

Harbor regulars mourn death of their mascot

Lucy the goose likely fell victim to predator



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ABOVE: Ursula Grunwald, 85, stands next to the bowl where she fed Lucy the goose daily on the north end of the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor. Ursula had been caring for the goose for 23 years.

Tsunami had wiped out goose's favorite perch

Harbor - 2004

By JASON HOPPIN

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SANTA CRUZ — Lucy the goose, a Santa Cruz harbor emblem who for decades greeted visitors with a friendly honk, was found dead Monday morning.

A harbor mainstay who both inspired allegiances and ruffled more than few feathers in her day, Lucy was discovered by a walker along the banks of the Upper Harbor. There were signs of trauma, possibly a result of defending her eggs, and harbor officials later recovered her remains.

"I always say 'hi' to her every morning, and I didn't see her so I

went looking for her," said Santa Cruz resident Aileen Fokes, who spotted the remains on a steep bank. "Her head was gone, totally. It was really a terrible thing to see."

A clearly shaken Fokes said Lucy had been out of sorts since the March tsunami wiped out her usual harbor hangouts. She spotted the remains near a feeding bowl locals kept filled for the goose, with a breakfast of chopped romaine left undisturbed.

"When the tsunami came, she became disoriented," Fokes said. "This past week or two, she's just been on the bank. She lost all of her



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE

Lucy the harbor goose, as seen in March 2010, would wait for unofficial caretaker Ursula Grunwald to bring food every day.

SEE LUCY ON A2

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LUCY

Continued from A1

perches that she was used to. I think that something may have been stalking her and attacked.”

Santa Cruz County Animal Services officials responded to the scene, but initially could not find the remains. It was found later in the day.

“From what was reported to us — one of the harbor patrolmen found her — she might have gotten in a tangle with another animal,” Port Director Lisa Ekers said, adding that the death was a blow. “She was kind of an informal mascot. Everyone knew her very well.”

Deputy Harbor Master John Haynes said egg shells were found near the site where Lucy was killed, speculating that she was brooding and trying to protect her eggs from predators. He said the remains will be turned over to people who fed Lucy, with a public ceremony a possibility.

“We’re going to give them the body, and then they’ll figure out what to do,” Haynes said.

Lucy outlasted many harbor residents, with some caretakers believing she had lived there for a quarter of a century. Ursula Grunwald, a longtime ally of Lucy’s, said the goose was a widow whose



mate was killed a dozen years ago, likely by dogs.

“She was the sweetest, sweetest animal, and she was so healthy. She was a healthy, healthy goose,” said Grunwald, who said Lucy sometimes fed on dandelions and wheat grass. “Every Christmas I was afraid she would end up in somebody’s pot, but she didn’t. She survived.”

Lucy’s life was not without controversy. Last year, she sparked a roiling debate among harbors regulars, setting friends on opposite sides of the issue. Some were fed up with her droppings, while others defended her right to coexist with boaters and kayakers, even if she frequently soiled the docks.

The controversy led to a charged meeting attended by dozens of harbor users. One man, a former top UC Santa Cruz administrator, even brought large, blown-up photos of goose droppings to illustrate his concerns.

In the end, the matter was tabled. A truce settled over the harbor, and the incident brought Lucy notoriety, with clucks from many about the “only-in-Santa-Cruz” tale.

Lucy survived that, and more. A 9.0 earthquake in Japan in March sent tsunami waves across the Pacific Ocean in to the harbor, sinking several boats, smashing docks and causing \$28.5 million in damage. But Lucy

Ursula Grunwald, who fed Lucy every day, says the goose was a widow whose mate was killed a dozen years ago, likely by dogs. Grunwald says the loss of Lucy’s favorite perch in the March tsunami made her more vulnerable to predators.

KEVIN JOHNSON/SENTINEL

hung in there.

“The Jettfloat that everyone complained about was gone. She was out there, swimming around. ... If she had an epitaph, let it say, ‘Lucy won,’” said Tom Dexel, a member of the Santa Cruz Rowing Club, who would like to see a plaque or picture to commemorate Lucy.

But most agree that in the end, Lucy was a casualty of the tsunami. Her perch was right across from U Dock, which was wiped out by the waves.

“She had no more protected place (from predators),” Grunwald said. “She just didn’t have any place to stay.”

Sentinel staff writer Kim White contributed to this report.