

From: Mark Erdmann | Executive Director – ReShark merdmann@rewild.org
Subject: 🐟 Kickstarting 2026 RELEASE season, recovering SATELLITE TAGS & Sharks International 2026!
Date: February 12, 2026 at 4:38 PM
To: merdmann@rewild.org



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Greetings ReSharkers!

Kia Ora from sunny Queenstown New Zealand! My sincere apologies for the hiatus in the ReShark Ramblings - its been an incredibly busy start to 2026! As such, I have a lot to report! Without further ado:

11 more pups released in Raja Ampat!

January was a BUSY time for StAR Indonesia Project Manager Nesha Ichida and the teams at both Misool Foundation and RARCC nurseries in Raja Ampat, with ReShark Council member Dr. Lisa Hoopes of Georgia Aquarium also joining in and getting to release her namesake pup, Hoopes!

In total, eleven more *Stegostoma* pups were released in six different release events at the Misool and Kri Nurseries, bringing our total number released in Raja Ampat to 62 pups to date. The events ranged from formal releases conducted with the Governor and Vice Governor of South West Papua to releases with 70 students from 4 schools and releases with the guests of Misool Resort and Panua

students from 4 schools and releases with the guests of Misool Resort and Papua Diving. The following pups were released: Hoopes & Munro (from Georgia Aquarium), Nausrau, Caitlin & Christopher (Sea Life Sydney Aquarium), Thomas (from Cairns Marine), and Ali, Anderson, Morin, Edloma & Herby (Sea World Gold Coast). Importantly, seven of these pups (Hoopes, Munro, Christopher, Nausrau, Thomas, Edloma, and Anderson) received some expensive bling for their release party - microPAT satellite tags to help us see exactly where these pups go over the first 2 months of their lives as wild pups! We'll keep you updated on what we hear back from these tags when they are scheduled to pop off in March and April.



Spotty Dotty's MicroPAT satellite tag recovered 160km from her release site!

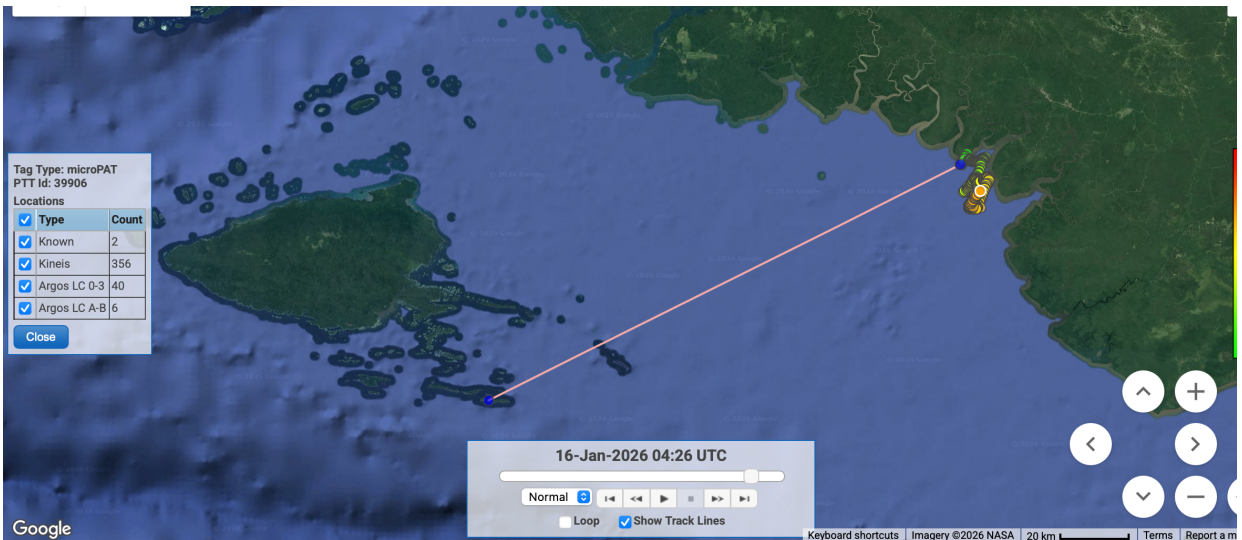
Speaking of microPATs, I'm absolutely thrilled to report that Nesha and the Misool nursery team, working with Konservasi Indonesia staff, managed to recover Spotty Dotty's microPAT tag, which popped off after 72 days of deployment. Using a specialized goniometer instrument to search for the tiny tag floating in the middle of the ocean, the team spent 12 hours and ventured into the

floating in the middle of the ocean, the team spent 15 hours and ventured into the vast mangrove swamps of South Sorong to recover the tag.

Unbelievably, Spotty Dotty moved over 160 km from her release site at Misool Resort in just 72 days to eventually pop her tag off in the mangrove ecosystems of South Sorong! This is of course of extreme interest to our post-release monitoring program; until now we've been largely relying upon acoustic tagging of all released pups to provide us some insights into their movements after release. However, our acoustic receiver arrays (to pick up the pings from the tagged sharks) are generally concentrated in about a 15-20km radius from the release sites in Misool and Kri.

Spotty Dotty proves that at least some of our pups have “itchy fins” and need to travel - FAR outside of our acoustic receiver array. Based on this finding, while we are going to continue to acoustic tag our pups (as these tags have a battery life of about 5 years), we are going to focus for the next 6 months on satellite tagging as many individuals as we can to better understand how many of them undertake long-distance journeys, versus those that are happy to remain close to their release site. I'll certainly be providing plenty more updates on this over the coming months!





Juvenile leopard sharks photographed near Dampier Strait and Misool

We're delighted to note that in the past month and a half, visitors to Raja Ampat have photographed two juvenile leopard shark pups on reefs less than 10km from our release sites at Misool and Kri nurseries. In late December, Reto and Angela Koenig from Switzerland photographed a beautiful leopard shark juvenile at Pulau Dua near Batanta in the Dampier Strait, while just last week Henley Spires on the Mantra Liveaboard took some beautiful ID shots of a juvenile Steg in shallow water off Wara Beach, just east of Misool Resort.

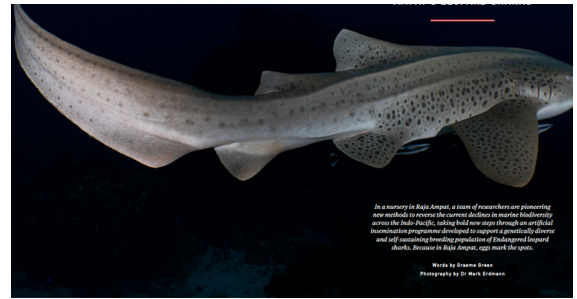
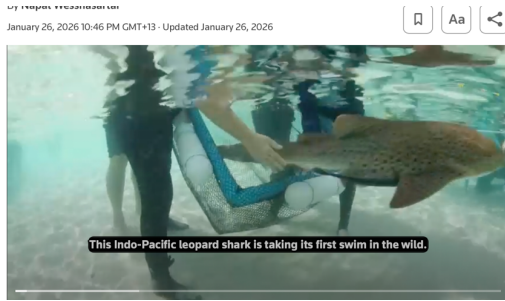
Henley reports that while the shark was originally shy and swam away, when he found it again it was busy snuffling around in the sand and rubble looking for food and was not at all bothered by him. Sounds like our pups! Unfortunately I have not yet had the time with Nesha to attempt to compare these juvenile photo to our released shark pup photo IDs to try to figure out if we can identify which sharks these are. I feel 90% confident they are StAR juveniles, but we'll spend some time comparing ID photos and let you know our conclusions soon!



StAR Thailand and StAR Indonesia highlighted in the media

The StAR Thailand and StAR Indonesia projects were recently highlighted in feature articles by [Reuters](#) and [Oceanographic Magazine](#), respectively. I could summarize, but I reckon both are great articles and worth a read - so here are the links instead:





Ramping up to Sharks International 2026 conference in Sri Lanka

As mentioned previously, ReShark will be hosting two events at the upcoming Sharks International Conference in Sri Lanka in May. Firstly, we'll co-host an all day pre-conference workshop with Dr. Charlotte Hopkins of University of Hull (Scotland) on 3 May entitled [Shark Rewilding: Reviving threatened elasmobranchs and the ReShark Initiative](#). Anyone coming to the Sharks International Conference is strongly encouraged to come to the pre-conference workshop, which we are anticipating will be a lively discussion of elasmobranch rewilding and its role in shark conservation efforts.

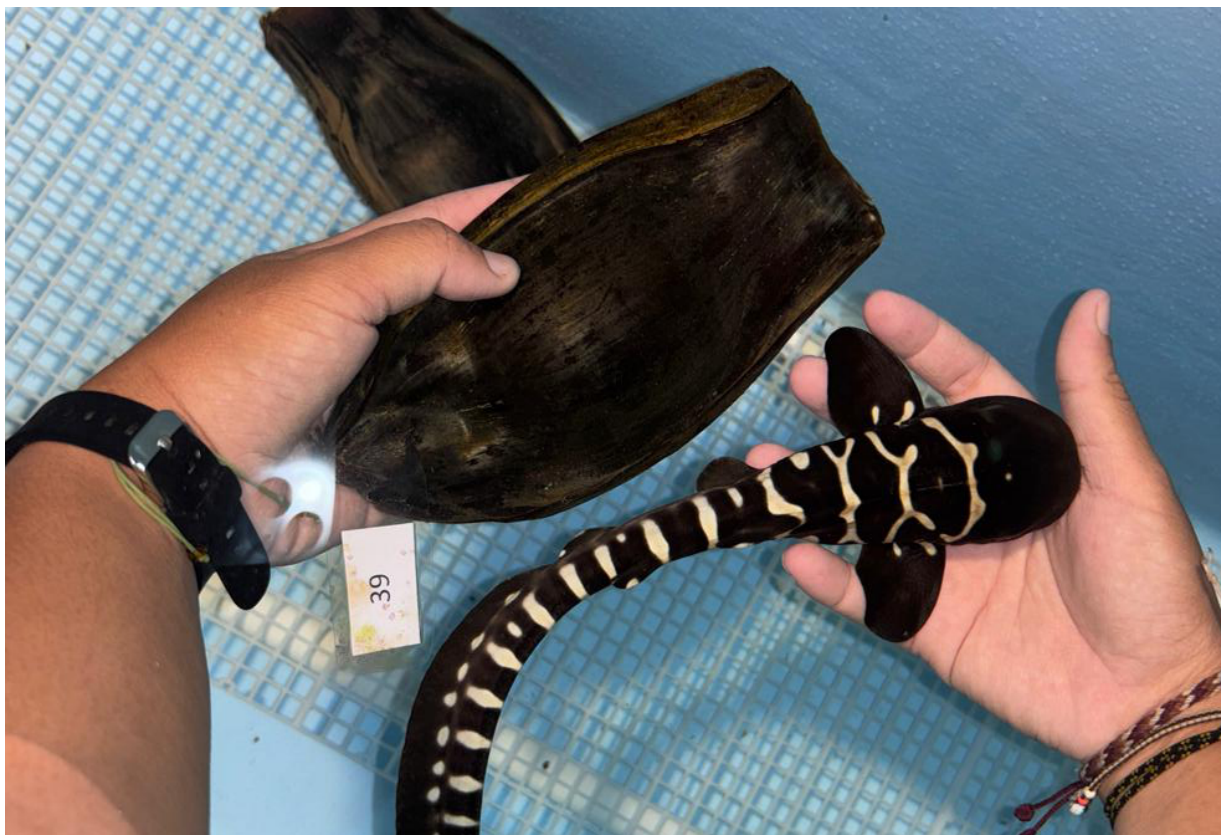
We're also hosting a regular presentation session entitled [Elasmobranch Reintroductions: the Future is Now](#) - at which we'll be hearing from not only the StAR Project (Indonesia and Thailand), but also the Shark Ray 360 Program and the Maugean Skate Conservation Action Plan, amongst others. We're proud to note that we have a strong contingent of shark nannies and local leaders from both the StAR Thailand and StAR Indonesia programs attending and presenting, many for their first time at an international scientific conference!



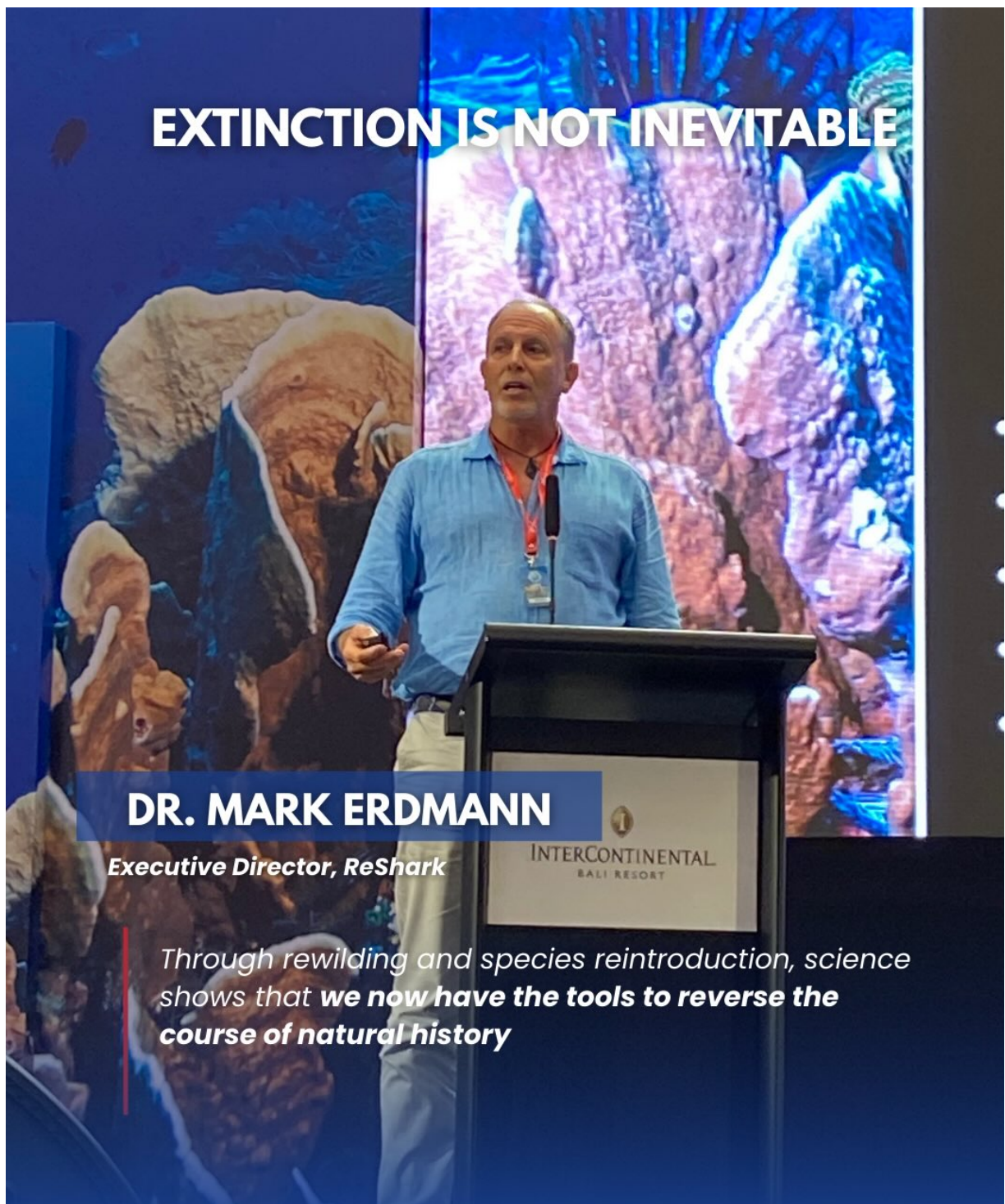
All eggs now hatched in Raja Ampat; 36 pups in tanks and sea pens at RARCC Nursery

And finally, a quick update that now that all breeders have taken a hiatus in egg production to accommodate our annual egg import permit renewal process at the beginning of this year, we've managed to hatch all the remaining eggs in the RARCC Nursery at Kri Island (note the Misool Nursery is currently shut while the new nursery building is under construction).

The RARCC nursery is now bustling with 36 pups ranging in size from a 29cm newborn on up to 1.13m long Leah (named after Husbandry Working Group Chair Leah Neal), and including pups hatched from the first eggs from new breeders Irukandji Shark and Ray Encounters (with pups Orion and Barney) and Aquarium of the Pacific (with pup Angel). Six more pups are scheduled for release in early March (Leah, Shishino, Brunswick, Abam, Rima and Lizzie), with additional batches to be released in late April and again in mid-June. We'll keep you updated on all the pup happenings!



Okay, that's a wrap. With a quick note that in late January I was pleased to present a sneak preview of what's to come in Sri Lanka in May with a talk entitled "Elasmobranch Rewilding: The Future is Now" at the [Bali Ocean Days](#) conference in Indonesia.



Finally, our dearest friends at Re:wild have shortlisted some incredible wild species, and one fan favorite will receive USD \$10,000 to support real conservation impact, ahead of Valentine's Day. Of course we're biased - support us and our work through the StAR Project by [casting your vote \(as many times as you can\)](#) for "leopard shark"!

I'll do my best to get back on the two-weekly schedule of ReShark Ramblings at the end of the month! Til next time....

Mark Erdmann
Executive Director, ReShark



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