

Flying fish a fascinating sight

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Spotfin Flyingfish captured on film by ecologist Rohan Clarke at Ashmore Reef off the Kimberley coast.

(Phys.org)—A chance sighting of the exotic Spotfin Flyingfish captured on film by ecologist Rohan Clarke during a recent research trip has been recognised in a premier natural history photography competition.

The photo snapped at Ashmore Reef off the Kimberley coast, Western Australia, during a research trip has won the Animal Behaviour category of this year's [ANZANG wildlife photography competition](#) in the Australasian region.

Dr Clarke, from Monash University's School of Biological Sciences, said

the photo was captured when the spectacular fish was spooked by the boat during the cruise to an overnight anchorage.

"Spotfin Flyingfish began exploding out of the water all around us," Dr Clarke said.

"The glassy, mirror-like sea and evening light provided a perfect opportunity to hang off the bow with the camera and snap one in mid-flight as it fled the moving boat."

Dr Clarke and his research team are studying seabirds of the Kimberley to gauge the long-term effects of the 2009 Montara oil spill. Ashmore Reef is home to other exotic winged creatures including the Masked Booby, Wedge-Tailed Shearwater, Lesser Noddy and Nankeen Night-Heron.

The 20cm long Spotfin Flyingfish can accelerate to around 40km/h underwater before breaking the surface and extending its wings. They are capable of flights of a hundred metres or more.

When not conducting research, Dr Clarke has concentrated on building a quality collection of natural history images. With images of Australian birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals his collection is one of the largest achieved by a single photographer in Australia, South-east Asia and the Pacific region.

The collection can be viewed via Dr Clarke's website - [Wildlife Images](#).

Provided by Monash University

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