

Biodiversity Record: Two sightings of blacktip reef shark in the Singapore Strait

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Subjects: Blacktip reef shark, *Carcharhinus melanopterus* (Chondrichthyes: Carcharhiniformes: Carcharhinidae).

Subjects identified by: Debby Ng and Pavarne Shantti (at Saint John's Island), and Damien S. C. Ho (at Pulau Subar Laut).

Location, date and time: Singapore Strait at two localities —

1) Saint John's Island at Bendera Bay; 27 June 2021; 0630 hrs.

2) Sisters' Islands Marine Park, Pulau Subar Laut; 27 June 2021; 0815 hrs.

Habitat: Marine. Shallow coastal sea in the intertidal zones. There are seagrass meadows in Bendera Bay, and coral reef and rocky shore at Pulau Subar Laut.

Observers: Debby Ng, Lynn Wong and Pavarne Shantti (at Saint John's Island), and Damien S. C. Ho (at Pulau Subar Laut).

Observations: Two separate observations were recorded on the same day —

1) At Saint John's Island, two blacktip reef sharks, each approximately 0.45 m in total length, were sighted in Bendera Bay during spring low tide of -0.1 m (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. A blacktip reef shark (circled) in Bendera Bay at Saint John's Island. (Screen grab from video by: Debby Ng).

2) At Pulau Subar Laut, a shiver of 10 individuals was sighted just outside the island's lagoon during spring low tide of 0 m. Most were smaller than 1 m in total length, but a few were approximately 1.5 m (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Exposed fins of 10 blacktip reef sharks at Pulau Subar Laut. (Screen grab from video by: Damien S. C. Ho).

Remarks: The high number of blacktip reef sharks observed on the same day in this record highlights the times at which they may be active within lagoons. In addition to the two featured observations, a news article published on the same day as these sightings reported 12 dead individuals trapped in a gill net on the intertidal flats at Pulau Semakau (Tan, 2021). All three occurrences were observed during the ebb tide, seaward but near to the waterline.

Blacktip reef sharks are one of the most commonly observed sharks in Singapore (Wang & Lim, 2011), but most reports feature trapped individuals (see Yeo, 2014; Chim et al., 2015; Ong, 2020). Our observations during the ebb tide corroborate information from published studies—that the movement of this species is tidally mediated (Papastamatiou et al., 2009). Its occurrence within the intertidal zone also underpins the importance of shallow coastal habitats, such as seagrass meadows, rocky shore and coral reefs, for this species.

Note: The authors are grateful for permission (Permit No. NP/RP21-051) granted by National Parks Board Singapore and the Friends of Marine Park for access to Bendera Bay at Saint John's Island.

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