

SHARKS IN OUR WATERS

Hear all about latest research from Mossel Bay Marine Laboratory

Enrico Gennari, a marine researcher of the Mossel Bay Marine Laboratory, will be sharing his experiences and knowledge at an illustrated talk organised by WESSA George/Sedgefield branch on 13 November.

Enrico's research focuses on the thermal eco-physiology of the white shark.

For a foretaste of the kind of experiences he will be sharing during his talk, read the following example of how they obtain data, spending hours at sea. It is an excerpt from an online blog by Chris Pulham, an intern at Oceans Research: "... this shark provided a good opportunity for tagging, as she was in the target range for the size of sharks wanted for data collection (at approximately 2.5 metres).

"The first tag was designed to measure the internal body temperature of the shark, from inside the stomach. The tag was prepared inside the body of a tuna and after a couple of cursory passes of the bait she took the tuna, effortlessly tearing it from the bait float. The remaining two tags were applied simultaneously, via a modified spear gun, to the shark just below the dorsal fin. The first was also designed to give body temperature data, but this time from the white muscle tissue, and the third gave external (water) temperature as well as information on depth.

"Data was collected via an unidirectional hydrophone, to a box known as the VR100. This registered each data receipt with an audible 'ping'.

"... 2 am found us back at the tracking boat. Our shark had moved away from Seal Island, and was cruising slowly near the mouth of Klein-Brak River. The high oxygen content of the water near the river mouth makes an ideal environment for a



A great white shark in its natural habitat. Learn more about these creatures at a talk by marine researcher Enrico Gennari at the George Museum on Saturday.

resting shark. The shark spent most of our 7-hour shift cruising near the coast in shallow water.

"2 am again, and our second shift saw us following the shark back towards the island with some urgency - it must be time for breakfast! The shark circled Seal Island before we 'witnessed' its first meal since it took our tuna. I use the word 'witnessed' loosely as, although we did not visually observe any predation we were able to track its effects on the stomach temperature of the shark, which we saw take a dramatic drop as the shark ingested a mouthful of cold water with its meal. It may be rare to

witness a shark predation, but how many people can say they've tracked the stomach temperature of a feeding white shark?"

Come and hear more on 13 November at George Museum from 10:00 to 12:00.

Entrance is free, but donations for WESSA Education Fund will be most welcome.

For more information, e-mail the secretary at wessageorge@isat.co.za or phone 044 873 4203.

More info is available at www.shark-lab.co.za, www.oceans-research.com and www.oceans-aware.org.