



January 27, 2018

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Sanctuary Ocean Count volunteers observe humpback whales from Kaua'i, O'ahu and Hawai'i

More than 557 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O'ahu, Kaua'i and Hawai'i islands during the first event of the 2018 Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count.

Volunteers collected data from 46 sites statewide on January 27. A total of 172 whale sightings were seen during the 10:30 – 10:45 am time period, the most of any time period throughout the day's count. Weather conditions were ideal for viewing humpback whales across majority of the state. Rain did affect a few sites on Hawai'i Island.

Ocean Count promotes public awareness about humpback whales, the sanctuary and shore-based whale watching opportunities. The sanctuary holds Ocean Count three times each year during peak whale season. Participants tally humpback whale sightings and document the animals' surface behavior during the survey, which provides a snapshot of humpback whales activity from the shoreline.

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 NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the State of Hawai'i 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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