

NOAA examines slain turtle

Officials of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service observed knife marks on an endangered female green sea turtle that was apparently slaughtered over the weekend.

On Saturday a volunteer found the remains of the turtle beheaded with its organs cut out on Laniakea Beach.

The turtle, identified as L-20 but called Honey Girl by volunteers of Malama na Honu for her honey-colored shell, was the largest female of the 24 sea turtles that frequented the beach. Officials said she was a "resident basker" at the beach since 2005 and had nested at French Frigate Shoals in 2000.

According to a necropsy by NOAA Fisheries, knife marks were observed on one of the turtle's shoulder blades, or pectoral girdle. Muscles from the turtle's shoulder blades had been picked clean of meat, as was the turtle's belly, experts determined.

"The good body condition along with the lack of lesions in organs available for examination indicates this animal died rapidly and did not suffer from a chronic disease," officials said.

In a written statement, Laura Thielen, chairwoman of the Board of Land and Natural Resources, said, "These findings indicate that the turtle known as Honey Girl was a healthy female adult able to breed and help sustain the population of endangered green sea turtles in Hawaii. Her untimely loss saddens us all."

Hawaii's sea turtles are protected under federal and state laws.

The Department of Land and Natural Resources is investigating the case. Anyone with information may call 643-DLNR or NOAA Fisheries at 983-5730.



COURTESY KITV

Honey Girl, a green sea turtle, was found slaughtered Saturday at Laniakea Beach.

L20

THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2008

HAWAII