

Hammerhead shark refuge found in Galapagos

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A new breeding ground for endangered hammerhead sharks has been

found in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador's government said.

This natural refuge off the island of Santa Cruz is home to about 20 of the sharks, the environment ministry said.

It is the second such refuge detected in the archipelago. The first, found in 2017, was shown to host around 30 hammerheads.

At the new one, researchers attached tracing devices to five of the sharks as part of efforts to monitor and protect the ecosystem they live in, said Eduardo Espinoza, who led the expedition in which the refuge was found.

Hammerheads grow slowly and are not particularly fertile reproducers. This and the danger posed by commercial fishing has placed them in danger of extinction, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Ecuador in 2016 established a vast marine reserve to try to protect the sharks. The islands are home to more than 2,900 marine species.

The Pacific islands 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) west of the coast of Ecuador have one of the world's most fragile ecosystems, with flora and fauna that live nowhere else.

Known for their beloved giant turtles, the Galapagos inspired Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

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