



SHARKMAN . . . Doctoral student Ryan Johnson, of Sharklife, prepares for a dive in the waters of Mossel Bay to study the habits of great white sharks (inset).

# Shark documentary puts Mossel Bay on the map

Researcher's work on great whites to be aired in the US tomorrow, and worldwide in coming years

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**SHARKVILLE**, a documentary made by local resident Ryan Johnson on the sharks found off Mossel Bay, will premier on National Geographic in the US tomorrow night.

After that the documentary will start screening on National Geographic's international channels within four to eight weeks and is

expected to be repeated regularly over five years to an estimated audience of 100 million viewers, according to Mossel Bay Tourism spokesman Martin Hatcuel.

Johnson, a doctoral student and one of the scientists-in-residence at the Mossel Bay-based SA Marine Predators Laboratory (Sampla), had travelled to New York earlier this week to promote his work, Hatcuel said.

Johnson said he would

appear on television shows like *Good Morning America*, *The O'Reilly Factor* and *Fox and Friends*, as well as on various radio programmes.

"I'll be talking about *Sharkville* as well as our research, our discoveries, Sharklife (a shark conservation group) and Sampla," he said.

Asked whether he'd be mentioning Mossel Bay, he said: "*Sharkville* is Mossel Bay: Mossel Bay is the centre of my discussion and it made this movie possible."

Johnson said the town provided perfect research grounds because it had a resident seal population and was relatively untouched by cage diving.

Although the great white shark, the subject of *Sharkville*, is well known as a formidable predator, much of its life and many of its habits in Mossel Bay were unknown until Johnson began his six-year-long study documented in the film.

Working in collaboration with Marine and Coastal

Management, Sampla created detailed swim maps which showed the animals' depth and position, as well as the temperature of the surrounding water.

One of Johnson's most intriguing discoveries was that great white sharks hunted seals at night, a behaviour he was able to film using night vision cameras.

He said his group had found fish hook traces in about 60 per cent of the sharks they had encountered this year.