

Northern Australia Hammerhead Shark Tagging Program



National Environmental Science Programme

Seeing where hammerheads go

Northern Australia has two large species of hammerhead sharks, the scalloped hammerhead and great hammerhead. They can migrate long distances. This makes it difficult to manage them, because impacts in one place may affect the whole population.

To properly understand and manage the threats facing hammerhead sharks, we need to learn how the sharks move across all of the northern Australian states, including any movements between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. We will tag hammerhead sharks with satellite tags to track where they go, and collect small tissue samples to help see which populations are connected.

Hammerhead sharks will be tagged with satellite tags to learn how they move between Western Australia, the Northern Territory, the Torres Straits and Queensland, and Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.



Satellite tracking tag.

Who we are



Dr Michelle Heupel
Australian Institute of Marine Science

Michelle is the project leader. She is a world expert in shark tagging, tracking, management and conservation, and she advises the Australian Government on the best way to manage hammerhead sharks.



Dr Andrew Chin
Australian Institute of Marine Science/James Cook University

Andrew runs the shark tagging at sea. His work is on tropical fisheries with a focus on sharks and Indigenous fisheries. He also works with Indigenous youth studying marine science at JCU.

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Why is this important?

Hammerhead sharks are iconic species around the world, and hold special significance for many Indigenous peoples. Indeed, hammerhead stories and art are represented across northern Australia and the Pacific. They are also important to tourism and fisheries. Unfortunately, hammerhead sharks are being overfished in some places, and because they migrate across state and even national borders, fisheries management can be very complicated. This project will help us understand their movements to help develop management plans.

What is happening now?

During 2017, the team will be tagging hammerhead sharks in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Researchers will be contacting communities where tagging is taking place to keep everyone informed about what is happening.



The NESP hammerhead project team acknowledges the value and importance of hammerhead sharks and all other marine species to Traditional Owners with rights and interests in Sea Country. We respect the rights and knowledge of Traditional Owners, and welcome input and involvement from those interested.



The NESP Marine Biodiversity Hub is funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Programme. Our goal is to assist decision-makers to understand, manage and conserve Australia's environment by funding world-class biodiversity science. Published **20 Feb 2017**