

# Net plan to track sharks

■ Louise Burke

Thousands of tourists jump flippers first into the choppy, dark waters behind Ningaloo Reef each year and swim like mad towards the biggest shark in the sea.

Far from crazy, they are experiencing one of the North West's most popular attractions — swimming with whale sharks.

The gentle giant plankton eaters, which can grow to 18m, are in the midst of their annual migration to the warm waters off Ningaloo Reef, a migration that usually runs from April into July.

Tourism WA will today launch a campaign to get Facebook users to share and support research by “liking” a series of posts about its adoption of a whale shark via conservation organisation ECOCEAN.

Fans will be able to follow the shark's movements, Tourism WA said. Because of unique spots on each whale shark, the program can track them via photo submissions.

ECOCEAN director Brad Norman said it had catalogued more than 41,000 images.

Facebook users can “like” the program at [www.facebook.com/ExtraordinaryWesternAustralia](http://www.facebook.com/ExtraordinaryWesternAustralia).



Wonder down under: Brad Norman photographs a whale shark off Exmouth as part of his research. Picture: Astrid Volzke