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Ocean Count Promotes Awareness about Humpback Whales

Volunteers with Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Staff Sites on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Hawai'i islands

More than 380 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O'ahu, Kaua'i and Hawai'i islands during the last count of the 2017 Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count.

Ocean Count serves to promote public awareness about humpback whales, the sanctuary, and shore-based whale watching opportunities. The count is conducted three times per year during the peak whale season and provides a snapshot of humpback whale sightings from the shoreline. Participants tally humpback whale sightings and document the animals' surface behaviors during the survey.

Volunteers collected data from 48 sites statewide on March 25, 2017. A total of 85 whale sightings were recorded during the 8:30 am – 8:45 am time period, the most of any time period during the day's count. It was a nice sunny day with the occasional cloud cover which was great for volunteers but whale viewing conditions were not so favorable due to the presence of gusty winds and choppy waters. Over 1500 volunteers participated during the three Sanctuary Ocean Count days. Also our volunteers were able to educate over 1700 members of the public who stopped by for more information during the counts.

Preliminary data detailing whale sightings by site location are available at: <http://www.sanctuaryoceancount.org/resources/>. Additional information is available on the sanctuary's website at <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>.

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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