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Spot the Leopard Shark: Thailand (STLST) is a community-based project that monitors populations of threatened leopard sharks *Stegostoma fasciatum* in Thai waters through the public contribution of photographs, to inform science and promote conservation.

Photo credit: Wiwat Ueapadaporn

Objectives

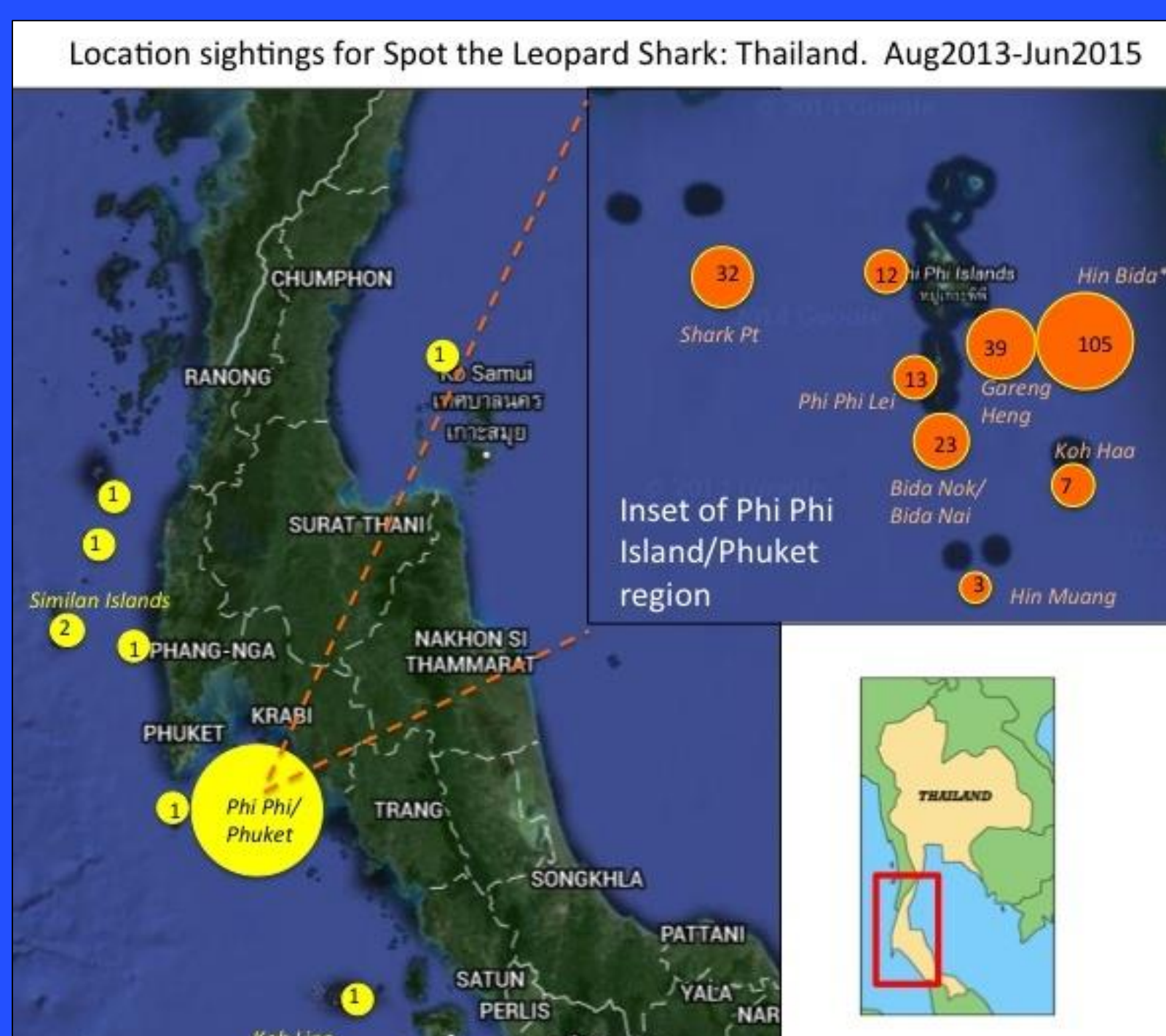
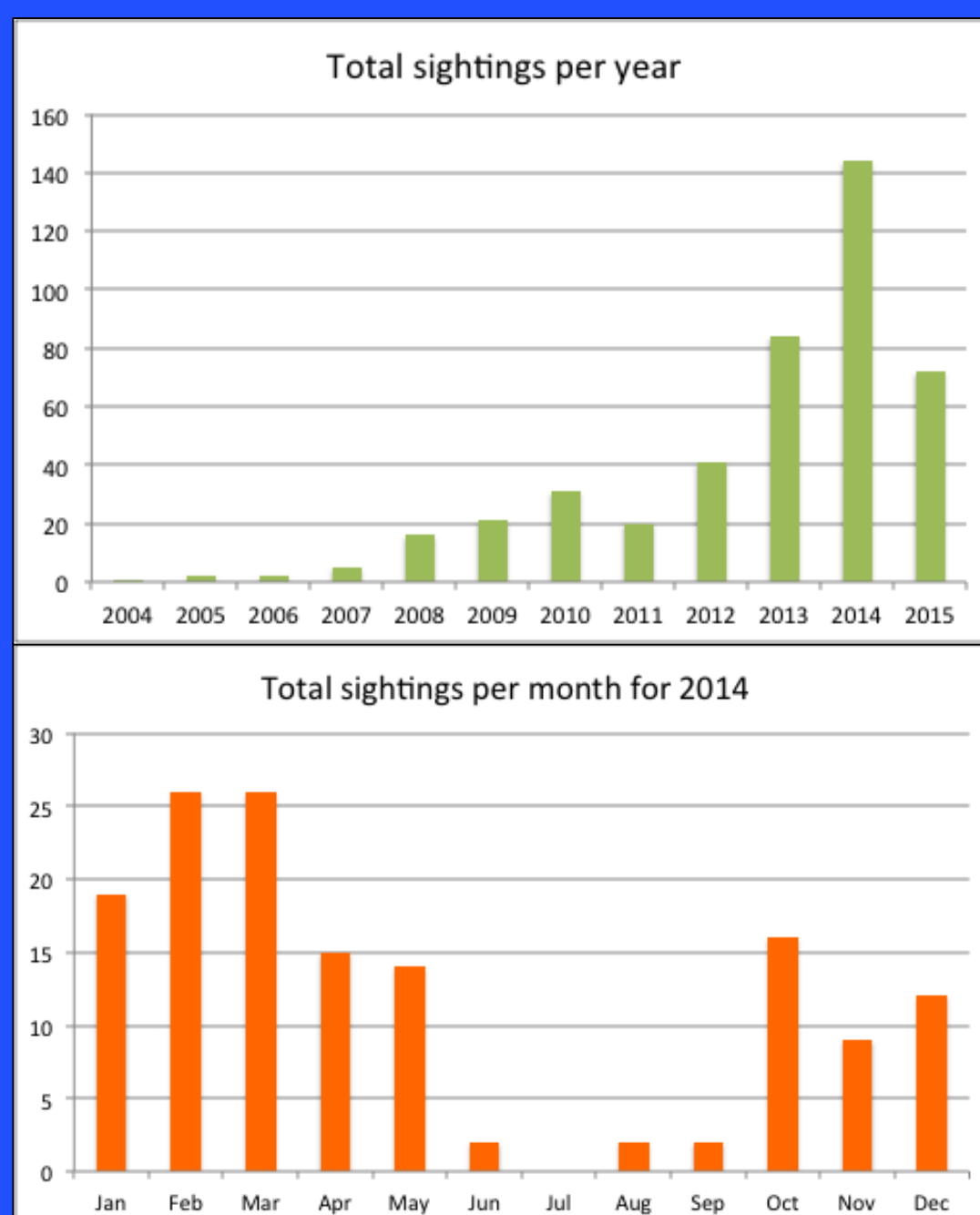
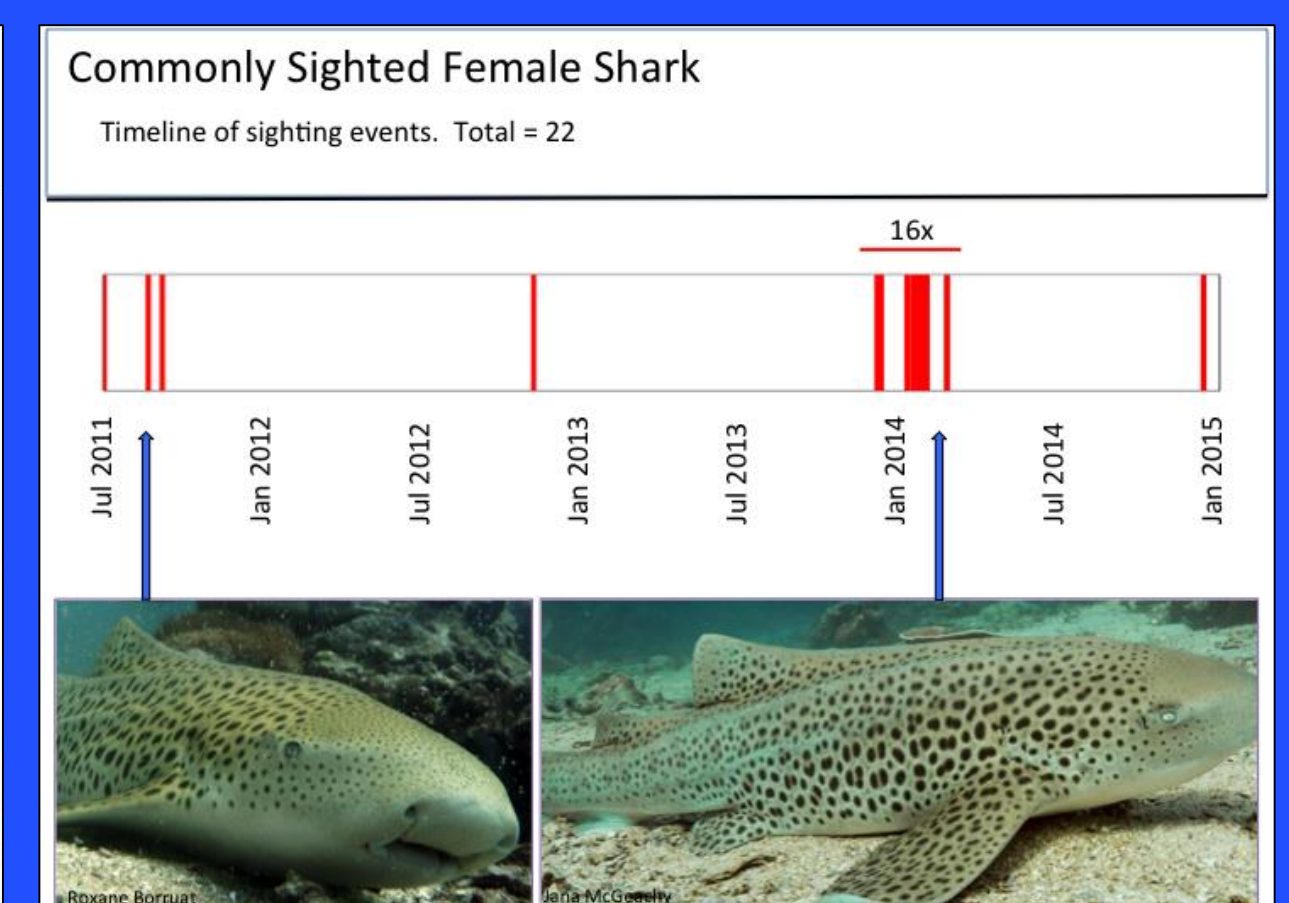
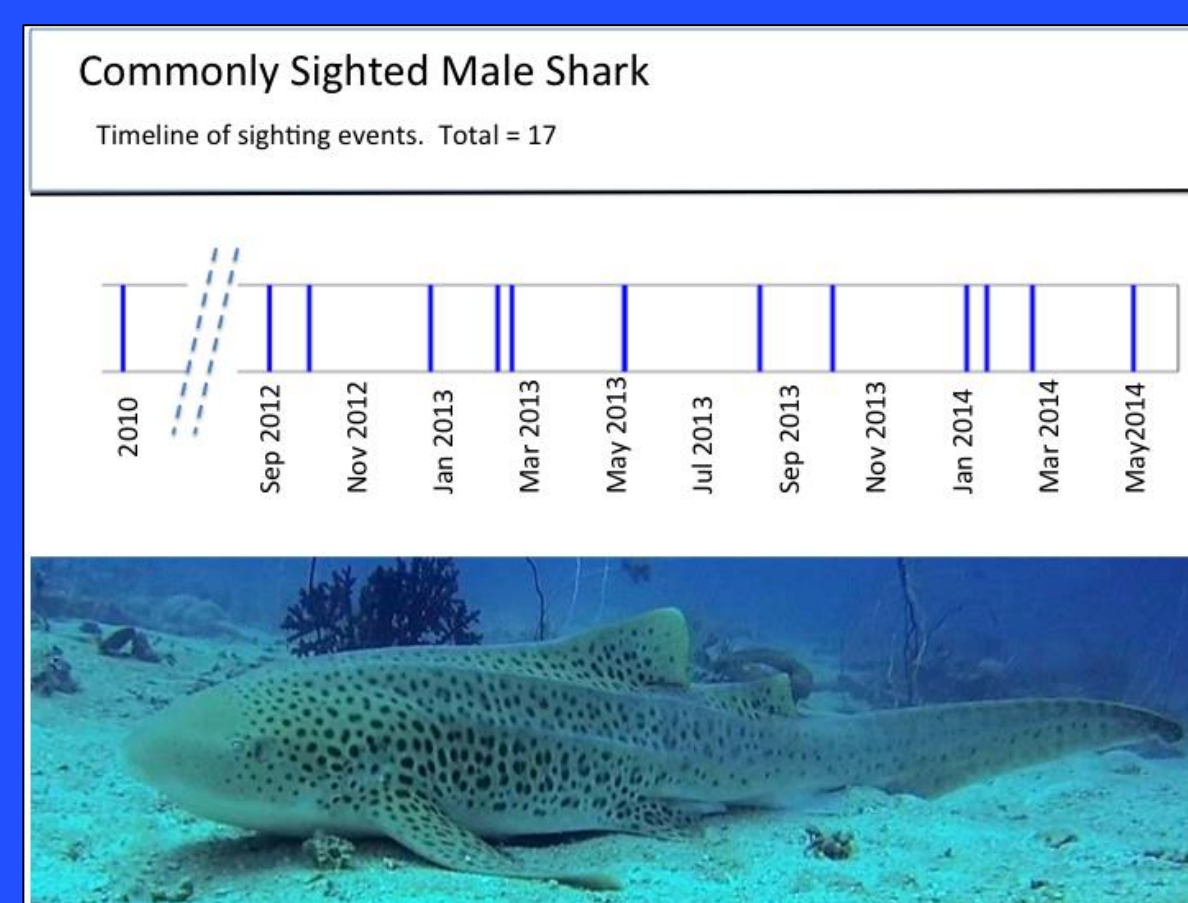
- Obtain baseline population estimates for leopard sharks in Thai waters
- Identify important habitats
- Increase public awareness of biology and conservation of leopard sharks.
- Compare patterns of site-fidelity and seasonality among populations

Methods

- Individual sharks are identified by their unique body patterns.
- Photographs of sharks are sourced from the public.
- Photos with data on location and date are submitted to the project through a dedicated Facebook page.
- Photos are matched and new sharks identified.
- Results and updates are posted on Facebook.

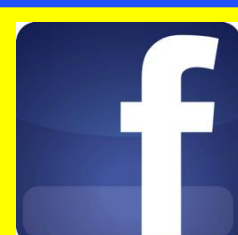
Results

- Over 700 photos submitted between August 2013 and Jun 2015.
- 231 individual sharks identified; 104 sharks identified since Aug 2013.
- Most frequent sightings from Phi Phi Islands/Phuket region including *Hin Bida* which currently has no marine park protection.
- Individual sharks show site preferences



Conclusions

- Citizen science is an effective tool for monitoring rare leopard sharks.
- Facebook enables the simultaneous exchange of data with the sharing of outcomes and public education.
- Lack of recent sightings from NW Andaman sea and Gulf of Thailand suggest large population declines.
- Leopard sharks are vulnerable at unprotected sites and are likely to need protected species status in Thailand.



SPOT THE LEOPARD SHARK - THAILAND



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