

MADEIRA 23.7.-6.8.2022

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This is a short report on the mammals seen during a family holiday on Madeira, which also included fern-hunting, trekking, snorkling, diving, and pool time.

We made three 2½ hour whale and dolphin trips with Ventura do Mar, and a 1-day trip to the Desertas with VMT. On these we saw:

Atlantic Spotted Dolphin (*Stenella frontalis*): Beautiful encounters on two trips.

Common Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*): A small group seen on one trip and another group seen near the Desertas.

Short-finned Pilot-Whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*): Two encounters.

Bryde's Whale (*Balaenoptera brydei*): Two encounters, one of a single individual apparently lacking a dorsal fin (the same individual had previously been seen off the Canaries), and then two individuals on the trip to Desertas.

From the harbor, we also saw a big group of Short-beaked Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*).

These are the five most commonly seen species off Madeira in summer.

A note on beaked whales: these are not rare off Madeira, in particular Cuvier's and Blainville's. However, they are rarely seen on the regular boat trips because of their long dives. On two of our trips, we dashed to an area where they had just been seen and waited about 15 minutes without success. We then drove off to look at species that are more easily seen. I believe that if one could hire a boat with specific aim of searching for beaked whales (i.e., telling them to ignore the standard dolphins and whales), one would have a good chance to see one or two species per day. Alternatively, one could team up with one of the island-based vigias who spot the cetaceans from land and guide the tour boats. Here, one would have good chances of distant views as the beaked whales are often only 1-2 km from the shore. I got a contact for one vigia (Higino, +352 969 486 444), but we didn't manage to fit this into our schedule and the sea was quite rough in any case on most days.

Finally, we saw some bats:

Madeira Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus maderensis*): Easily seen in the evenings in Funchal.

Madeira Lesser Noctule (*Nyctalus leisleri verrucosus*): Rare. We had a chance encounter with one roosting the tunnel leading from Encumenda to Levada do Norte in the morning; it was gone when we returned later and more people had crossed the tunnel.