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Subject: 🐡 Successful GASSE 2.0, sea pen and nursery UPGRADES & 44 pups in Raja Ampat nurseries!
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Greetings ReSharkers!

Happy New Year! After a month break, happy to bring you the next edition of ReShark Ramblings! Plenty to report at the start of 2026, including:

Successful Great Australian *Stegostoma* Semen Expedition (GASSE 2.0)!

In December, a team of scientists and veterinarians from University of Queensland, Ocean Park Hong Kong, Sea World Foundation (Gold Coast), Sea Life Sydney Aquarium, Irukandji Aquarium, ReShark, Thrive Conservation, Biopixel Oceans Foundation, and Griffith University successfully completed the second “Great Australian *Stegostoma* Semen Expedition” (GASSE) - collecting semen from 35 wild leopard shark males aggregated at North Stradbroke Island off Brisbane (and from an additional five males at Sea World Gold Coast, Irukandji and Sea Life Sydney Aquarium).

The semen from these 40 adult males was used to perform artificial insemination

The semen from these 40 adult males was used to perform artificial insemination (the other "AI") on 7 females at the aforementioned three aquariums in Australia unfortunately our plans to also attempt AI on female leopard sharks at Singapore Oceanarium were foiled by difficulties getting the permit to export the semen from Australia (though we hope to have this sorted for GASSE 3 in late 2026). The semen is also being analyzed by Siobhan Houlihan as part of her PhD work exploring aspect of the reproductive ecology of Indo-Pacific leopard sharks. The expedition ran extremely smoothly due to the organizational skills of Dr. Christine Dudgeon (thanks Chris!!) - we're all now eagerly awaiting the results of this round of AI to see if any of the females inseminated produce embryos fathered by these wild males - hoping for some insights on this over the coming 3 6 months. Thanks very much to the Djinda Foundation and Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative for sponsoring the expedition!



StAR Thailand sea pen under renovation; new pups expected early February

After their second successful release of pups in early December, the StAR Thailand team began renovations on the Maiton Island sea pen. These renovations are nearing completion, with the sea pen expected to be operational again by late January. Aquaria Phuket currently has four more pups ready to transfer to the StAR Thailand team; we expect those pups to be in the new sea pe

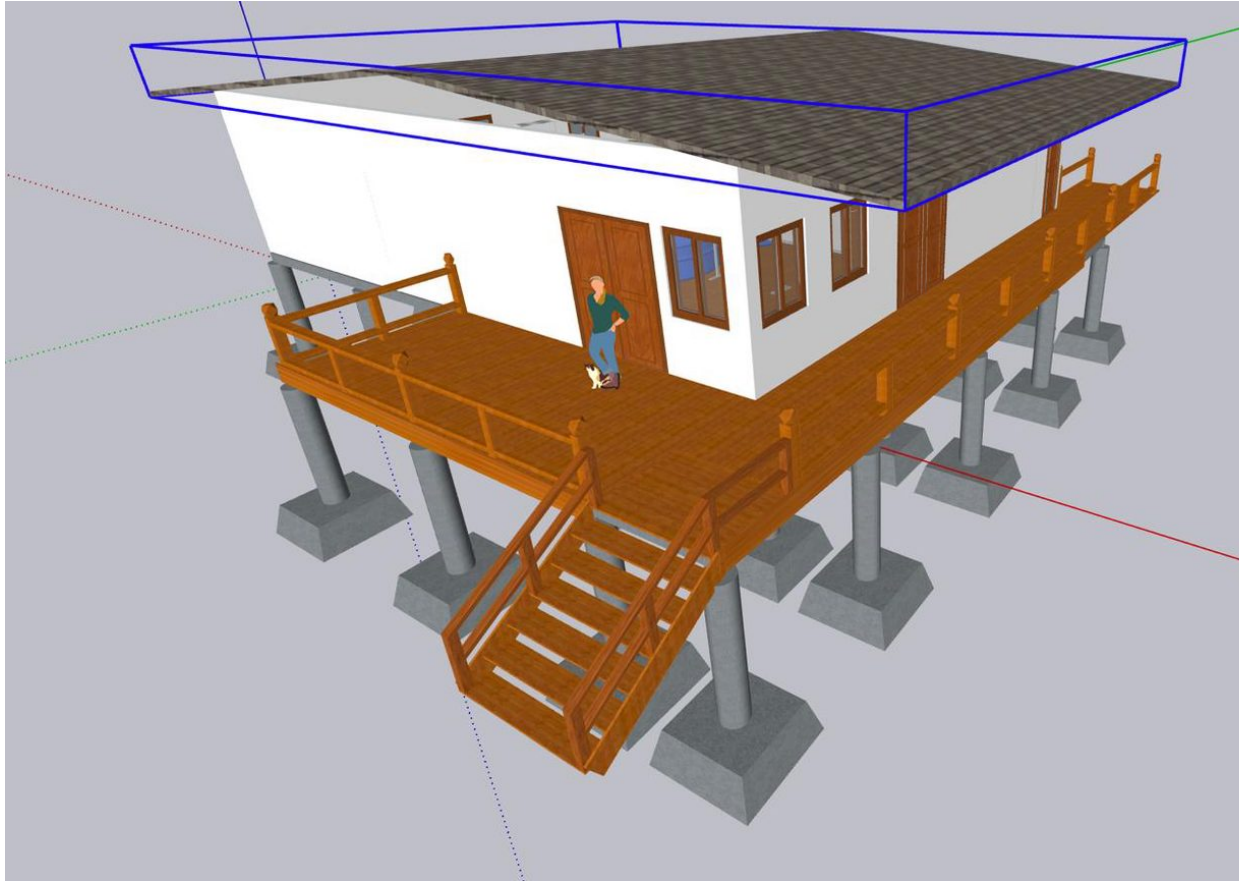
by early February. In the meantime, May and her team are busy planning out 2026 operations, including engagement with other Thai aquariums and discussing with government partners the potential to import eggs from international aquariums outside of Thailand.

New Kalig (Misool) nursery construction underway

While the Thai team completes their sea pen renovation, the Misool team has begun construction of a new nursery facility located next to the sea pen at Kalig Island (see aerial of location below, as well as schematic of new building). The new facility is similar to the RARCC Kri nursery, built over the water in the Kalig Lagoon and with nearly double the space of the previous Misool nursery on Batbitim island. The new nursery will be 100% solar powered, and should be completed in March.

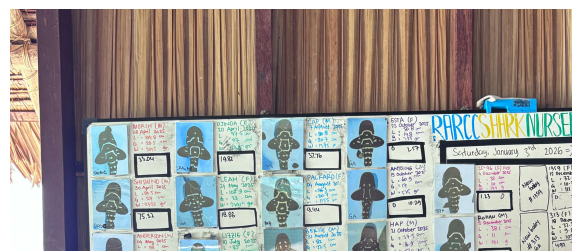
In the meantime, the Misool nursery is closed (the five pups currently in the sea pen will be released in the coming week) - which will give senior Misool aquarist Anissa the opportunity to go to the RARCC nursery and spend time with senior Kri aquarists Mardia and Aenun and see firsthand how that nursery is now operating smoothly as a leopard shark grow-out machine! The Kri nursery is also scheduled for a solar power upgrade over the coming months as well - we hope that by mid-year both of these nurseries will be fully powered by the sun! Huge thanks to the Rumah Foundation and MAC3 Impact Philanthropies for funding the Kalig nursery and the solar power upgrades.





Forty-five interns and aquarists trained in Raja Ampat

Forty-four pups sounds impressive, but this month the Raja Ampat nurseries hit a similarly impressive number - forty-five aquarists and interns have now been trained in the RARCC and Misool Foundation nurseries! A huge thanks to Thrive Conservation, RARCC and Misool Foundation for managing this fantastic internship program, which now welcomes 4-6 new interns every two months to the two nurseries. Within a week of training by our senior aquarists, the interns are able to materially contribute to nursery operations, and quickly learn to identify each pup by name so that they can accurately record daily food intake by each pup. The program is helping train a new generation of young Indonesian shark conservationists - one of the outstanding side benefits of the StAR project!





Excitement building for satellite tag releases...

In May 2025, we trialled microPAT satellite tags on three pups released from Misool in Raja Ampat (Patrick, Syafri, and Geo). Patrick's tag successfully transmitted some incredible data, showing he moved over 50km north of the release site in a short few weeks, and recorded his deepest dive to an incredible 166m depth! Syafri and Geo's tags popped off on schedule after 4 months, but appear to have been too heavily fouled to properly transmit data (though the releases proved these two sharks survived four months post release!). In late October, we deployed two more of these tags (on Hugo at Kri Island and Spotty Dotty at Misool) - and scheduled these tags to pop off next week when Nesha is again in Raja Ampat. We are eagerly awaiting data from the ARGOS satellite network telling us where these tags pop off - and hoping that Nesha and team will be able to recover the tags using a special piece of electronic equipment known as a goniometer. Stay tuned for more information!

Okay - that's it for this edition of ReShark Ramblings. Before I sign off, I also wanted to acknowledge that Seattle Aquarium's registrar, Amie Bialo, gave a presentation to the Zoological Registrar's Association in November 2025 about the paperwork involved in the international shipments of StAR eggs to Indonesia. Thanks Amie - this talk highlights the breadth of the StAR coalition and the MANY people working across the globe for the success of this program - thank you to each of you!

Til next time - be well!

Mark Erdmann
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