

PROJECT TITLE: Recovery of sharks and rays: quantifying the key factors that lead to positive impacts on species abundance across a global scale

Project Science Theme: Science for Environmental Solutions

Project keywords: Megafauna, overfishing, recovery, marine, sharks

Lead Institution: Bristol

Lead Supervisor: Martin Genner, Bristol, School of Biological Sciences

Co-Supervisor: Dr Rupert Collins, The Natural History Museum, Science Department

Co-Supervisor: Dr Hugo Harrison, University of Bristol, School of Biological Sciences

Project Enquiries: m.genner@bristol.ac.uk

Webpage: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/biology/research/ecological/>

Project aims and methods:

The industrialisation of fisheries during the 20th century led to a global decline in elasmobranch species, which are particularly vulnerable to overfishing due to their relatively large body sizes, late maturation, and extended gestation periods. However, over recent decades, a number of protective measures have been introduced, including restrictions on fishing activities and the establishment of marine protected areas. Building on evidence that some shark and ray populations are beginning to rebound, this project will investigate the key factors that enabling recovery, including fisheries restrictions, environmental characteristics, species ranges and species life history traits. The Doctoral Researcher will receive training in the analysis of long-term quantitative datasets and in methods for linking biological, environmental, spatial, and ecological variables. They will play a central role in shaping the project, including compiling key datasets, designing indices to quantify changes in fisheries practices, and selecting representative case studies. This work will be supported by the combined ecological, analytical, and systematic expertise of the University of Bristol (Martin Genner, Hugo Harrison) and the Natural History Museum (Rupert Collins). Together, these analyses will contribute to the growing global effort to identify effective strategies for the conservation of key marine species.

Useful recruitment links:

For information relating to the research project please contact the lead Supervisor via:
m.genner@bristol.ac.uk

Bristol NERC GW4+ DTP Prospectus:

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/research/great-western-four-doctoral-training-partnership-nerc/>

How to apply to the University of Bristol:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/>

The application deadline is Thursday 8 January 2026 at 2359 GMT