

Satellite tracking technology to shed light on shark behaviour

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A University of Queensland (UQ) marine biologist will use satellite technology to track tiger sharks as part of a project to better understand the greatly feared sea dwellers and prevent future attacks on bathers.

UQ PhD student Bonnie Holmes said the lack of knowledge about tiger sharks and their decreasing numbers in South-East Queensland motivated her to focus her research on the large ocean predator and that sponsorship was needed to commence her fieldwork in September.

"This information will be very valuable to the community because limited knowledge exists about tiger shark migratory patterns, preferred areas to hunt or breed in, or how they are impacted by humans," Ms Holmes said.

"They're thought of as mindless killers, but I want to show what lies behind their behaviour and why they are important to the Australian ecosystem."

Ms Holmes will attach satellite tags to tiger sharks of different ages, gender and size to gain information about their migration, feeding and mating patterns under varying conditions and circumstances.

The research is the first of its kind in southern Queensland and will be conducted between Kingscliff in northern New South Wales and the Town of 1770 in Queensland.

While the use of satellite tags will provide essential shark tracking data, industry support is required to sustain the project over its three-year lifespan.

Satellite tags will cost between \$1700 and \$3500 each with current research partners including the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, and the Queensland Wildlife Preservation Society.

Ms Holmes plans to monitor at least 30 tiger sharks and collect data via the satellite tracking tags that transmit information each time the shark surfaces.

"I'm planning one four day field trip each month during winter and two each month in summer when there appears to be more tiger sharks in SEQ waters," she said.

If you would like to make a contribution, get involved or find out more about the research please contact Bonnie on the details below.

Provided by University of Queensland

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