

## MEDIA STATEMENT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Volunteers Count Whales in Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary**

Over 800 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, and Hawai‘i island during today’s annual Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count. The count is a yearly 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 60 sites statewide. A total of 253 whales were seen during the 8:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. time period, the most of any time period throughout today’s count (60 sites reported data). Weather conditions were favorable for spotting whales in some areas, however many sites were affected by gusty winds.

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 22<sup>nd</sup> and March 29<sup>th</sup>. For more information on becoming a Sanctuary Ocean Count volunteer visit <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov> or <http://sanctuaryoceancount.org> or call (808) 268-3087.

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/>