

1 **Title:** Short-term reef changes in fish community metrics correlate with variability in large shark  
2 occurrence

3

4 **Running Head:** Short-term predator presence

5

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23 **Abstract**

24           Large predators exert control on lower trophic levels, often influencing long-term  
25 changes in community structure. Many large predators are highly mobile and occur along a  
26 continuum of presence and absence on habitats. In many natural systems, the movement of large  
27 predators through an area has been shown to lead to rapid changes in prey distribution through  
28 trait-mediated behavioral responses. To test whether a similar interaction also occurs for artificial  
29 habitats, we examined how reef fish community metrics (abundance, species richness,  
30 community composition) varied with the presence of a large coastal shark (sand tiger shark,  
31 *Carcharias taurus*). Remotely-operated vehicle surveys of large sharks and reef fishes on  
32 shipwrecks along the North Carolina, USA, continental shelf revealed that short-term shark  
33 presence correlated with changes in reef fish community metrics. Specifically, when sharks were  
34 present, fish species abundance and richness did not differ compared to when sharks were absent.  
35 Finer-scale analyses near sharks revealed similar abundance but elevated species richness  
36 proximate to sharks. We confirmed that this fine-scale pattern of similar abundance but higher  
37 richness near sharks held when the ROV was not in the water by repeating analyses using time-  
38 lapse videos from nearby shipwrecks. The detected differences in fish community metrics in the  
39 presence of sharks correlated with higher numbers of water-column associated species, such as  
40 jacks and barracuda, but lower numbers of benthic-associated species, including seabass and  
41 grouper. These findings suggest that the presence of large predators on artificial structures, as in  
42 natural systems, can drive short-term changes in community structure.

43

44 **Keywords:** artificial reef; elasmobranch; predator ecology; shipwreck; remotely-operated  
45 vehicle

## 46 **Introduction**

47 Large predators are ecologically important with roles ranging from the maintenance of  
48 biodiversity (Ripple et al. 2014; Dalerum et al. 2008), regulation of prey population size  
49 (Beschta & Ripple, 2009), alteration of prey behavior and habitat use (Heithaus et al. 2007;  
50 Brown et al. 1999; Werner & Peacor, 2003), to limitations of prey productivity and reproduction  
51 (Estes & Duggins, 1995; Creel et al. 2011). Because large predators often occupy upper trophic  
52 levels, they can exert top-down control on lower trophic levels through consumptive and non-  
53 consumptive effects (Ordiz et al. 2013; Baum & Worm, 2009). For example, large predators  
54 consume prey items, which can affect diversity and species behavior (Johnson et al. 2007;  
55 Johnson & VanDerWal, 2009; Pace et al. 1999; Barley et al. 2017) and stabilize prey oscillations  
56 (Morozov et al. 2012) within food webs. Even predation risk associated with predator presence  
57 can initiate behavior-mediated responses in lower trophic levels that can modify mesopredator  
58 abundance and distribution (Ritchie & Johnson, 2009; Preisser et al. 2005). Despite playing  
59 fundamental roles in ecosystems and their food webs, large predators are often highly mobile or  
60 migratory (Brown et al. 1996; Haskell et al., 2002; Harestad & Bunnell, 1979).

61 Many examinations of how predator presence versus absence affects communities, food  
62 webs, and ecosystems have focused on broad spatial or extended temporal scales (Mittelbach et  
63 al. 1995; Whitehead et al. 2008; Menge et al. 2016; Schultz et al. 2016). The majority of  
64 opportunities to examine large predator occurrence is through the lens of predator removal or  
65 loss (e.g. killer whale, sea otter (Estes & Duggins, 1995); freshwater piscivorous fish (Browne &  
66 Lutz, 2010; Ripple et al. 2014)). In general, the effects of predator decline and removal in food  
67 webs manifest over long time periods, as lower trophic levels gradually adjust to the absence of  
68 the largest, most functionally important individuals (Dulvy et al. 2017). This approach compares

69 community structure and function within healthy ecosystems containing predators to those  
70 without predators or with low predator densities, often attributable to overhunting, overfishing,  
71 or habitat degradation. For example, long-term fence exclusion of dingoes, a large terrestrial  
72 Australian predator, established an area where dingoes are functionally extinct and led to  
73 pronounced changes in sheep distributions (Allen & West, 2013). Dingo absence also triggered  
74 shifts in avian communities, including reduced species richness, whereas dingo presence  
75 maintained avian diversity, largely through regulation of mesopredators and herbivores (Rees et  
76 al. 2019), ultimately improving ecosystem resiliency (Letnic et al. 2009; Johnson et al. 2007). In  
77 marine systems, the presence and absence of sharks have been associated with long term changes  
78 in the distribution of sea turtles, dugongs, and seagrass as a result of predator avoidance and risk-  
79 based foraging (Burkholder et al. 2013, Wirsing et al. 2007).

80 Predator presence also affects lower trophic levels in the short-term. In natural systems,  
81 the movement of large predators through an area leads to rapid changes in prey distribution  
82 through behavior responses (Lima & Dill, 1990; Schmitz et al. 1997). Predator presence, for  
83 example, can alter prey species distribution as evidenced through colonization patterns of marsh  
84 decapod crustaceans (Dorn et al. 2006), seagrass habitat use of Australian salmon prey species  
85 (Smith et al. 2011), and vertical migration of copepods (Bollens & Frost, 1989). Studies  
86 explicitly and repeatedly support the theory that large predators relate to community structure in  
87 natural ecosystems (Estes et al. 2013; Myers et al. 2007). Despite the proliferation of examples in  
88 natural systems of predator presence being associated with variations in lower trophic levels,  
89 whether this pattern holds on artificial or human-made systems is less well studied. To test  
90 whether large predators exert short-term influences on communities requires an ecosystem where  
91 large predators exhibit both presence and absence over short temporal and spatial scales.

92           Here, we test how the short-term presence or absence of a large predator, the sand tiger  
93 shark (*Carcharias taurus*), correlates to the reef fish community metrics observed on artificial  
94 habitats (shipwrecks) off the southeastern US continental shelf. We specifically tested whether:  
95 1) Reef fish abundance and species richness differ when sand tiger sharks are present versus  
96 absent; 2) Reef fish abundance and species richness differ immediately surrounding sand tiger  
97 sharks versus farther from sharks; and 3) Reef fish community composition differs with sand  
98 tiger shark presence versus absence.

99

## 100 **Materials and Methods**

### 101 *Model predator selection*

102           We selected a large coastal shark species, the sand tiger shark (*Carcharias taurus*), as a  
103 model large predator because they commonly aggregate on shipwrecks off the coast of North  
104 Carolina (NC), USA, the geographic area of our study. While the reason why sand tiger sharks  
105 occupy these shipwrecks remains undocumented, sand tiger sharks likely use the shipwrecks as  
106 “rest-stops” along their seasonal migration or, perhaps, as year-round habitat (Teter et al. 2015;  
107 Jorgensen et al. 2009). More recently, evidence of site fidelity of sand tiger sharks to the same or  
108 nearby shipwrecks has been documented (Paxton et al. 2019). Despite their affinity for  
109 shipwrecks, sand tiger shark abundances on shipwrecks fluctuate and a sand tiger can be present  
110 on a shipwreck one day or hour and absent the next. The highly mobile nature of sand tiger  
111 sharks, coupled with their alternating presence and absence on shipwrecks (Teter et al. 2015;  
112 Haulsee et al. 2018; Kneebone et al. 2012; Peterson et al. 2017) provides an opportunity to test  
113 the short-term or fine-scale association of a large predator and the reef fish community  
114 occupying coastal NC shipwrecks. Also, while other large predators do occur along the coast of

115 NC, sand tiger sharks are the largest fish predator that can be commonly observed on shipwrecks  
116 off NC (Paxton et al. 2017), making them the ideal model predator for this study since other  
117 large predators like white sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*), sandbar sharks (*Carcharhinus*  
118 *plumbeus*), and nurse sharks (*Ginglymostoma cirratum*) occur infrequently on NC shipwrecks  
119 (Paxton, personal observation).

120

## 121 ***Remotely-operated vehicle surveys***

### 122 *Site selection*

123 Remotely-operated vehicle (ROV) surveys were conducted at seven shipwrecks located on  
124 the continental shelf of NC (Figure 1A; Table S1). These shipwrecks, which extend from the  
125 southwest to the northwest of Cape Lookout, NC, were selected because they are located in an  
126 area where sand tiger sharks are known to occur (Haulsee et al. 2016; Teter et al. 2015). The  
127 shipwrecks are 25-40 m deep, rest on sand, and all sank during 1942, except for one that sank in  
128 1918. These shipwrecks also provide an opportunity to understand how artificial habitats, such as  
129 artificial reefs, that are often installed to enhance, supplement, or restore fish habitat (Becker et  
130 al. 2018) may function for sharks and reef fish in the future.

131

### 132 *Data collection*

133 Each shipwreck was surveyed once between July and September 2018 using a Teledyne  
134 Benthos Stingray ROV. The survey period likely coincided with the seasonal migration period  
135 when male sand tigers are thought to move into areas off the NC coast (Teter et al. 2015),  
136 although it has been hypothesized that some sand tiger sharks may reside off NC year-round.

137 After the ROV descended and located a particular shipwreck, we completed a 45 to 60-minute  
138 survey of the fish community with the ROV facing the shipwreck and remaining down current of  
139 the wreck, to avoid entanglement of the ROV tether in the wreck. If the ROV pilot observed  
140 sharks via the topside video monitor, then the pilot steered the ROV toward the sharks, if  
141 possible, to provide a closer glimpse of the fish community near the shark. The ROV field of  
142 view was consistent across all surveys. Ethics approval was not required because this was an  
143 observational study involving visual identification and counts of fish.

144 During the shipwreck surveys, the ROV position was tracked using a dual Hemisphere  
145 GPS that recorded latitude, longitude, and heading, and a Tracklink 1505B ultra-short baseline  
146 acoustic tracking system. The position of the survey vessel and ROV were logged in Hypack  
147 (Xylem Inc. 2015). During surveys, Hypack also displayed the position of the ROV in real-time  
148 to assist in visually piloting the ROV around the shipwrecks. We also utilized multibeam  
149 bathymetry collected previously at the seven shipwrecks to aide in ROV navigation relative to  
150 the shipwreck structures. The umbilical transmitted ROV video from the ROV to the survey  
151 vessel during surveys, and this video footage was recorded by an HD recorder. On the front of  
152 the ROV, parallel with the ROV video camera, we mounted two GoPro Hero 6 video cameras  
153 (GoPro, USA), one as a primary video camera, and one as a backup video camera. The GoPro  
154 recorded higher quality (2.7K primary GoPro and 1080p backup GoPro) video than the onboard  
155 ROV video camera. We used videos collected by the primary GoPro with the highest video  
156 resolution to assess fish communities.

157 For each 45 to 60 minute video for the seven shipwrecks, we first recorded whether sand  
158 tiger sharks were present or absent at any point in the ROV dive. Second, we processed clips of  
159 video from each shipwreck survey. Specifically, we processed one full minute of video every

160 four minutes (e.g. three minutes between the end of one clip and the start of the next clip). In  
161 total, we processed 70 one-minute video clips, ranging from 6 to 17 clips per dive across the  
162 shipwrecks. In each video clip, we recorded whether sand tiger sharks were present or absent to  
163 help differentiate whether sand tigers were present on the wreck at all during the survey versus  
164 whether sand tigers were present in the one-minute processed video clips. We identified fish to  
165 the lowest taxonomic level possible and recorded their approximate location relative to the shark.  
166 We counted the maximum number (maxN) of each fish species visible within any frame during  
167 each one-minute clip. Large schools of fish were counted using the group-counting method in  
168 which we counted individuals within an arbitrarily drawn box and then multiplied by the number  
169 of boxes that fit within the frame (Labrosse et al. 2002). We excluded the portions of the video  
170 when the ROV ascended or descended from processing. Fish that were out of focus or otherwise  
171 unidentifiable were counted, but their species was recorded as “unknown fish.”

172

### 173 *Data analyses*

174 Statistical analyses were conducted in R version 3.5.3 (R Development Core Team, 2019)  
175 using an alpha value of 0.05. We first used generalized linear mixed models (GLMM) (Bolker et  
176 al. 2009) to model the relationship between a) reef fish abundance and shark occurrence and b)  
177 reef fish species richness and shark occurrence. The response variable reef fish abundance was  
178 the total fish abundance in each one-minute video clip. Similarly, the response variable for  
179 species richness was the total species richness in each one-minute clip. Abundance and species  
180 richness from each clip were treated as individual samples or replicates. Given the elapsed time  
181 between these one-minute clips, it is unlikely that we documented the same fish multiple times.  
182 Both models included shark occurrence (presence vs. absence) within an entire ROV survey as a



183 fixed effect. For example, if a shark was not observed during the entire duration of a dive at a  
184 particular shipwreck, then we designated the shipwreck and all ROV videos from that particular  
185 shipwreck survey as “shark absent.” Alternatively, if we spotted a shark or multiple sharks  
186 anywhere during any portion of the ROV dive, then we recorded the corresponding shipwreck  
187 and collected videos as “shark present” even if a shark was not immediately visible in a  
188 particular one-minute clip. The shipwreck was included in the GLMM as a random effect to help  
189 control for potential sources of variation in counts among the shipwrecks due to differing  
190 shipwreck characteristics (e.g., area, volume, vertical relief) not directly accounted for. We fit  
191 the models with the ‘glmmADMB’ package using Laplace parameter estimations (Fournier et al.  
192 2012). We used a negative-binomial error distribution with a log link to allow for overdispersion  
193 of the reef fish abundance and species richness counts. We used likelihood ratio tests (LRTs)  
194 between the full model and a model without the fixed effect for shark presence to generate a *p*-  
195 value for the fixed effect of shark presence. We then examined the fixed log-effects estimates to  
196 determine the magnitude and significance of changes in reef fish abundance with shark presence  
197 versus absence.

198         Second, we used GLMMs to again model the relationship between shark occurrence and  
199 response variables (reef fish abundance and reef fish species richness) but this time using a fixed  
200 effect called “shark visibility” that allowed a finer-scale analysis of the effect of shark  
201 occurrence. For GLMM models, we used reef fish abundances from only the video clips  
202 recorded on shipwrecks where we observed sharks at any point during the entire ROV survey.  
203 This approach allowed us to test for a response of reef fish abundance and species richness near a  
204 shark when a shark was visible in the clip versus farther away when a shark was not visible. We  
205 included shark visibility as a fixed effect and shipwreck as a random effect. As above, we fit the

206 GLMMs with negative-binomial error distributions and assessed evidence for patterns predicted  
207 by shark visibility with LRTs.

208         To examine whether shark presence influenced fish community composition, we used  
209 multivariate analyses, including nonmetric multidimensional scaling (nMDS) analysis,  
210 permutational analysis of dispersion (PERMDISP), permutational analysis of variance  
211 (PERMANOVA), and indicator species analysis. We performed all multivariate tests on square-  
212 root transformed reef fish species abundance data from each one-minute video clip within the  
213 ‘vegan’ package (Oksanen et al. 2015) with an alpha value of 0.05. We first used PERMANOVA  
214 (Anderson, 2001) with Bray-Curtis distances and 1,000 permutations to test whether fish  
215 community composition varied with shark presence versus absence on shipwrecks. Second,  
216 PERMDISP, a distance-based test for homogeneity of multivariate dispersion (Anderson, 2006)  
217 helped interpret PERMANOVA results by determining whether multivariate dispersion differed  
218 with shark presence versus absence. Together, PERMANOVA and PERMDISP permitted an  
219 evaluation of whether reef fish communities differed when sharks were present versus absent.  
220 Third, we performed nMDS with Bray-Curtis distances to visually summarize patterns in the  
221 structure of the reef fish community with and without sharks. The nMDS mapped samples into  
222 ordination space using ecological distances between samples ordered by rank. A Shepard  
223 diagram confirmed linearity between ordination distances and Bray-Curtis distance. Biplots  
224 illustrated the relationships among samples in ordination space with samples colored by shark  
225 presence/absence and superimposed ellipses indicating 50% confidence intervals. Fourth, we  
226 performed an indicator species analysis within the ‘indicspecies’ package (De Caceres &  
227 Legendre, 2009) to identify which reef fish species correlated with the presence or absence of

228 sharks on a shipwreck. The resulting indicator values represent the level of association between  
229 particular species and whether sharks are present or absent.

230

### 231 *Time-lapse video surveys*

#### 232 *Site selection*

233 To confirm patterns of reef fish abundance and species richness with shark visibility  
234 when the ROV was not in the water, we repeated the shark visibility analyses using previously  
235 collected stationary time-lapse videos from two nearby shipwrecks (Figure 1B; Table S2). The  
236 nearby shipwrecks are two artificial reefs containing intentionally-sunk vessels located on soft  
237 sediment bottom in the same geographic vicinity and depth as the seven shipwrecks surveyed  
238 with the ROV. On each of the two additional shipwrecks, video footage collection occurred  
239 during three sampling periods over five months in 2016. The artificial reef *Spar* sampling  
240 spanned one to two weeks during the following periods: 1) November 2015; 2) January 2016;  
241 and 3) April 2016. The artificial reef *Aeolus* was sampled during the April 2016 period. The  
242 stationary camera field of view was consistent among the surveys, as the cameras were placed at  
243 the same location on each individual shipwreck.

244

#### 245 *Data collection*

246 Time-lapse videos were recorded at each of the two wrecks for 20 seconds every 20  
247 minutes using a stationary GoPro Hero 3+Black video camera (GoPro, USA) with  
248 intervalometers mounted in a cylindrical housing with dome port (Sexton Co, Oregon, USA). A  
249 total of 547 videos were processed, 332 from the *Spar*, and 215 from the *Aeolus*. In each of the  
250 stationary 20-second videos, the video analyst noted the presence or absence of sand tigers and

251 identified all visible reef fish (Pierce et al. 2018) and recorded their position relative to the shark,  
252 as well as the sharks' position relative to the reef. The analyst also counted the maximum  
253 number (maxN) of each fish species visible during each one-minute clip. The group-counting  
254 method was used to count large schools of fish (Labrosse et al. 2002), as detailed above.  
255 Additionally, for all 20-second clips within 60 minutes, we recorded whether a sand tiger shark  
256 was present in any of the 20-second clips.

257

### 258 *Data analyses*

259 Analyses were conducted in R to test effects of shark presence on species abundance and  
260 richness. To ensure that our analytical approach matched the approach from the ROV videos as  
261 closely as possible, we used the subset of 20-second video clips from clock hours where sharks  
262 were present. We categorized each 20-second video clip as either having a shark visible or not,  
263 so using video clips where sharks were present enabled us to test whether the changes in  
264 communities proximal to versus farther away from sharks that we detected with ROV videos  
265 were preserved in the time-lapse video dataset. To conduct this test, we fit two GLMMs, one for  
266 the response variable reef fish abundance and one for the response variable reef fish species  
267 richness. Both were fit and assessed using the 'glmmADMB' package and negative-binomial  
268 error distribution, as described above (Fournier et al. 2012). The models included shark visibility  
269 as a fixed effect and the shipwreck as a random effect.

270

### 271 **Results**

272 Reef fish abundance did not differ with shark presence or absence on shipwrecks  
273 surveyed with the ROV (Figure 2A;  $p = 0.64$ ; Table S3). On the three shipwrecks with sharks,

274 reef fish abundance was similar in the immediate vicinity of (several meters) and farther away  
275 from sharks (Figure 2B;  $p = 0.44$ ; Table S3). We confirmed that the lack of a pattern near sharks  
276 held when the ROV was not in the water by using time-lapse videos (Figure 2C;  $p = 0.17$ ; Table  
277 S3). Reef fish species richness was marginally, but not significantly lower, on shipwrecks with  
278 than without sharks (Figure 3A;  $p = 0.07$ ). On shipwrecks with sharks, however, there was a  
279 higher species richness near sharks than farther away from sharks (Figure 3B;  $p = 0.04$ ), and fish  
280 were observed swimming behind, above, under, or in sync with the predator movements. We  
281 confirmed that the pattern of elevated species richness near sharks held when the ROV was not  
282 in the water by using stationary, time-lapse videos (Figure 3C;  $p < 0.0001$ ).

283 Reef fish community composition differed on shipwrecks with and without sharks that  
284 were surveyed with the ROV (Figure 4; PERMANOVA  $p < 0.001$ ), and this was attributed to  
285 greater dispersion in community composition when sharks were absent than present (PERMDISP  
286  $p = 0.02$ ). These differences in community composition with shark presence versus absence  
287 correlated with prevalence of water-column associated species, such as banded rudderfish  
288 (*Seriola zonata*, indicator value = 0.36,  $p = 0.04$ ) and barracuda (*Sphyraena barracuda*, indicator  
289 value = 0.58,  $p = 0.008$ ), on shipwrecks with sharks. In contrast, benthic-associated species, like  
290 black sea bass (*Centropristis striata*, indicator value = 0.62,  $p = 0.004$ ) and gag grouper  
291 (*Myceteroperca microlepis*, indicator value = 0.53,  $p = 0.008$ ) occurred in lower numbers on  
292 sites with sharks, instead frequenting shipwrecks without sharks.

293

## 294 **Discussion**

295 Our study provides evidence that large predator presence correlates with fine-scale  
296 changes in reef fish community metrics on artificial habitats, as in natural habitats. While reef

297 fish abundance did not vary with large predator presence, we found that species richness differed  
298 based on proximity to the large predator. Community composition varied with large predator  
299 presence versus absence, with water-column associated fish species indicative of large predator  
300 presence and benthic-associated species more often found when the large predator was absent.

301 Our finding that reef fish abundance did not vary with large predator presence but that  
302 species richness was lower when sharks were present is inconsistent with previous studies. For  
303 example, mesopredator abundance often positively correlates with predator presence (Masi et al.  
304 2018; Ritchie & Johnson, 2009). We posit that this difference between our findings and those  
305 from previous research may relate to the scale of our study. In particular, demonstrations of  
306 increased biodiversity around large predators are often over broad spatial scales (Ripple et al.  
307 2014; Dalerum et al. 2008), whereas our video collection occurred over short periods (45-60  
308 min) and small areas (shipwrecks). Therefore, our findings suggest that abundance, and likely by  
309 extension - species richness - may be spatially or temporally dependent and thus the response of  
310 fish community metrics to trophic interactions, such as predator presence, may differ across fine  
311 and broad scales.

312 The pattern that we observed of similar abundance but elevated species richness near  
313 sharks in both ROV and time-lapse video datasets supports previous food webs literature  
314 documenting that animals respond to predation risk in real-time and utilize avoidance and other  
315 behavioral strategies to reduce predator encounters (Burkholder et al. 2013; Lima & Dill, 1990;  
316 Madin et al. 2012; Wirsing et al. 2007; Gallagher et al. 2017). For example, even though the  
317 constant threat of predation can promote a heightened sensitivity in prey, the levels of predation  
318 risk experienced are largely species-specific and can depend on fine-scale changes in predator  
319 behavior (Schmidt & Kuijper, 2015; Hamilton, 1971; Stankowich, 2003; Creel et al. 2019).

320 Additionally, predation risk has a spatial component because closer proximity to large predators  
321 elevates risk. In our study, however, we observed species close to the large predators swimming  
322 behind, under, and in sync with the predator movements and we observed a greater number of  
323 species close to the predators. Finding more species near the predator may, at first, seem  
324 counterintuitive, but prey responses could be attributed to rapid, strategic maneuvers of prey  
325 species reacting to subtle changes in large predator movements, the benefits of polyspecific  
326 associations (Au, 1991), or reduced predation risks associated with forming multispecies groups  
327 (Scott et al. 2012). Further, this finding suggests that there may be a “halo-of-influence” around  
328 large predators, where elevated species richness occurs, driven largely by species that frequently  
329 associate with the predator.

330         The notion that a halo-of-influence may exist around large predators is further supported  
331 by our finding that reef fish community composition differed with and without sharks. When  
332 sharks were absent, the fish community exhibited higher multivariate dispersion, which we  
333 interpret to mean that the community composition was more variable. In contrast, when sharks  
334 were present, community composition was more consistent. When we examined species driving  
335 community composition patterns, we discovered that the dissimilarities in fish community  
336 composition with sharks were largely attributable to how benthic and water-column associated  
337 fish species and their trophic roles correlated with or without sharks.

338         The large reef-associated fish species that exhibited an association with reefs with sharks  
339 (barracuda, banded rudderfish) or without sharks (gag grouper, black sea bass) occupy high  
340 trophic levels but have smaller body sizes than sand tiger sharks. The location of fish within the  
341 water column relates to their feeding methods and diet (Young et al. 2015), which may explain  
342 the different association of water-column versus bottom-associated fishes to predators.

343 Barracuda and banded rudderfish consume prey in the water-column, whereas gag grouper and  
344 black seabass are benthic feeders. Sand tiger sharks are nocturnal feeders that have not been  
345 found to consume barracuda, banded rudderfish, gag grouper, or black seabass. Instead, sand  
346 tiger sharks often consume smaller-bodied prey. For example, sand tiger sharks gut content  
347 analyses in the Chesapeake Bight region, which is north of our study area, demonstrate that this  
348 shark preys upon teleosts (65% of diet), elasmobranchs (35% of diet), crustaceans (<0.1%),  
349 unidentified plant material (<0.1%), and mollusks (<0.1%) (Gelsleichter et al. 1999). The  
350 teleost prey items include water-column associated species, such as Atlantic menhaden  
351 (*Brevoortia tyrannus*) and bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*), but also benthic-associated species,  
352 such as sea robin (*Prionotus carolinus*) and summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*)  
353 (Gelsleichter et al. 1999). Elasmobranch prey include skates (Rajidae) and their eggs, as well as  
354 small sharks (Gelsleichter et al. 1999). As such, the four reef-associated predatory fish species  
355 (barracuda, banded rudderfish, gag grouper, black seabass) whose abundances varied with shark  
356 presence should not experience consumptive predation pressure from sand tiger sharks. We posit  
357 that the differential presence of predatory fish species in the presence or absence of sharks is  
358 likely not attributable to consumptive pressure, but instead that the ability of reef-associated  
359 fishes to optimize success in their differing modes of foraging (Au, 1991). It is also possible that  
360 water-column associated predators may perceive sharks as a threat or as competitors for prey.

361         Although we do not understand the exact mechanism, we suggest that benthic predators  
362 can maximize foraging success in the absence of sharks, whereas water-column predators may  
363 achieve higher foraging success in the presence of sharks. This likely relates to the landscape of  
364 fear and energy paradigms between predator and prey species that, respectively, dictate tradeoffs  
365 in optimizing survival and energetic costs (Gallagher et al. 2017). Banded rudderfish are



366 commonly referred to as “pilot fish,” reflecting their tendency to closely follow sharks and other  
367 large predators (Kells & Carpenter, 2011), which supports the notion that water-column  
368 associated species may reap foraging benefits from close associations with sharks. Also, we  
369 observed densely packed schools of baitfish with shark presence, and schooling formations could  
370 dilute predation pressure from sharks (Hamilton, 1971; Stankowich, 2003; Turner & Pitcher,  
371 1986).

372         Sharks likely resided on the shipwrecks before our ROV descended and began collecting  
373 video footage, but we do not know how long the sharks were present before our ROV surveys.  
374 We tried to control for the amount of time the shark was present by analyzing the time-lapse  
375 videos. Since the time-lapse cameras were stationary, they likely recorded footage closer to the  
376 moment that the sharks arrived on the wrecks. If, however, sharks and reef fish cohabited reefs,  
377 the reef fish response that we documented may not represent the immediate response of reef fish  
378 to the sharks but rather a post-arrival response. Future studies should monitor the habitat and  
379 conduct associated surveys before a shark arrives, at the moment of arrival, at intervals while the  
380 shark is present, and immediately after a shark leaves. It is also possible that fish community  
381 metrics may respond differently to first-time predator visits versus more frequent predator visits.  
382 While we did not observe this directly, predation pressure on younger sharks from more mature  
383 conspecifics, as has been demonstrated in another aggregating shark species, the lemon shark  
384 (*Negaprion brevirostris*; Guttridge et al. 2009) or complex social dynamics among predators  
385 (Guttridge et al. 2012; Haulsee et al. 2016) may relate to reef fish community metrics.  
386 Additionally, since the ROV video and time-lapse video footage demonstrated the same pattern  
387 in reef fish community metrics with shark presence, our findings were unlikely to have been  
388 influenced by the presence of the ROV in the water. It would be worthwhile to test whether these

389 patterns hold with diver-conducted surveys and whether a predator correction factor may be  
390 needed when for reef fish surveys when fish predators or human (diver) predators are present.  
391 We acknowledge that other rare predators may be present on these reefs and also relate to reef  
392 fish distributions. Future efforts should focus on teasing apart the relative influence of different  
393 large predators on reef fish.

394         Our study confirms that large predator occurrence not only relates to changes in  
395 community metrics in natural habitats but also in artificial habitats. In marine environments,  
396 artificial habitats, such as artificial reefs, are commonly deployed to enhance or supplement  
397 existing natural habitat or to restore degraded natural habitat (Becker et al. 2018). In this context,  
398 artificial reefs are intended to mimic functions of natural habitats. Whether artificial reefs  
399 provide functions similar to natural reefs is a topic of debate. It has been demonstrated, for  
400 example, that artificial reefs have different trophic structures than natural reefs (Burt et al. 2009;  
401 Simon et al. 2013) and can function differently than natural reefs by facilitating not only the  
402 spread of invasive species (Dafforn et al. 2012; Langhamer, 2012) but also the likely movement  
403 of tropical fish poleward (Paxton et al. 2019). Other studies, such as a meta-analysis of fish  
404 community metrics on artificial reefs relative to natural reefs, reveal performance similarities  
405 between these two reef types (Paxton et al. 2020). Our demonstration that large predator  
406 presence correlates with fine-scale changes in reef fish community metrics on artificial habitats,  
407 as in natural habitats, reveals that artificial habitats can provide similar ecosystem properties to  
408 natural habitats, increasing our understanding of how these novel habitats function ecologically  
409 within the context of food webs.

410         Our findings reveal that the presence of sand tiger sharks is associated with variations in  
411 reef fish community metrics. Specifically, elevated species richness occurred within a “halo of

412 influence” around the large predator, and community composition differed on reefs with and  
413 without sharks. The differences in community composition linked to species-specific responses  
414 to shark presence, where pelagic predatory fish associated with sharks but bottom-associated reef  
415 fish predators did not. Our study supports previous research on the role of large predators in  
416 structuring communities (i.e. Mittelbach et al. 1995, Myers et al. 2007) but also adds to the body  
417 of literature on predator ecology by providing evidence of short-term influences of a large  
418 predator on reef fish communities occupying artificial habitats.

419

## 420 **Acknowledgments**

421 We thank E. Ebert, C. Blawas, D. Day, R. Purifory, crew from Olympus Dive Center, and  
422 the UNCW Undersea Vehicles Program, for assistance with ROV surveys. For the time-lapse  
423 video surveys, we thank G. Safrit G. Sorg, H. Lemoine, R. Rosemond, J. Fleming, T. Courtney,  
424 M. Kenworthy, A. Poray, D. Keller, I. Kroll, C. Hamilton, J. Hughes, J. Bouton, T. Dodson, J.  
425 Purifoy, S. Davis, C. Lewis, E. Kromka, E. Ebert, K. Egan, J. Vander Pluym, B. Teer, B. Degan,  
426 J. Hackney, R. Muñoz, D.W. Freshwater, K. Johns, G. Compeau, J. Styron, D. Wells, S. Hall, M.  
427 Dionesotes, L. Bullock, A. Pickett, C. Marion, I. Conti-Jerpe, E. Weston, M. Wooster, J.  
428 McCord, D. Sybert, R. Purifoy and crew from Olympus Dive Center, T. Leonard and crew from  
429 Discovery Diving for diving and boating assistance. We thank Y. Azevedo, P. Oliviera, A.  
430 Requarth, L. Revels, S. Richardson, D. Rouse, T. Urugant, and K. Wiedbusch for assistance with  
431 time-lapse video processing. We thank R. Noble for mentorship and guidance of CB during the  
432 UNC IE Semester and as the chair of CB’s honor’s thesis committee. ABP was supported by a  
433 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship awarded under grant no. DGE-1144081, the P.E.O.  
434 Foundation, and the South-East Zoo Alliance for Reproduction & Conservation. The time-lapse

435 component of this research was supported by BOEM under cooperative agreement  
436 M13AC00006. The ROV component of this research was supported by funding from the North  
437 Carolina Aquarium Society, SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund, and NC Coastal  
438 Recreational Fishing License Grant (#6446). We also thank A. McDowell and L. Penfold for  
439 assistance in research funding acquisition. We thank R. Muñoz, M. Burton, J. Christensen, G.  
440 Piniak, C. Layman, and an anonymous reviewer for thoughtful feedback on this manuscript.

441

#### 442 **Author Contributions**

443 ABP conceptualized the ROV research. ABP and JCT conceptualized the time-lapse  
444 video research. ABP and JCT conducted ROV fieldwork. ABP, JCT, and RVV conducted  
445 fieldwork for time-lapse videos. CB processed ROV videos. RVV and ABP processed time-lapse  
446 videos. ABP and CB analyzed the data. CB and ABP wrote the manuscript. All authors discussed  
447 and interpreted the results and edited the manuscript. The views and conclusions contained in  
448 this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions  
449 or policies of the US Government, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products  
450 constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

451

#### 452 **Data Availability**

453 Data are archived in Dryad Digital Repository (xxxx).

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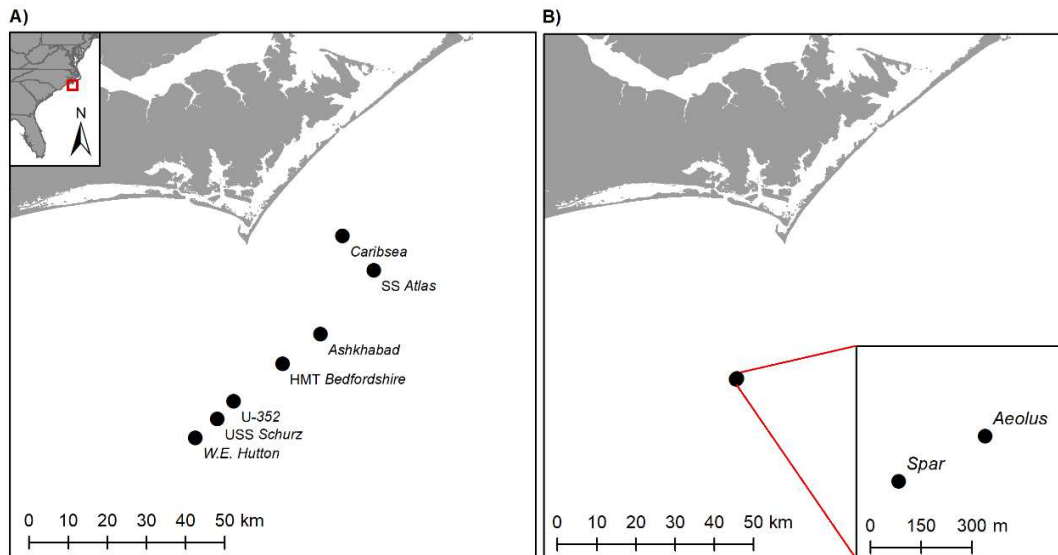
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703 **Figures**

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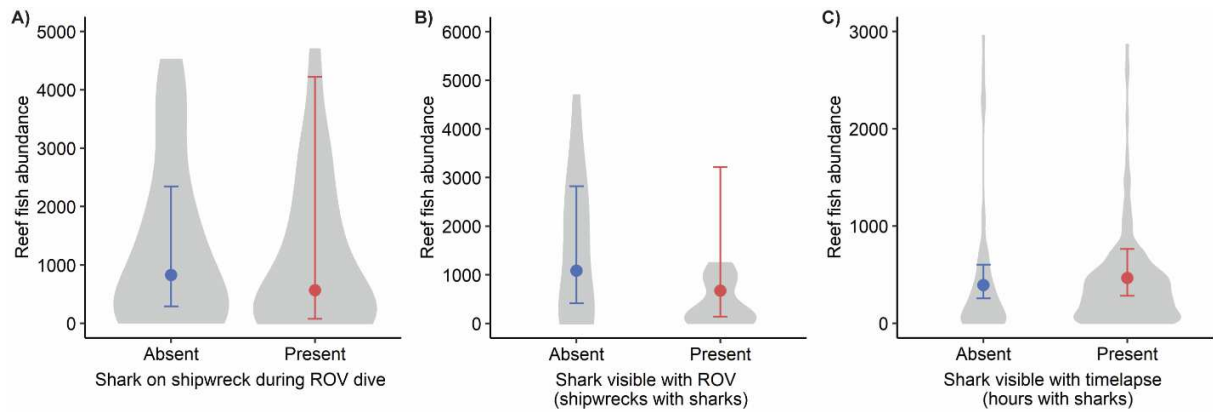
706 **Figure 1:** A) Location of seven shipwrecks surveyed using a remotely-operated vehicle (ROV).

707 B) Location of two shipwrecks surveyed without an ROV using stationary time-lapse

708 videography.

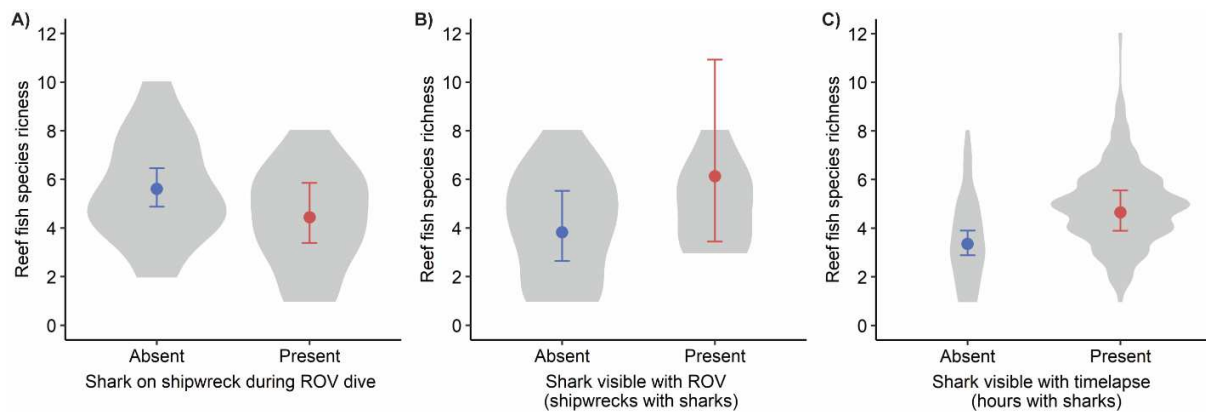
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711 **Figure 2:** Reef fish abundance per video clip when A) sharks are present versus absent on  
 712 shipwrecks during ROV surveys, B) sharks are visible versus not visible on shipwrecks occupied  
 713 by sharks during ROV surveys, and C) sharks are visible versus not visible on shipwrecks  
 714 occupied by sharks during each hour of stationary time-lapse video. Violin plots display the  
 715 observed data, where the shaded area is proportional to the number of observations. Predicted  
 716 values of reef fish abundance and corresponding confidence intervals from generalized linear  
 717 mixed models are shown inside the violin plots as colored points and lines.

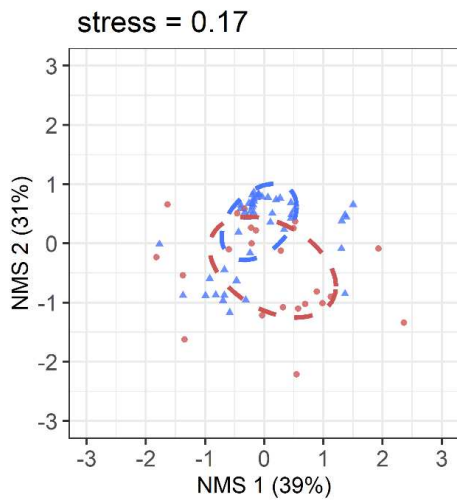


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719 **Figure 3:** Reef fish species richness per video clip when A) sharks are present versus absent on  
 720 shipwrecks during ROV surveys, B) sharks are visible versus not visible on shipwrecks occupied  
 721 by sharks during ROV surveys, and C) sharks are visible versus not visible on shipwrecks  
 722 occupied by sharks during each hour of stationary time-lapse video. Observed data are displayed  
 723 as violin plots, where the shaded area is proportional to the number of observations. Predicted  
 724 values of reef fish richness and corresponding confidence intervals from generalized linear  
 725 mixed models are shown inside the violin plots as colored points and lines.

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729 **Figure 4:** Nonmetric multidimensional scaling ordination of community composition when  
730 sharks are present (red circles) versus absent (blue triangles). Each point represents the  
731 community in a one-minute video clip from ROV surveys. Ellipses represent 50% confidence  
732 intervals.

733 **Supplementary Materials**

734

735 **Table S1:** Descriptions of shipwrecks surveyed with remotely-operated vehicles.

<b>Shipwreck</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>	<b>Date Sunk</b>	<b>Survey Date</b>	<b>Video clips</b>	<b>Sharks Present</b>
<i>Caribsea</i>	Freighter	27	34.6069	-76.3146	1942	2018-07-16	17	Yes
<i>SS Atlas</i>	Tanker	38	34.5285	-76.2422	1942	2018-08-06	6	Yes
<i>Ashkhabad</i>	Tanker	18	34.3815	-76.3650	1942	2018-08-06	11	No
<i>HMT Bedfordshire</i>	Converted	32	34.3141	-76.4525	1942	2018-08-06	10	No
<i>U-352</i>	German U-boat	35	34.2280	-76.5649	1942	2018-08-07	8	No
<i>USS Schurz</i>	US Navy	33	34.1873	-76.6022	1918	2018-08-07	7	No
<i>W.E. Hutton</i>	Tanker	38	34.1437	-76.6524	1942	2018-08-07	11	Yes

736

737 **Table S2:** Description of artificial reef shipwrecks surveyed with time-lapse videography.

<b>Shipwreck</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>	<b>Video clips</b>	<b>Sharks Present</b>
<i>Spar</i>	US Coast Guard Buoy Tender	34	34.2771	-76.6455	332	Yes
<i>Aeolus</i>	US Navy Cable Layer	35	34.2783	-76.6432	215	Yes

738

739 **Table S3:** Generalized linear mixed model (GLMM) results for models corresponding to each  
740 survey approach and response variable. The fixed and random effects, as well as the data used to  
741 fit the model, are specified. Deviance and *p*-values from the likelihood ratio test (LRT) between  
742 the full model and reduced model without the fixed effect are provided, as are the GLMM  
743 estimates for the mean reef fish abundance when sharks are absent and present.

Survey approach	Response variable	Data	Fixed effect	Random effect	Deviance	<i>p</i> -value	$\mu_{\text{absent}}$	$\mu_{\text{present}}$
ROV	Reef fish abundance	All	Shark presence vs. absence	Shipwreck	0.214	0.64	826	565
ROV	Reef fish abundance	Shipwrecks with sharks	Shark visible vs. not	Shipwreck	0.60	0.44	1084	676
Time lapse	Reef fish abundance	Hours with sharks	Shark visible vs. not	Shipwreck	1.88	0.17	393	465
ROV	Reef fish species richness	All	Shark presence vs. absence	Shipwreck	3.22	0.07	5.61	4.45
ROV	Reef fish species richness	Shipwrecks with sharks	Shark visible vs. not	Shipwreck	4.15	0.04	3.82	6.13
Time lapse	Reef fish species richness	Hours with sharks	Shark visible vs. not	Shipwreck	47.56	<0.0001	3.36	4.65

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