



MEDIA STATEMENT

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VOLUNTEERS COUNT WHALES IN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS HUMPBACK WHALE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY DURING 20TH ANNIVERSARY SANCTUARY OCEAN COUNT

Over 850 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, and Hawai‘i island during the first event of the 20th Anniversary Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count. The count, which is conducted three times per year, is a shore-based census that provides snapshot data on humpback whales. Participants tally humpback whale sightings and document the animals’ surface behavior during the survey.

Volunteers collected data from 58 sites statewide. A total of 354 whales were seen during the 8:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. time period, the most of any time period throughout the count (56 sites reported data). Weather conditions and sea states were ideal for viewing humpback whales and other marine life, including spinner dolphins and Hawaiian monk seals.

Preliminary data detailing whale sightings by site location is available at:
<http://www.sanctuaryoceancount.org/resources/>

Two more Sanctuary Ocean Counts are scheduled to take place on Saturday, February 28th and March 28th. Interested volunteers may register online at <http://sanctuaryoceancount.org>. Additional information is available on the sanctuary’s website at <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov> or volunteers may call 808-725-5917 (O‘ahu, and Hawai‘i) and 246-2860 for Kaua‘i. Volunteers are required to register prior to participating. Registration will close one week prior to the event date.

The sanctuary which is administered by a partnership of NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the State of Hawai‘i through the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), protects humpback whales and their habitat in Hawaiian waters where they migrate each winter to mate, calve and nurse their young.

On the Web:

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary:

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources: <http://hawaii.gov/dlnr/>

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