

ANGER AT MAN RIDING ON WHALE SHARK

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People should not approach or touch it, say divers

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THE rare sighting of whale sharks should not be a reason for people to approach or touch the largest known extant fish species.

Divers said this in response to a video of a snorkeller riding on a whale shark off Pulau Sibuan here on Friday.

The person who captured the 11-second video was heard saying that riding the whale

shark was a "jackpot".

Another snorkeller was also approaching the non-mammalian vertebrate.

It is learnt that such interactions happen only about five times in a year.

Semporna Professional Divers Association chairman Suzimin Edris said this should not have happened if the tour guide had known how to respect wildlife and regulations under Sabah Parks.

He added that Sibuan was an island under a gazetted protected area known as Tun Sakaran Marine Park.

"The association has informed every dive centre to recruit qualified guides or encourage operators to train their staff to respect wildlife and nature."

Meanwhile, Reef Check Malaysia programme manager

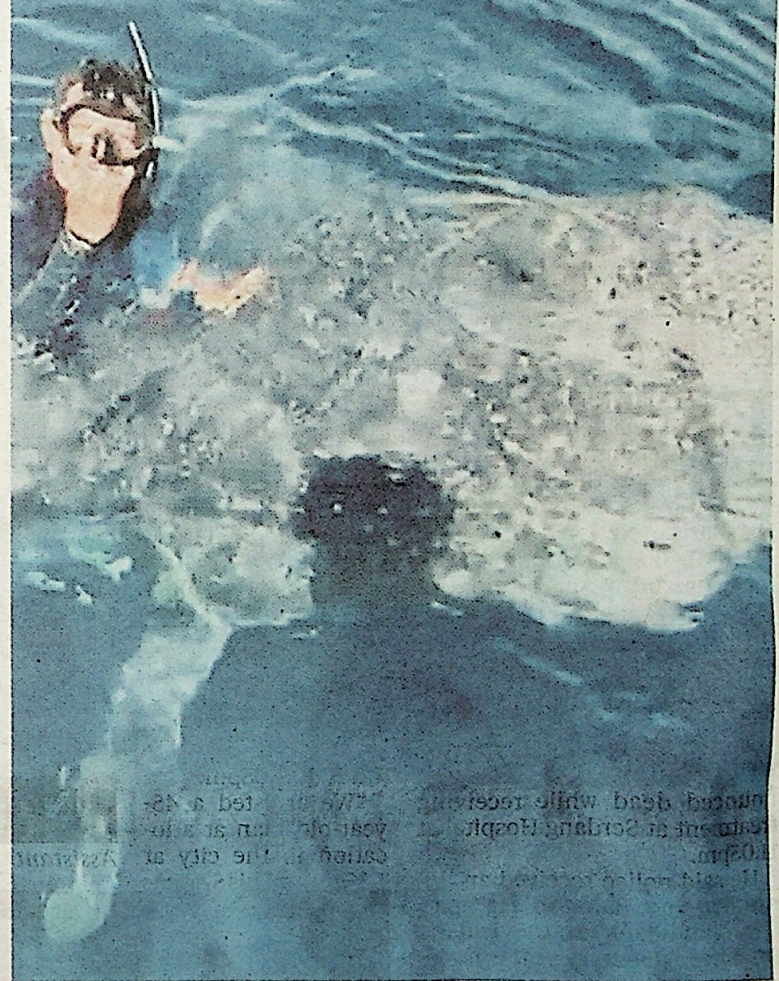
Adzmin Fatta said that there would be an eco-friendly snorkelling guide training in Semporna from Dec 7 and 10.

He added that the programme was a collaboration between Reef Check, Sabah Tourism, Culture and Environment Ministry and Sabah Parks.

"It is part of the sustainable tourism project by the ministry, which provides funds for Reef Check to conduct it as we realise this issue will continue to happen and might jeopardise tourism.

"The ministry is also committed to expanding the eco-friendly snorkelling guide training and green fins programme in Sabah next year.

Adzmin said: "Hopefully, it will attract more guides to undergo training."



A screengrab showing a snorkeller riding on a whale shark off Pulau Sibuan in Semporna on Friday.