

Kia Ora ReSharkers!

Its been a bit over a month since you last heard from me, and I'm pleased to report that we have some very exciting news in terms of evidence that our resharking is succeeding brilliantly in the field. As I'm sure many of you will appreciate, monitoring the success and survivorship of our pups upon release into the wild is not an inconsequential affair - so when our monitoring efforts reveal long-term survivorship, its a real cause for celebration. Read on!

StAR Thailand's "Maya" breaks the record for longest resighting period for a StAR pup!!

In early November, StAR Thailand and the Thai Department of National Parks downloaded the acoustic receiver array in Thailand and May excitedly reported some fantastic news - 3 of the released Thai pups were recorded within the array in this download period, all showing long-term survivorship!

"Maiton" was detected for 161 days post-release, while "Similan", released on 9 September 2025, was recorded repeatedly throughout the array for 345 days (11 months, 11 days post-release)! Even more excitingly, "Maya" (released on the same day as Similan) was recorded for 356 days within the acoustic array, making her our longest StAR pup resighting! Importantly, while Similan pinged the array frequently across the 345 day period, Maya actually "disappeared" from the

acoustic array for nearly 10 months, only to “reappear” 10 months post-release - pinging a receiver less than 25km from her release site on Maiton Island.

This gives us hope that some of the Raja Ampat pups, most of which disappear from the acoustic array within 2 months of release, may also “reappear” - we’re looking forward to downloading the 52 acoustic receivers in Raja Ampat in early 2027 and hopefully uncovering some similarly long resighting periods. The StAR Thailand team was also delighted to receive two more pups from partner Aquaria Phuket; these are now in the sea pen at Maiton Island and are targeted for release in a special ceremony in early December - stay tuned for more details!



Maya just before her release in September 2025. She now holds the record for the longest post-release resighting of any StAR pup!

National Geographic CEO visits Maiton Island sea pen!

The StAR Thailand team was also thrilled to welcome Dr. Jill Tiefenthaler, Chief Executive Officer of the National Geographic Society, together with a delegation of Thailand-based National Geographic Explorers: Sirachai Arunrugstichai, Asst. Prof. Dr. Watcharapong Hongjamrassilp, Prof. Dr. Suchana Chavanich, and Dr. Nareerat Boonchai, to Maiton Island on 24 October 2026.

During the visit, the delegation had the opportunity to learn more about the project and visit the sea pen, where leopard sharks are cared for and prepared for their eventual release back into the wild, under the close supervision of the project's aquarist team. Sincere thanks to the Maiton Resort team and Mr. Surapong Banchongmanee, Senior Fisheries Technical Officer at the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), for their warm welcome and support in making this visit possible.



StAR Thailand team with Dr. Tiefenthaler from National Geographic Society and Mr. Surapong Banchongmanee from DMCR.

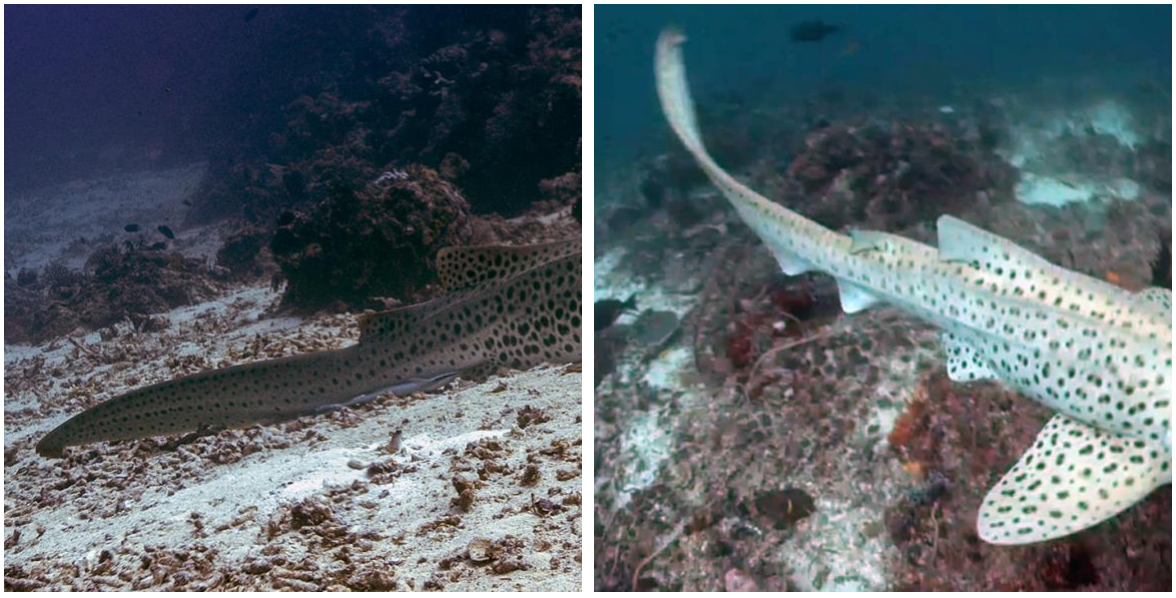
7 leopard shark sightings in Raja Ampat in the last 3 weeks!

As the Raja Ampat tourism high season returns, we've been DELIGHTED at the flood of citizen scientist sightings of leopard sharks rolling in! In a three week span from mid-October to first week of November, we have received 7 different sightings of leopard sharks in Raja - six from SE Misool (Magic Mountain, SW Batbitim, Tank Rock and Eagle's Nest) and one from Saundarek in Dampier Strait! Because of some shots being left-side and others right-side, I have only been able to confirm with certainty that there are at least 5 different sharks involved in these 7 sightings - but either way its fantastic news (particularly bearing in mind the extremely low number of sightings between 2001-2019 in Raja!).

Several of the resighted individuals appear to be in the 1.3.-1.5m size class, which would make them quite likely to be released StAR pups. At the present time, we are unable to confirm this with certainty (unfortunately, our leopard shark pups

are released before their adult spot pattern has fully developed, so its not possible to directly match release photos to resighting photos from even 3-6 months after release) - but our colleagues at Biopixel Oceans Foundation are currently working on an AI model that we hope will allow us to “connect the dots” between juvenile spot/stripe patterns and adult spot patterns. This would be a dramatic step forward in our ability to do long-term post-release monitoring of our pups; our current methodologies of using acoustic and satellite tagging are limited by the life of the battery of the tag - but if we could reliably match adult spot patterns from citizen scientist sightings with the photographs of our pups at release time, we could theoretically track these individuals over decades.

We’ll keep you updated on how this novel use of AI develops - but in the meantime, happy to report twice as many leopard shark sightings in Raja Ampat in 3 weeks as we had in nearly 20 years from 2001-2019! Big thanks to Carlo Calderaro at Misool Resort for directing many of these sightings our way.



Leopard shark sightings from SE Misool in Raja Ampat in late October.

ReShark/Thrive Conservation Raja Ampat Shark Conservation Education Catamaran nearing completion

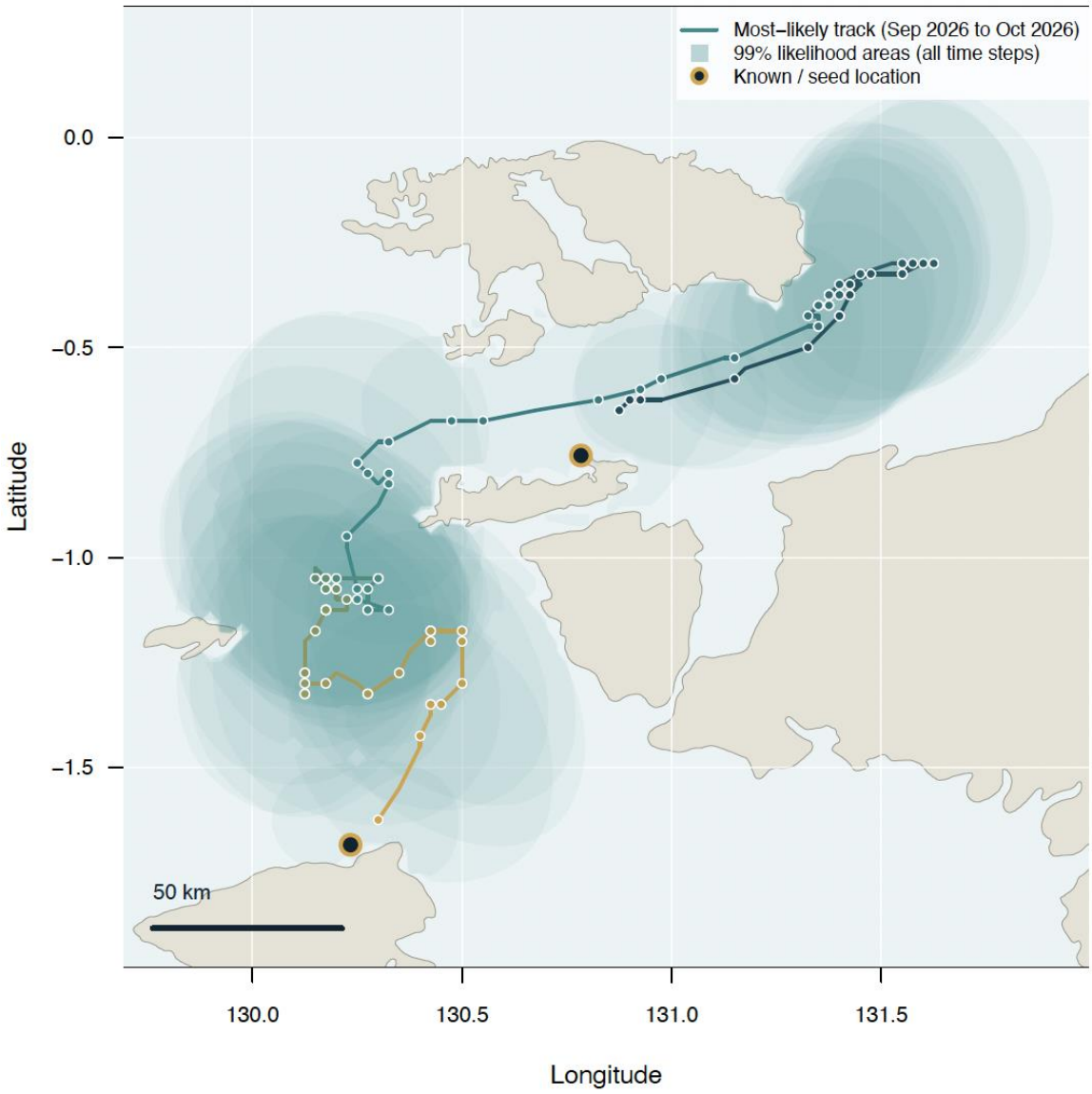
I’m pleased to report that our much anticipated Raja Ampat Shark Conservation Education catamaran is now nearing completion and will be launched within the next two months. While Max Ammer’s boat-building crew from PT Papua Catamaran has been putting the final touches on the 12m fiberglass catamaran (which will be predominantly powered by electric engines and a solar power system, but with diesel inboard backup engines), the Thrive Conservation team

has been refining the education curriculum and materials being used with the schools.

Just as importantly, Simone Tomazela from Sea Connection Art has generously donated her time and artistic skills to formulate the hull design with Nesha. She, together with a muralist from Bali, Yolanda, and a number of students from Child Aid Papua have been painting for the past two weeks. There are still a lot of finishing touches to be done in the next two months and we're keeping it under wraps for now but it's looking fantastic. We're very excited to have her on the water in Jan 2027, delivering an experiential shark conservation education curriculum for Raja Ampat students. For now, I'll simply thank the donors that have allowed us to build this ship and develop and launch the education program: Bertie Gregory and Act 4 Wildlife, the Alice C. Tyler Perpetual Trust, Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong, and Shannon Wong and the SEA Fund.

Three more microPAT satellite tag deployments completed in Raja Ampat

All three microPAT satellite tags deployed on released pups in early September in Raja Ampat have now popped off and transmitted their data. Bestie's tag popped off about 100km southwest of his release at Kri island, having recorded a maximum depth of 133m, while Elisa's tag came off about 30km south of Kri in northeastern Batana (not far from where Thomas' and Abam's tags popped earlier this year), with a max depth of 107m. The best data came from Alistair, as we were able to recover his tag and download the high resolution dataset (thanks to Edy Setyawan, Muhammad Izuan and Demas Fiay!); Alistair swam from northeastern Batanta (site of his release) to northeastern Misool, where he entered a shallow mangrove bay and popped his tag. He recorded a maximum depth of 129m, and covered nearly 439km in 32 days (see estimated track below). Our pups are definitely not couch potatoes!!



Most likely track for Alistair over 32 days beginning with release in northern Batanta and ending in a shallow mangrove bay in northern Misool. Figure courtesy of Dr. Hugo Lassauce.

Thrive Conservation's internship program for StAR trains its 57th intern!

Every 2-3 months, our nurseries in Raja Ampat receive 2-3 fresh-faced Indonesian interns - typically recent university graduates, though some have even come from local high schools in Raja Ampat. No matter where they are from, our shark nannies quickly begin their training and assign them important tasks that range from cleaning tanks, feeding pups (which includes fastidiously recording every morsel of food swallowed by a pup - which can be challenging when there are 25 pups in the sea pen!), photographing and measuring pups, and even helping with nursery tours for visiting schools or tourist groups.

It’s not an easy internship, but it's certainly never boring! Nesha’s team at Thrive Conservation select interns from a constant supply of applications, arrange transportation to the nurseries in Raja Ampat and ensure they are housed, fed and given stipends during their internship. This month, the 57th intern wrapped up their internship in Raja Ampat, with 8 more already scheduled to come for the next 6 months, a milestone we are very proud of! One of the recent interns gave this testimonial on the day they finished their internship: "I learned that every portion of food we prepared, every centimeter gained in our pup's growth, and every record collected contributes to a bigger purpose — helping the leopard sharks thrive again in their natural home.” We’re delighted to be building a bigger constituency for shark conservation in Indonesia!

Shark Ray 360 takes the stage at the AZA Annual Conference

Last month, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) held its annual conference in Portland, Oregon, where members of the Shark Ray 360 Steering Committee presented a panel to a curious and enthusiastic audience keen to learn more about the project. The session, entitled “*Global Collaboration to Advance the Care and Conservation of Bowmouth Guitarfish*” covered a range of topics, including Shark Ray 360’s structure and governance, the rapid development of husbandry resources for coalition members, genetic analysis and decision-making to support long-term population sustainability, and marketing, branding and communications strategies to engage a global audience.

The session also highlighted the growing international reach of the coalition, with a particular focus on the work being undertaken by Singapore Oceanarium in Southeast Asia. It was great to see Shark Ray 360's work being shared with the wider AZA community, as expanding *ex situ* management strategies and building a better understanding of bowmouth guitarfish care, breeding and rearing are all important pieces of the puzzle as we work towards eventual rewilding! The Steering Committee will continue to take advantage of every opportunity to grow the coalition and bring new partners into this important collaborative effort!





(L) Bowmouth guitarfish at Shedd Aquarium.
(R) Shark Ray 360 Steering Committee members at AZA annual conference 2026.

Keynote addresses on ReShark at WAZA and EUAC conferences; ReShark in National Geographic and BBC Blue Planet!

In the past few months I've been honored to present keynote addresses on ReShark's work at two prominent aquarium conferences in Europe: first "*Elasmobranch Rewilding: The Future is Now*" at the European Union of Aquarium Curators (EUAC) annual conference in September and most recently "*ReShark: Empowering Today's Zoos and Aquariums to be Stewards of Tomorrow's Sharks and Rays*" at the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) annual conference in Cologne in October.



Delivering my keynote at the recent WAZA annual conference in Cologne.

Both talks were seemingly well-received and led to a number of new contacts for ReShark in the aquarium world. ReShark has also received mention in the recent National Geographic “Our One Ocean” special November magazine edition in collaboration with Rolex (within the Raja Ampat story), and the StAR Project will be featured in the final episode of Blue Planet III entitled "Future Seas” - expected to be released later this month. Look for a special communication on that!

That’s all for this ReShark Ramblings - we’ll get one final edition out before the end of the year! Til then, be well!

Warm regards,

Mark Erdmann
Executive Director, ReShark



ReShark

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