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HAWAII

Turtle found slaug

A group dedicated to protecting the sea creatures identifies the mutilated carcass

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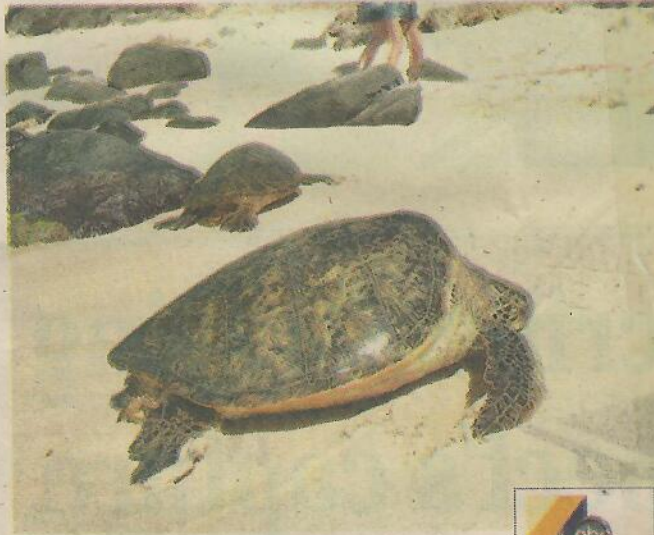
State and federal authorities are investigating the death of a green sea turtle that was found mutilated yesterday on the North Shore.

The female turtle was found covered by sand and on her back at Laniakea Beach shortly before 9:30 a.m., said Joanne Pettigrew, the educational outreach coordinator of Malama na Honu, which protects the turtles that gather at Laniakea Beach.

A Malama na Honu volunteer noticed ants in the sand before finding the turtle carcass, she said.

The turtle had been beheaded with its organs cut out and missing flippers, said Deborah Ward, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Land and Natural Resources.

"She was slaughtered," Pettigrew said, calling the attack "a very violent act, not done by someone looking for a food source."



COURTESY MALAMA NA HONU

Honey Girl, a green sea turtle seen in the foreground, was found dead and mutilated at Laniakea Beach on the North Shore yesterday.

Volunteers knew the turtle as Honey Girl for her honey-colored shell, Pettigrew said. Honey Girl was the largest female out of about 24 sea turtles that regularly frequent the beach, she added.

Honey Girl was about 200 pounds, between 30 to 40 years old, and in her prime, said Deborah Ward, Department of Land and Natural Resources spokeswoman.

She said the volunteer identified the turtle by an identification tag on its flipper, and a snorkeler found the underside of the turtle in the ocean nearby.

"On behalf of over 50 volunteers, we're very upset, disappointed and angry," Pettigrew said.

The state enforcement officers responded to the scene and notified the city's Department of



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TURTLE CARCASS FOUND



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Ocean Safety and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Ward said.

Federal officials took the turtle carcass to the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center for a necropsy.

NOAA spokeswoman Wende Goo said the death appeared unnatural, but too many organs were missing to determine the cause of death.

Green sea turtles are a threatened species and protected by the federal and state laws. Anyone caught harassing or harming a turtle can face up to a year in prison and \$20,000 in fines.

Anyone with information is asked to call the state's Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement at 643-DLNR.