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TITLE: Cold-water coral reef habitats benefit recreationally valuable sharks

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ABSTRACT:

We provide a case study to demonstrate how a key ecosystem function of coral reefs (habitat provision) co-benefits both sharks and humans. Spawning grounds of the blackmouth catshark *Galeus melastomus* were discovered using seabed and video surveys on the Mingulay Reef Complex, a seascape of cold-water coral reefs off western Scotland. Spawning habitats were environmentally similar across years. Shark abundance of *G. melastomus*, a species valued by the recreational sea angling industry, was significantly higher nearer reef habitats. Our case study demonstrates how a local coral vulnerable marine ecosystem (VME) helps maintain key life stages of shark populations and provides socioeconomic benefits. Evidence for co-benefits between corals, sharks and humans provides a compelling case for identifying and protecting coral VMEs.

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