

Virginia Beach Pelagic

March 26 2023

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On March 26th I joined a pelagic trip offered by Rudee Tours. It was my first one in my home state of Virginia. Late March is not a common period to run pelagic trips, at least in the Mid-Atlantic, so there was little precedent for what we would see. Virginia Beach lacks easy access to the Gulf Stream like Cape Hatteras, and it still takes several hours to reach the rich waters of Norfolk Canyon.

- 1) On the way out to the Canyon we ran into a small pod of **Atlantic Spotted Dolphin**. It was mothers and calves and they rode along with the boat for a while.



- 2) Throughout the trip we ran into multiple pods of **Bottlenose Dolphins**, many had calves and were bowriding. This is the offshore population of dolphins which are larger and darker than the coastal population. We also saw this inshore group, only 150-200 feet from the beach.



- 3) From an impressive distance you could spot **Humpback Whale** based on the blow. Finding these large cetaceans is also a good way to see interesting birds. Following the whale was a large flock of gulls, Manx Shearwaters, and a very nice find for VA, a Black-Capped Petrel.



- 4) Only surfacing twice and then disappearing was a **Minke Whale**. These aren't particularly common off of Virginia, so we were all excited to see one.



Other wildlife includes, several close views of Mola Mola, Atlantic Puffins, Common Murre, Dovekie, Razorbill, Northern Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, Black-Capped Petrel, Red Phalarope, and a pair of Dark Eyed Juncos that rode some 70 miles back to shore on our boat.