

# 'Honey Girl' found dead on Windward beach

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said it received notification Thursday that a Hawaiian monk seal known as "Honey Girl" was found dead on a Windward Oahu beach.

The cause of death was not apparent, officials said, and a postmortem exam was not conducted due to COVID-19 restrictions.

For more than 20 years, the endangered marine mammal formally known to scientists as monk seal R5AY had delighted nature watchers as she basked and gave birth to at least a dozen pups on Oahu and Kauai beaches. She was also known for her ability to survive numerous fishhook injuries, one of which required surgery.

NOAA said the monk seal was first identified in 2002. She became the subject of a children's book, "Honey Girl: The Hawaiian Monk Seal" by Jeanne Walker Harvey.

The state Division of Conserva-



NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION FISHERIES

**A postmortem exam will not be held for Honey Girl, or R5AY, left, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Honey Girl is pictured with pup RG03.**

tion and Resources Enforcement assisted NOAA, along with volunteers, in transporting the dead seal to Kualoa Ranch for burial, where a pule (blessing) was performed by a Hawaiian cultural practitioner.

Leading causes of death for monk seals in Hawaii include toxoplasmosis, a disease spread by feral cats, and drowning from entanglement in illegal lay nets. Toxoplasmosis has killed two

seals so far this year.

"We are deeply saddened that Honey Girl, one of the most iconic representatives of her entire endangered native endemic Hawaiian species, will no longer grace beaches around Oahu," said state Department of Land and Natural Resources Chairwoman Suzanne Case in a statement. "Her legacy calls for our collective respect and care for all our Hawaiian monk seals."