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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 590 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O'ahu, Kaua'i and Hawai'i islands during the second 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 50 sites statewide on February 25, 2017. A total of 174 whale sightings were recorded during the 11:30 am - 11:45 am time period, the most of any time period during the day's count. There were more whale sightings on Hawaii Island this Ocean Count compared to last month's. Conditions were generally overcast across the sites with flat/calm waters and little to no wind which allowed for great whale viewing conditions. Volunteers on Hawai'i Island at the Ka Lae Ocean Count site had quite a show viewing 23 breaches (an acrobatic display where the humpback uses its tail to launch itself out of the water then lands back on the surface with a splash) in just 15 minutes!

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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