



Photograph courtesy University of South Carolina

## New Hammerhead Shark Species Found in U.S.

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A new species of hammerhead shark has been discovered off the coast of South Carolina, but summer swimmers don't have to worry—it's the sharks that are in trouble, experts say.

The newfound shark species, which has not yet been named, is nearly identical to the scalloped hammerhead, a common Atlantic shark that can grow up to 10 feet (3 meters) long.

But the new species appears to be extremely rare—so much so that it may only breed in certain South Carolina bays.

Biologists at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, discovered the new species while studying the DNA of scalloped hammerheads. The researchers found that some hammerheads they examined had a significantly different genetic signature from the rest, despite their similar appearance.

A separate team led by Joe Quattro at the University of South Carolina in Columbia came to the same conclusion while studying the state's coastal shark stocks.

Discovery of the new hammerhead raises the need for better shark protection in the U.S., Quattro says.

"If South Carolina's waters are the primary nursery grounds for [this] species, and females gather here to reproduce, these areas should be conservation priorities," he said in a statement issued last week.

"Protecting this prime nursery habitat is vital to the survival of the species."

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