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

More than 442 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O'ahu, Kaua'i and Hawai'i islands during the final event of the 2018 Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count.

Volunteers collected data from 43 sites statewide on March 31. A total of 34 whale sightings were seen during the 11:00 am – 11:15 am time period, the most of any time period throughout the day's count. Weather conditions were great for viewing whales on Hawai'i Island but were unfavorable for viewing whales on O'ahu and Kaua'i islands. Multiple Ocean Count sites on O'ahu and Kaua'i were cancelled due to continuous rainfall and some sites experiencing thunder and lightning.

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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