have been covered at night – preventing survey work.

Actual voyage

The Bluefin left Lagos as planned at 0620 hrs BST on 24th August 2004. Initial conditions were largely calm (sea state 0 – 1), but as Cape San Vincent was approached this rapidly increased to sea state 3 then 4. Rounding the cape the wind was found to be blowing more or less directly from the intended course, forcing the adoption of a more southerly course than had been intended – roughly WNW. This

course was held for much of the day with the sea state rapidly passing 5 and the wind increasing to an estimated Force 7. These conditions were not conducive to any cetacean survey work. At 1600 hrs, at a position approaching 10° West (37° 16.32N, 009° 59.12W), with the wind maintaining its strength and direction, MS decided to return the Bluefin to port in Lagos. Lagos was reached at 0400 hrs on 25th August.

After an assessment of the state of the boat and the discovery of damage to the generator housing as a consequence of the voyage, it was decided not to put to sea again, but rather to overwinter the Bluefin in Portugal and undertake some of the refitting work here instead of in England.

Further survey

On the 26th August BD joined a local dolphin-watching group 'Dolphin Seafaris' on behalf of the Seamark trust. Despite the calm conditions little was seen on the trip with the only cetacean being a lone common dolphin, however, a group of Risso's Dolphins had been seen earlier in the day. Dolphin Seafaris apparently log all their sightings at the points of both contact and separation and note the species involved and behaviour. At present their data is not passed on to other organisations although they would be apparently be keen to share data. Sightings, particularly of common dolphins, are apparently regular of this stretch of coast, with the waters beyond six miles off shore being the most productive. The Risso's dolphins encountered on the 26th were over deeper water approximately 12 miles offshore and were heading in a westerly direction along a contour line.



Summary of sightings

All times are BST

24th August 2004

Cetaceans:

Species	Number	Location	Observers	Sea State	Distance to sighting	Notes
Prob Harbour Porpoise	2	37° 03.00' N 008° 58.386' W	NB, IB	1	5 m	Both animals similar in size. Size and shape as porpoise but a pinker colour than normal noted.

Sea birds (these are minimum numbers, many were missed or left unidentified)

Watch start time & locaton	Watch end time & location	Observer	Sea State	Species	Number	Notes
0621 hrs Lagos Harbour Mouth	0845 hrs 36° 59.084N 008° 58.386 W	BD	0 - 3	Balearic Shearwater Cory's Shearwater Gannet	1 7 10	
0845 hrs 36° 59.084N 008° 58.386 W	1200hrs 37° 06.60N 009° 24.75W	BD	4+	Cory's Shearwater Storm-petrel sp Gannet Pomerine skua 'Commic' tern	4 3 7 1 3	?1 Wilson's, 2 British Ad pale phase

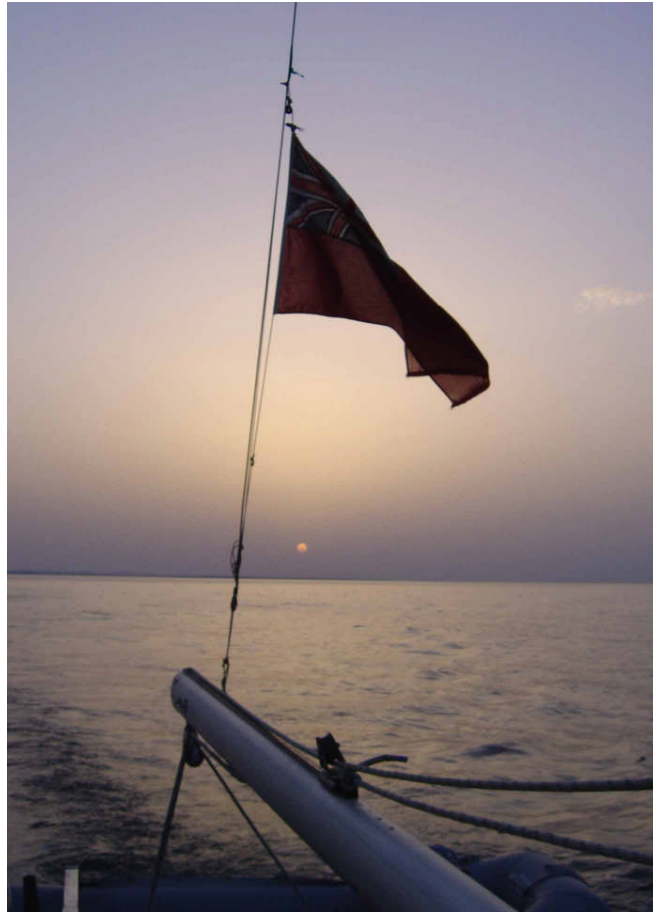
26th August 2004

Cetaceans:

Species	Number	Location	Observers	Sea State	Distance to sighting	Notes
Common Dolphin	1	Aprox 6 mi south of Lagos point	BD	0	5 m	Lone apparently adult animal with two small notches in rear of dorsal fin. Not interested in boat.

Seabirds:

Watch start time & locaton	Watch end time & location	Observer	Sea State	Species	Number	Notes
1000 hrs Lagos Harbour Mouth	1130 hrs Lagos Harbour Mouth	BD	0 - 1	Balearic Shearwater Cory's Shearwater Gannet	3+ 15+ 3+	



PLANS FOR 2005

We shall again be carrying out survey work for ORCA both on the coast of west Portugal and Biscay, before heading north up the Irish Sea to The Hebrides, where a full season of work is planned.

We are now actively looking for crew- see [Crewing Opportunities](#)