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2016 Sanctuary Ocean Count

Volunteers count whales across Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

More than 552 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O‘ahu, Kaua‘i and Hawai‘i islands during the first event of the 2016 Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count.

The count is conducted three times per year during peak whale season and 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 51 sites statewide on January 30, 2016. A total of 258 whales were seen during the 8:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. time period, the most of any time period throughout the day’s count. Weather conditions were favorable for spotting whales across many sites, however some sites were affected by the haze from the vog and the white caps from high surf.

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

Two more Sanctuary Ocean Counts are scheduled for February 27 and March 26. 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 808-725-5912 (O‘ahu and Hawai‘i) and 808-246-2860 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, protects humpback whales and their habitat in Hawaiian waters where they migrate each winter to mate, calve and nurse their young.

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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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