

Plea for better tracking of Great Whites

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THE species recovery plan for the Great White shark is under review, but South Australia's new shark ecologist, Dr Charlie Huveneers, says we still know very little about the sharks in our waters.

He is tagging sharks to learn more about their movements and how they interact with the fishing industry.

Dr Huveneers, who has a joint position with SARDI and Flinders University, was in Canberra this week for a meeting about the Great White recovery plan.

He said it was hard to assess recovery of the species because there was a lack of information.

"At the moment we have

no way of finding out if the population is increasing or decreasing," he said.

Under the Australian Acoustic Tagging and Monitoring System, scientists keep tabs on about 50 Great Whites - but the network of receivers is patchy.

Dr Huveneers would like more receivers placed along the SA coastline.

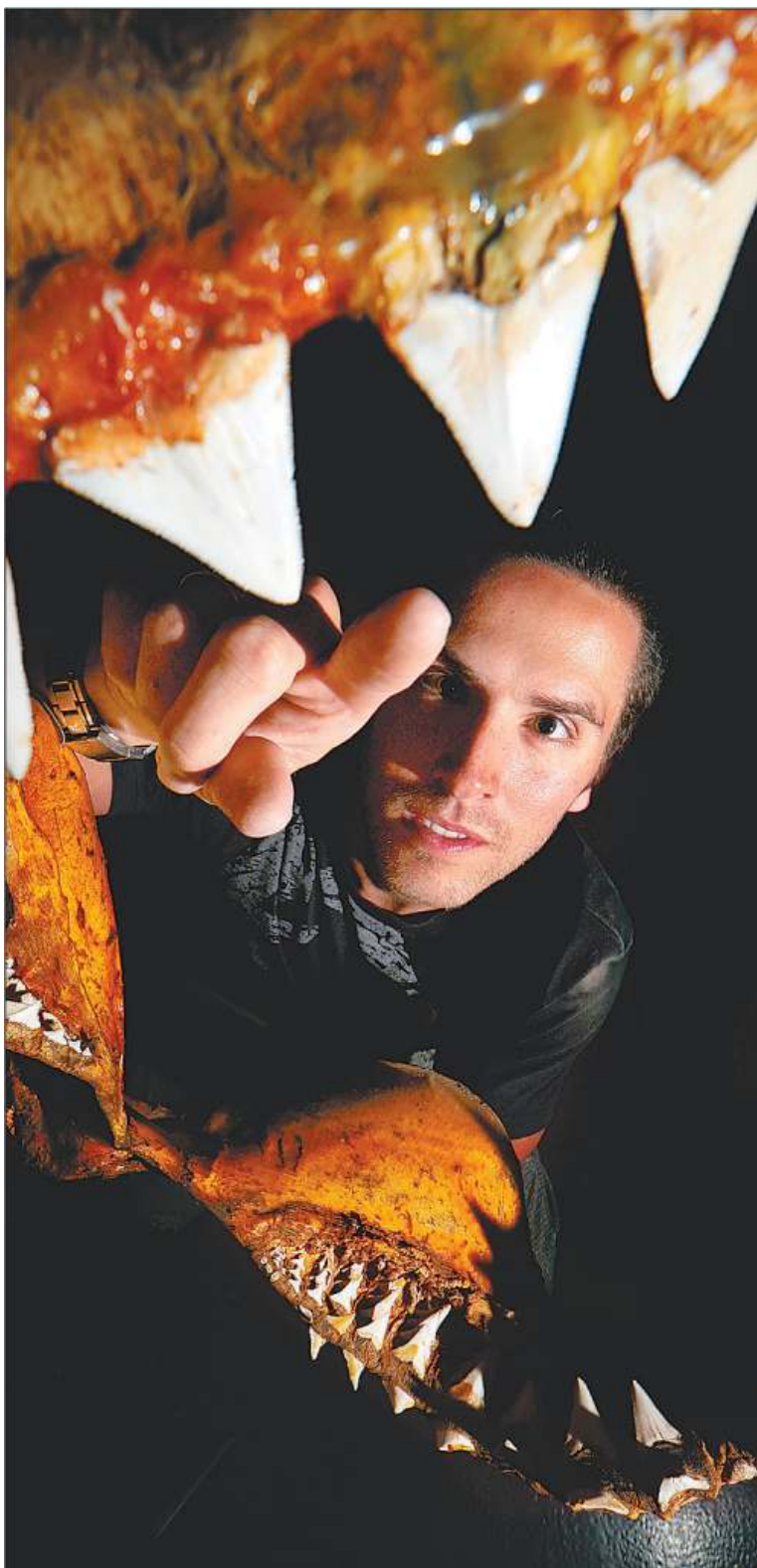
They also could be used to track other species, such as snapper, which are important to the SA fishing industry, he said.

Dr Huveneers said the fishing and aquaculture industries could help by reporting every time a shark was caught in nets.

Before the recovery plan was launched in 2002, about 165 Great White sharks were captured every year.

In the last financial year, five "interactions" between the sharks and SA-managed fisheries were reported.

Dr Huveneers suspects there may be "significant issues" around reporting which need to be resolved by working more closely with the fishing and aquaculture industries, who stand to benefit from the research.



REVIEW: Shark scientist Charlie Huveneers yesterday.

Picture: ALICE PROKOPEC