



Feb. 27, 2016

Contact: Jean Souza: 808-651-1457, Jean.Souza@noaa.gov
Cindy Among-Serrao: 808-725-5923, Cindy.Among-Serrao@noaa.gov

Volunteers Increase Awareness of Humpback Whales

Volunteers count whales across Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

More than 661 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O‘ahu, Kaua‘i and Hawai‘i islands during the second 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.

“Our Sanctuary Ocean Count project is highly dependent and successful due to our dedicated volunteers. With their help we are able to increase public awareness of humpback whales in the Hawaiian Islands. They all have a ‘whale of a time!’” states Cindy Among-Serrao, Ocean Count Coordinator.

Volunteers collected data from 48 sites statewide on February 27, 2016. A total of 186 whale sightings were seen during the 9:00 am – 9:15 am time period, the most of any 15 minute count period. Despite the recent high surf across the Hawaiian Islands majority of the sites were still accessible for this month’s Ocean Count. Most sites had generally good whale viewing conditions with clear skies and light winds.

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

One more Sanctuary Ocean Counts is scheduled for 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.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and our other [social media channels](#).

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/>

###