Shark does his bit to help crocs

GREG Norman is on the prowl and being watched closely in North Queensland. That’s Greg Norman the crocodile, not the globe-trotting golfer-businessman known as The Shark.

Researchers have named one of 60 estuarine crocodiles after the Queensland sporting legend and will be keeping track of him and his mates over the next few years.

The University of Queensland is monitoring the Cape York crocodiles from a Brisbane laboratory after fitting GPS transmitters to the cranky creatures.

Norman donated funding to the project.

The 4m salty named after him was tagged near the Wenlock River mouth and was last detected in the lower reaches of the catchment in central Cape York on November 28.

Professor Craig Franklin said Greg Norman had since left the area and travelled along the coast south of Weipa, a journey of more than 300km.

The crocodiles have been captured in the Wenlock River in Cape York since last August and fitted with acoustic satellite transmitters designed to last 10 years.

Prof Franklin said the project hoped to improve the conservation of crocodiles by better understanding their movements in the wild.

“The crocodiles we are tracking vary greatly in their behaviours, but for the most part they maintain quite tight home-ranges within five to 10km, with the big males likely to be patrolling their section of the river,” he said.

“Interestingly, upon the arrival of the monsoonal season, a number of our crocodiles moved a long way upstream as the Wenlock River rose by as much as 12 to 15m.”

The crocodiles were given names and their own spots in cyberspace, with their movements recorded and plotted over the past eight months and beamed back to the research team’s Eco-Lab.

The largest crocodile tagged as part of the project has been named Drew, with the estuarine male measuring 4.4m.

Prof Franklin said the research, a collaboration between the University of Queensland and Australia Zoo, with financial support from the Australian Research Council, would continue. He said the goal was to have 100 crocodiles fitted with transmitters by the end of the dry season.

“It is important that it is done long term,” he said.

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CROC WATCH: Professor Craig Franklin is studying the movement of crocodiles in the state’s north.

Picture: Jamie Hanson

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