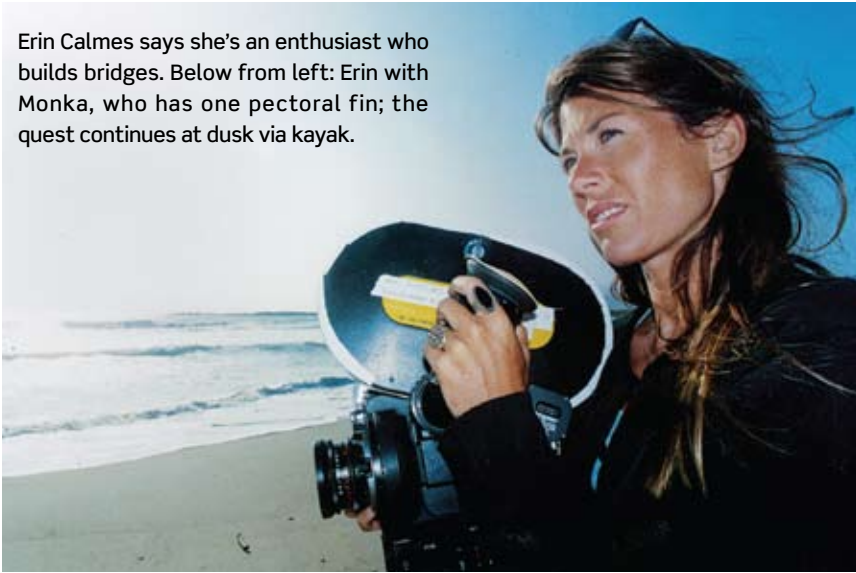


Dive Life

Erin Calmes says she's an enthusiast who builds bridges. Below from left: Erin with Monka, who has one pectoral fin; the quest continues at dusk via kayak.



markings from its mouth to the left pectoral fin behind the gills. After a shark is distinguished, any information about it is added to the research database.

The footage she shoots of Nacho will help determine how big whale sharks grow — she estimates he'll be 10 to 20 feet longer than when she last saw him two years ago. In the process, she'll be helping the research community get closer to other answers as well.

"Do they migrate together? Do they always come back to feed in the same area? Are there specific families? Where are they meeting? Where are they birthing? How deep do they go? How long do they live?" she says, rattling off what she's most curious about. "There are so many questions that are really unanswered, and we're just beginning to learn together."

When she says "together," she's referring to the community contributing to the database — and it's growing.

"Many who have had an encounter with a whale shark — whether they are an avid diver or snorkeler — it really moved them," she explains. They become interested and start asking the same questions.

It's a passion that's infectious. When asked what it's like to swim with the animal that's her life's devotion, Erin sighs contentedly, as if trying to choose a favorite day from a 10-year marriage.

"It's such a peaceful moment as you're kicking along with these whale sharks. It's like being at the symphony or singing your favorite song while driving along in your car. And when you really get into that Zen, it's almost as if you get into a meditation with that shark. You come up and feel like you just communicated with something much bigger than yourself."

FOR MORE INFORMATION Tuck and Roll (ketafilms.com/tucknroll) led to the formation of Eco Ocean. Learn how you can contribute at ecocean.org and sharks.org, plus help the fight by adding your name to whalesharkpetition.com.

Searching for Nacho

ERIN CALMES: FILMMAKER, FIGHTER, BRIDGE BUILDER BY BROOKE MORTON

I'M GOING TO tell you, but I don't want the actual location to be printed," Erin Calmes warns. She's guarded about where she will be taking her crew this fall to film *Nacho the Whale Shark*, a documentary for National Geographic International TV that attempts to follow the life of her favorite whale shark. And her reluctance is warranted. While in the Philippines in 1998, she stumbled upon a beach where poachers were butchering between six and eight whale sharks. Witnessing this led Erin to successfully petition the Philippine government to implement legislature to stop the slaughter.

But while trying to uncover what was happening to the whale sharks in the Philippines and around the world, Erin learned just how little information was available about the animal's behavior, lifespan, evolution and population decline. Thus, she created a private data-sharing group named Tuck and Roll — a reference to the whale-hunter myth that if swallowed, one should perform this maneuver, forcing the whale to regurgitate the contents of its stomach. Thanks to pattern-recognition technology that NASA created to locate celestial objects, any shark caught on film can be identified by the unique