

Politics

Scientists estimate a Greenland shark lived about 400 years



This undated photo made available by Julius Nielsen on Aug. 11, 2016 shows a Greenland shark slowly swimming away from a boat, returning to the deep and cold waters of the Uummannaq Fjord in northwestern Greenland during tag -and- release program in Norway and Greenland. In a report released Thursday, Aug. 11, 2016, scientists calculate this species of shark is Earth's oldest living animal with a backbone. They estimate that one of those they examined was born roughly 400 years ago, about the time of the Pilgrims in the U.S., and kept on swimming until it died only a couple years ago. (Julius Nielsen via AP) (Associated Press)

By Seth Borenstein | AP August 11 at 2:20 PM

WASHINGTON — Scientists now calculate that Greenland sharks are Earth's oldest living animals with backbones.

They estimate that one of those gray sharks was born in icy Arctic waters

roughly 400 years ago and lived until only a couple of years ago.

Using a novel dating technique, an international team of biologists and physicists estimated the age of 28 dead female Greenland sharks. Eight of them were probably 200 years or older.

Marine biologist Julius Nielsen at the University of Copenhagen estimated that the oldest of them was 392 years old, but with a huge 120-year plus or minus margin of error because of uncertainties in technique.

Until now, the record holder was a bowhead whale that hit 211 years old.

The study is published Thursday in the journal Science.

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