



# POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FISH OF THE CNMI



# Fish That May Bite

Triggerfish, **Pulonon** or **Såsåddok**, **Buub** or **Pugusus**



## Basic Information:

Triggerfish are a common diamond shaped fish. They can be aggressive and territorial. They are found in shallow and deep areas in lagoon and reef habitats. They will protect their home area which may include a nest. Nesting fish are more aggressive than normal.

## What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe triggerfish from a distance and not approach them. If a triggerfish approaches, swim away horizontally. The triggerfish has a cone shaped territory so a person swimming away vertically may remain with the fish's territory. They will readily come to food. Feeding them encourages their aggressiveness and makes human bites more likely.

## DO NOT FEED FISH!

## Danger level: Low to Medium.

Triggerfish are one of the most likely fish to bite a human, but their bites are not severe. Larger triggerfish have more severe bites.

**First Aid:** Treat like any cut or scrape. Prevent infection with a topical antibiotic and a bandage. Medical attention may be needed for large bites.



# Fish That May Bite

Barracuda, **Ālu**, **Serau** or **Abai**



## Basic Information:

Barracuda are long cylindrical fish. They are very curious fish. They can be found in shallow and deep areas, normally near the surface. They are attracted to shiny things like jewelry, which may look like a struggling fish.

## What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe barracuda from a distance and not approach them. If a barracuda approaches, remain calm and cover shiny objects like jewelry. It is best not to swim where people are actively fishing especially with live bait. Barracuda may be attracted to fish feeding, dead fish, struggling fish or bait. Feeding them and other fish encourages their aggressiveness and makes human bites more likely.

**DO NOT FEED FISH!**

## Danger level: Low.

Barracuda are not likely to bite a human. Bites only occur when barracuda mistake shiny objects on or near humans for fish.

**First Aid:** Treat like any cut or scrape. Prevent infection with a topical antibiotic and a bandage.



# Fish That May Bite

Reef Sharks, **Halu'on Unai**, **Peu**

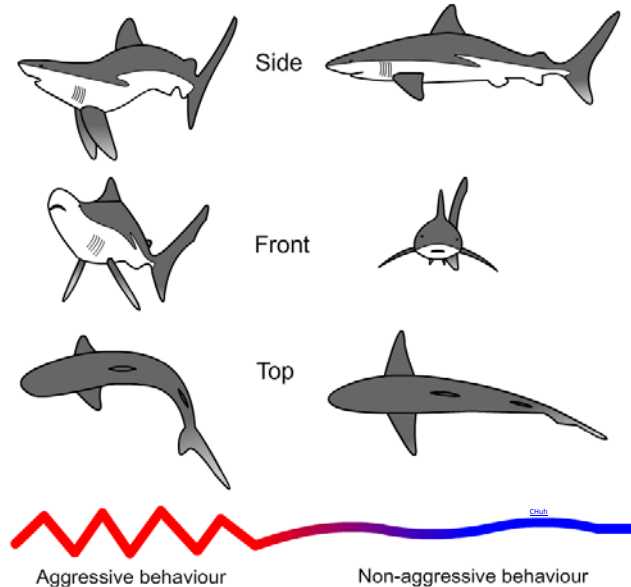


## Basic Information:

Reef sharks are a carnivorous fish that can be found in shallow and deep areas. There are other types of sharks that live in the CNMI but reef sharks are the most likely to be encountered by humans. They are unlikely to bother humans. The most common types are the grey, black tipped, and white tipped reef sharks. Nurse sharks may also be seen within the CNMI.

## What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe reef sharks from a distance and not approach them. Some sharks will display a certain posture if they feel threatened (see diagram). If a shark appears to display these postures or aggressive behavior, remain calm, and slowly leave the area while still facing the shark. It is best not to swim where people are actively fishing especially with live bait. Sharks may be attracted to fish feeding, dead fish, struggling fish or bait. Feeding them and other fish encourages their aggressiveness and makes human bites more likely.



**DO NOT FEED FISH!**



**Danger level:** Low.

Sharks are not likely to bite humans. Bites only occur when sharks are harassed or dead or dying fish are present. Your chances of being attacked by a shark are 1 in 11.5 million, which is much lower than your chances (1 in 2 million) of being involved in another beach related fatality like drowning (International Shark Attack File, <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/sharks/statistics/beachattacks.htm>)

**First Aid:** Stop bleeding by applying pressure with a clean cloth. Seek immediate medical attention.



# Fish That May Bite

Eels, Håkmang, Soufeng



## Basic Information:

Eels are a carnivorous fish that can be found in shallow and deep areas. They hide in holes in the reef. They have sharp teeth and may bite if provoked.

## What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe eels from a distance and not approach them. Do not reach into holes as they may contain an eel. If an eel approaches, remain calm and slowly move away from the area. Eels may be attracted to fish feeding, dead fish, struggling fish or bait. Feeding them and other fish encourages their aggressiveness and makes human bites more likely.

**DO NOT FEED FISH!**

**Danger level:** Low to Medium.

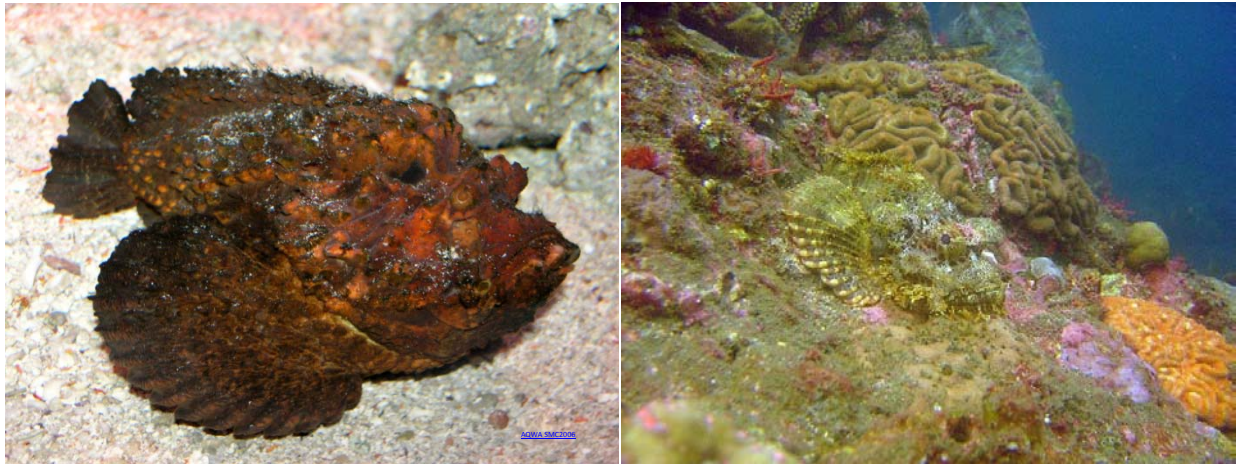
Eels are not likely to bite humans. Bites only occur when eels are harassed or dead or dying fish are present.

**First Aid:** Treat like any cut or scrape. Prevent infection with a topical antibiotic and a bandage. Medical attention may be needed for large bites



# Fish That May Sting or Poke

Stonefish and Scorpionfish, **Ñufo'**, **Lou** or **Nowuwo'**



## Basic Information:

Stonefish are a carnivorous fish that can be found in shallow areas. They are extremely well camouflaged and often do not move when approached. They have spines that are venomous.

## What to do if you see one:

Stonefish are difficult to see because of their excellent camouflage. If seen, it is best to observe stonefish from a distance and not approach them. When swimming be careful where you put your feet and hands. **DO NOT STAND ON OR TOUCH THE REEF.** Not only is it bad for the reef, but you could unknowingly step on a stonefish.

## Danger level: Low to High.

Stonefish are not aggressive, but may be stepped on or touched accidentally which could lead to envenomation by the spines. Stonefish are the most venomous fish in the world. Envenomation can cause severe pain, shock, paralysis, or even death. Incidents are much more likely if fish are harassed.



## First Aid:

Stings should be immersed in hot water, and the victim should receive immediate medical attention.



# Fish That May Sting or Poke

Lionfish, **Guihan Pābu** or **Nufo' Pābu**, **Lakule**



## Basic Information:

Lionfish are a carnivorous fish that can be found in shallow areas. They are often seen upside-down in holes in the reef. They have spines that are venomous.

## What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe lionfish from a distance and not approach them. If a lionfish approaches, remain calm and slowly move away from the area. Do not reach into holes as they may contain a lionfish. When swimming be careful where you put your feet and hands. **DO NOT STAND ON OR TOUCH THE REEF.** Not only is it bad for the reef, but you could unknowingly step on or touch a lionfish. They may be attracted to fish feeding, dead fish, struggling fish or bait. Feeding lionfish and other fish encourages their aggressiveness and makes stings more likely. **DO NOT FEED FISH!**

## Danger level: Low to High.

Lionfish are not aggressive but may be stepped on or touched accidentally which could lead to envenomation by the spines. Envenomation can cause severe pain, shock, paralysis, or in rare occasions even death. Incidents are much more likely if fish are harassed.

## First Aid:

Stings should be immersed in hot water, and the victim should receive immediate medical attention.





# Fish That May Sting or Poke

## Striped Eel Catfish, *Nayúy Sówugang*



### Basic Information:

Striped Eel Catfish are carnivorous fish that can be found in shallow areas. They are often seen in large schools. They feed over sand looking for small invertebrates and fish. They are the only species of catfish that are found on coral reefs. They are often seen under coral heads or in holes in the reef. They have spines that are venomous.

### What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe catfish from a distance and not approach them. If a catfish approaches, remain calm and slowly move away from the area. Do not reach into holes as they may contain catfish. When swimming be careful where you put your feet and hands. **DO NOT STAND ON OR TOUCH THE REEF.** Not only is it bad for the reef, but you could unknowingly step on or touch a catfish. They may be attracted to fish feeding or stirring up of the sand. Feeding them and other fish encourages their aggressiveness and makes stings more likely.

### DO NOT FEED FISH!

### Danger level: Low to High.

Catfish are not very common in the CNMI. Catfish are not aggressive but may be stepped on or touched accidentally which could lead to envenomation by the spines. Envenomation can cause severe pain, shock, paralysis, or in rare occasions even death. Incidents are much more likely if fish are harassed.

### First Aid:

Stings should be immersed in hot water and the victim should receive immediate medical attention.



# Fish That May Sting or Poke

Rabbitfish, **Sesyon** or **Hiteng**, **Llegh** or **Palawa**



## Basic Information:

Rabbitfish are herbivorous fish that can be found in shallow and deep areas. There are several species of rabbitfish in the CNMI. They are often seen in large schools. They have spines that are venomous.

## What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe rabbitfish from a distance and not approach them. Do not reach into holes as they may contain rabbitfish. When swimming be careful where you put your feet and hands.

**DO NOT STAND ON OR TOUCH THE REEF.** Not only is it bad for the reef, but you could unknowingly step on or touch a rabbitfish. They may be attracted to fish feeding. Feeding them and other fish encourages their boldness and makes stings more likely.

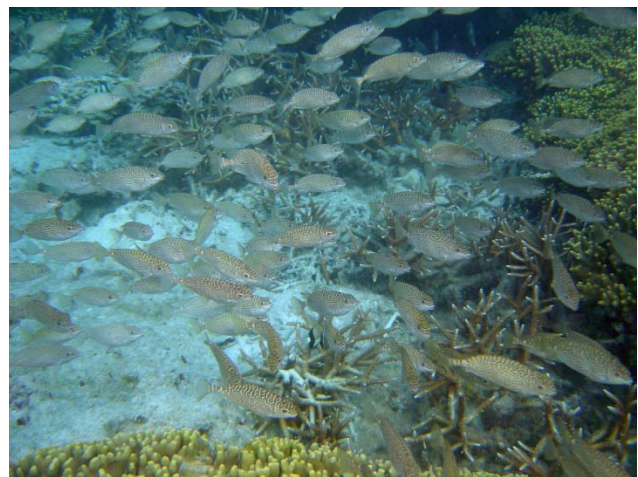
**DO NOT FEED FISH!**

## Danger level: Low.

Rabbitfish are not aggressive, but may be stepped on or touched accidentally which could lead to envenomation by the spines. Envenomation can cause pain, shock, or possibly paralysis. Incidents are much more likely if fish are harassed.

## First Aid:

Stings should be immersed in hot water and the victim may want to seek medical attention.



# Fish That May Sting or Poke

## Stingray, *Afula*, *Fáyi*



### Basic Information:

Stingrays are fish that can be found in sandy or flat shallow and deep areas. There are several species of stingrays in the CNMI. They are often seen lying on the bottom. They have spines at the base of their tails that are venomous.

### What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe stingrays from a distance and not approach them. When swimming be careful where you put your feet and hands. **DO NOT STAND ON OR TOUCH THE REEF.** Not only is it bad for the reef, but you could unknowingly step on or touch a stingray. They may be attracted to fish feeding. Feeding them and other fish encourages their boldness and makes stings more likely.

**DO NOT FEED FISH!**

### Danger level: Low to Medium.

Stingrays are not aggressive, but may be stepped on or touched accidentally which could lead to envenomation by the spines. Envenomation can cause severe, pain, shock, paralysis, or in rare cases death. Incidents are much more likely if fish are harassed or fed.



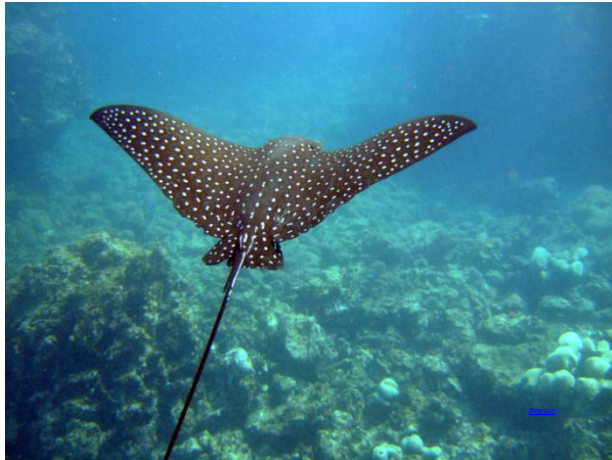
### First Aid:

Stings should be immersed in hot water and the victim may want to seek medical attention.



# Fish That May Sting or Poke

Eagle ray, **Fanihen Tasi**, **Fáyi**



## Basic Information:

Eagle rays are related to stingrays. They can be found in shallow and deep areas. They swim in the water column but feed on invertebrates in the sand. They are often seen “flying” through the water but have been known to jump out of the water. They have spines at the base of their tails that are venomous.

## What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe eagle rays from a distance and not approach them. When swimming, be aware of your surroundings. Eagle rays may be startled by the presence of swimmers. They may be attracted to fish feeding. Feeding them and other fish encourages their boldness and makes stings more likely.

## DO NOT FEED FISH!

## Danger level: Low.

Eagle rays are not aggressive and generally shy away from humans. Incidents are only likely if fish are harassed or fed.

Envenomation can cause severe, pain, shock, paralysis, or in rare cases death.

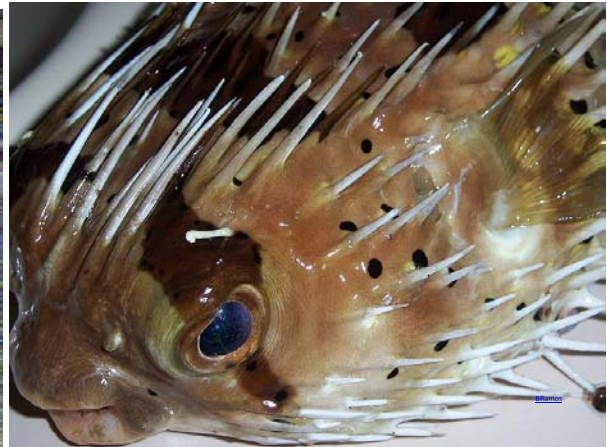
## First Aid:

Stings should be immersed in hot water and the victim should seek medical attention.



# Fish That May Sting or Poke

Porcupine fish, Titukà, Tayús



## Basic Information:

Porcupine fish are a slow moving fish that can be found in shallow and deep areas. There are several species of porcupine fish in the CNMI. They can inflate their bodies with water or air when harassed. They have large spines that are extended when they inflate themselves. They also produce a powerful toxin called tetrodotoxin, which is normally found in its internal organs. They also have a powerful beak-like jaw that is used for crushing hard shelled prey.

## What to do if you see one:

It is best to observe porcupine fish from a distance and not approach them. Do not try to grab or harass porcupine fish as they may poke you with their spines. Feeding them and other fish may result in accidental bites or stings.

**DO NOT FEED FISH!**

**Danger level:** Low.

Porcupine fish are not aggressive. If harassed the fish may inflate and erect its spines. Incidents are only likely if fish are harassed.

## First Aid:

Stings should be immersed in hot water and treated to prevent infection. If pain persists seek medical attention.

