Croc catchers committed to Cape crusade

STEVE Irwin died two years ago but his passion for the protection of crocodiles lives on.
Researchers from the University of Queensland joined the Irwin family and Australia Zoo crew members on a croc research mission last month to continue a project started by Irwin six years ago.

The team tagged 15 estuarine crocodiles on the 135,000ha Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve on Cape York as part of the project.

The tags are electronic transmitters which will monitor the behaviour and habitat use of the crocodiles for up to 10 years.

UQ's Prof Craig Franklin said the task of tagging the crocodiles was possible with the help of specially trained Australia Zoo staff.

“The Australia Zoo team is undoubtedly the best in the world at being able to capture large estuarine crocodiles and that’s a credit to Steve's training,” Prof Franklin said.

“The procedure is the Australia Zoo team sets the trap and their role is very much in handling the animal and making sure it is safe. Then I surgically implant a very small device, under sterile conditions.”

The research project will continue indefinitely, gathering data to assist in the protection and conservation of crocodiles.

“The simple rule of conservation is, the more you understand about an animal, the more you understand about its habitat requirements and the more you know how to protect it,” Prof Franklin said.