

# THE CYCLONE

ISSUE 2 - JULY 2025

THE MANTA TRUST



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# EDITOR'S LETTER

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Welcome to Issue 2 of Cyclone Magazine!

Since launching our first edition, your support has been truly inspiring. With each issue, we aim to bring you closer to the lives of manta and devil rays...their stories, the threats they face, and the people working to protect them.

In this issue, we follow Maggy, the first manta ever satellite-tagged in Japan, revealing unexpected behaviours in the deep waters of the Kuroshio Current. We look ahead to Sharks International 2026 in Sri Lanka, set to be the largest global gathering for shark and ray science, and highlight powerful community-led conservation and education in the Maldives' Raa Atoll.

You'll also find our regular features: Species Spotlight shines light on the Spinetail devil ray, and Manta Moments showcases breathtaking images of these ocean giants in action.

What really connects these stories is momentum...scientific discovery, collaboration, and community all driving change. Conservation is challenging work, but progress is being made every day, thanks to people like you.

Thank you for being part of this journey. We hope this issue leaves you informed, inspired, and hopeful for what's ahead.

With warm regards,

**Jasmine Corbett**

Media & Communications Manager, Manta Trust



# Species Spotlight

In each issue, we spotlight a different species of manta or devil ray, exploring fascinating facts and the latest research that reveals their unique behaviours, habitats, and conservation challenges. Each feature offers fresh insights into the remarkable diversity within this family of ocean giants. Through these in-depth explorations, we aim to enhance understanding, celebrate the extraordinary traits of these species, and highlight the crucial efforts dedicated to their protection. Join us as we uncover the wonders of manta and devil rays and the vital research that drives their conservation forward.



**T**he Spinetail devil ray (*Mobula mobular*) is one of the largest members of the mobulid family, often seen gliding through offshore tropical and warm-temperate waters around the globe. Despite its wide distribution, it remains one of the most heavily impacted mobulid species due to targeted and incidental capture in industrial and artisanal fisheries.

In our [recent global study](#) covering 75 countries, we uncovered that mobulid meat is consumed locally in 35 nations and exported to major markets worldwide. Gill plates, highly valued in traditional medicine, are traded internationally from at least 14 countries, particularly in Asia and Africa.

With Spinetail devil rays among the most frequently caught mobulids, their populations are declining rapidly across much of their range. This research highlights a critical need for stronger fishing regulations, international trade controls, and local enforcement to prevent further losses. By mapping trade routes and identifying key markets, we hope to drive informed conservation action before it's too late for this majestic ocean giant.

### **Spinetail Devil Ray**

*Mobula mobular*







# Moodhu Vaguthu

**T**he Maldives Manta Conservation Programme (MMCP) has three permanent bases in the Maldives in Raa, Baa and Laamu Atoll. The Raa Atoll base operates out of the InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort and carries out the three main facets of Manta Trusts' conservation philosophy – Research, Education, and Collaboration – from within a resort setting. This unique partnership allows us to access key manta aggregation sites, such as Maamunagau lagoon (the first confirmed manta nursery site in the Maldives) and conduct our vital research. We are then able to share much of the knowledge and insights we glean from being in the water with these majestic animals with a diverse range of people, including guests visiting the InterContinental and with local communities and schools on neighboring local islands.

Education is one of the central pillars of Manta Trusts' multidisciplinary approach to conservation, an approach that recognises that the success of conservation initiatives often hinges on broadening the scope of people invested in the overarching aims of species and ecosystem protection. Arguably the most important demographic to target for these initiatives is secondary school students, the individuals most likely to become the next generation of marine conservationists.

The Maldives is an archipelagic nation with over 1,192 islands; the country has more territorial sea than land. As such, the Ocean is an integral component of Maldivian identity, livelihood, and culture. In the face of mounting threats and pressures on marine species and ecosystems, both locally and globally, it is imperative for people to understand the ramifications of these pressures and the roles they may play in mitigating them.







To that end, the beginning of 2025 saw the MMCP team based in Raa launch their dedicated marine education program in the atoll, specifically targeting schools on neighboring local islands. This began with offering one to two-day education and outreach efforts on Meedhoo called 'Moodhu Vaguthu' (which means 'Ocean Time' in Dhivehi, the official language of the Maldives) in collaboration with the Olive Ridley Project and JOALI Being. Each month, a different grade at the Raa Atoll Education Centre (RAEC) is offered the Moodhu Vaguthu programme which features one day of in class sessions including presentations and interactive quizzes and a second in-water day which introduces students to the fundamentals of swimming and snorkeling. All of this is in preparation for the launching of the Moodhu Madharusaa (or 'Ocean School') programme later in the year which is a dedicated six-month, marine education programme. Moodhu Madharusaa features five core modules on marine species and ecosystems as well as field trips, offering students the opportunity to gain both theoretical and practical experience in the field of marine conservation.

Building long term relationships requires a number of elements including a shared goal or vision, trust, collaboration, and a willingness to learn from each other. Through the education and outreach efforts launched this year in Raa, we aim to build lasting relationships with local communities, other conservation NGO's, and resorts in the atoll so that we can collectively work toward protecting manta rays, their habitats, and the plethora of other species that are integral to the health and well-being of Maldivian ecosystems.



Words and photographs by  
**Meral Hafeez**  
Maldives Manta Conservation  
Programme  
Raa Atoll Project Leader











# #SAVE THE MANTAS

**T**he Manta Trust and global partners are launching a powerful new campaign, #SaveTheMantas, calling for a full ban on international commercial trade in manta and devil rays. The call comes ahead of the 20th Conference of the Parties (CoP20) to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), taking place this November.

At stake is a proposal to uplist all manta and devil rays (collectively known as mobulids) to CITES Appendix I, the highest level of international protection. If adopted,

it would prohibit all commercial international trade in mobulid products, a critical step toward ending unsustainable exploitation.

“Manta and devil rays are among the most iconic and revered marine species, yet they remain incredibly vulnerable to overfishing,” said Dr Guy Stevens, Chief Executive and Co-Founder of the Manta Trust.

“After over a decade of global protections under CITES Appendix II, it is disheartening to see unsustainable international trade in these species not only continuing but increasing. Stronger action is urgently needed.”



**D**espite their Appendix II listing since 2013 (mantas) and 2016 (devil rays), mobulid populations continue to crash. All nine known species are now listed as threatened on the IUCN Red List, with seven classified as Endangered. In some areas, populations have fallen by more than 90%.

The main threat is overfishing, driven by the trade in gill plates, sold as a traditional remedy in parts of Asia, and meat consumed locally or exported. Manta and devil rays are caught worldwide, primarily in coastal fisheries. A [recent global study](#) led by the Manta Trust revealed that products from these rays are traded across at least 22 countries, often with little regulation or accurate reporting.

Mobulids' biology makes them particularly vulnerable: they take about 10 years to mature and give birth to only one pup every few years. This means that even low fishing pressure can cause population collapse.

## Why Appendix I Matters

An Appendix I uplisting would ban all commercial international trade, closing existing loopholes that allow exports under questionable "sustainable" quotas. It would also simplify enforcement: rather than identifying species or verifying documents, officials could apply a straightforward ban.

"Our study shows that current protections are not enough," said Dr Marta D Palacios, lead author of the recent trade assessment. "Without urgent action, we risk losing these extraordinary species."

The uplisting proposal, spearheaded by Ecuador and backed by a coalition of governments and NGOs, is grounded in the most comprehensive trade analysis to date and offers a practical path to protection.

“

**"AFTER OVER A DECADE OF GLOBAL PROTECTIONS UNDER CITES APPENDIX II, IT IS DISHEARTENING TO SEE UNSUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN THESE SPECIES NOT ONLY CONTINUING BUT INCREASING. STRONGER ACTION IS URGENTLY NEEDED."**

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# Key Moments

## On the Road to Protection



**1 JULY 2025**

**#SAVETHEMANTAS  
CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES**

The campaign officially begins! With the launch of #SaveTheMantas, we're mobilising a global community to stand up for manta and devil rays. Through powerful visuals, public outreach, and strategic advocacy, we're building momentum in the lead-up to CITES CoP20, where international protection for these species will be on the line.



**17 SEPTEMBER 2025**

**WORLD MANTA DAY**

This year's [World Manta Day](#) carries the theme "*The Power of Protection*". It's a global moment to spotlight the urgent need for stronger safeguards for manta and devil rays. Expect a wave of awareness actions, campaign activations, and inspiring content as we rally voices around the world to demand lasting protection.



**24 NOVEMBER -  
05 DECEMBER 2025**

**CITES CoP20 - UZBEKISTAN**

The critical decision point. During these two weeks, governments will meet at [CITES CoP20](#) to vote on the uplisting of all manta and devil rays to Appendix I. This is our chance to help secure a global ban on the international trade of these species — a major step toward preventing extinction and ensuring their future in our oceans.



## GET INVOLVED

To raise awareness, the Manta Trust is calling on divers and ocean lovers to join the #SaveTheMantas campaign launching this July. Participants can:

- [Buy and wear the campaign T-shirt](#)
- Take a photo and upload it to your social media and the Manta Trust [campaign page](#)
- Tag social media posts with #SaveTheMantas

All images will become part of a powerful visual mural at CITES CoP20, sending delegates a clear message: the world is watching.

“This isn’t just about conservation. It’s about survival,” said Muhammad G Salim (Egin), who leads the Mobula Project Indonesia, an affiliate project of the Manta Trust.

While an Appendix I uplisting won’t solve every challenge, it’s a crucial step, one that could give mobulids a real fighting chance.

**Join the campaign.  
Share your voice.  
#SaveTheMantas**





# Manta Moments

In every issue, we showcase a hand-picked collection of our favourite manta encounters from around the world, brought to life through breathtaking photography by our dedicated team.

Each image tells a powerful story, capturing not only the beauty and grace of these gentle giants but also the urgency of protecting them. Through these evocative visuals, we hope to spark curiosity, inspire awe, and deepen understanding of the challenges manta and devil rays face. Let these extraordinary encounters renew your connection to the ocean and fuel a shared commitment to safeguarding manta rays for generations to come.



AN OCEANIC MANTA RAY SPOTTED DURING  
A RESEARCH SURVEY WITH THE MALDIVES  
MANTA CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

© Simon Hilbourne



MUNKS PYGMY DEVIL RAYS  
(MOBULA MUNKIANA) IN A  
COURTSHIP VORTEX, BAJA  
CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

© Jay Clue







A REEF MANTA RAY STOPS BY A  
CLEANING STATION IN LAAMU  
ATOLL, MALDIVES

© Jasmine Corbett







# Welcome back, Maggy!

Updates from the Japan Manta Project on Japan's  
First-Ever Satellite-Tagged Manta!

**A**fter four months of silence, we finally have news—we've recovered Maggy the manta's satellite tag!

The tag was originally deployed in August 2024 off the coast of Okinawa, Japan, and has since gone on quite the journey of its own. It eventually washed ashore on Hatenohama, a remote sandbar in Kume-jima, around 100 km from where it was first attached.

But what about Maggy? What did he get up to beneath the waves?

## Japan's First-Ever Satellite-Tagged Manta

This was a huge moment for manta research in Japan. Until now, no one had ever successfully deployed a satellite tag on a manta ray here. But that changed thanks to an incredible team effort. [Japan Manta Project](#) lead Rika Ozaki joined forces with Dr. Mark Erdmann (Conservation International Asia Pacific), Lydia Green (Manta Watch Aotearoa NZ), and Masato and Yuko Kamotani (Dive Gobies) to make it happen. While Japan has had a manta photo ID database since the 1970s (thanks to Takashi Ito at Ito Diving Service), less than 0.01% of all mobulid ray research has come from this region. This expedition aimed to

change that—and open a new window into the lives of these elusive giants.

## What lies beneath: following Maggy into the deep

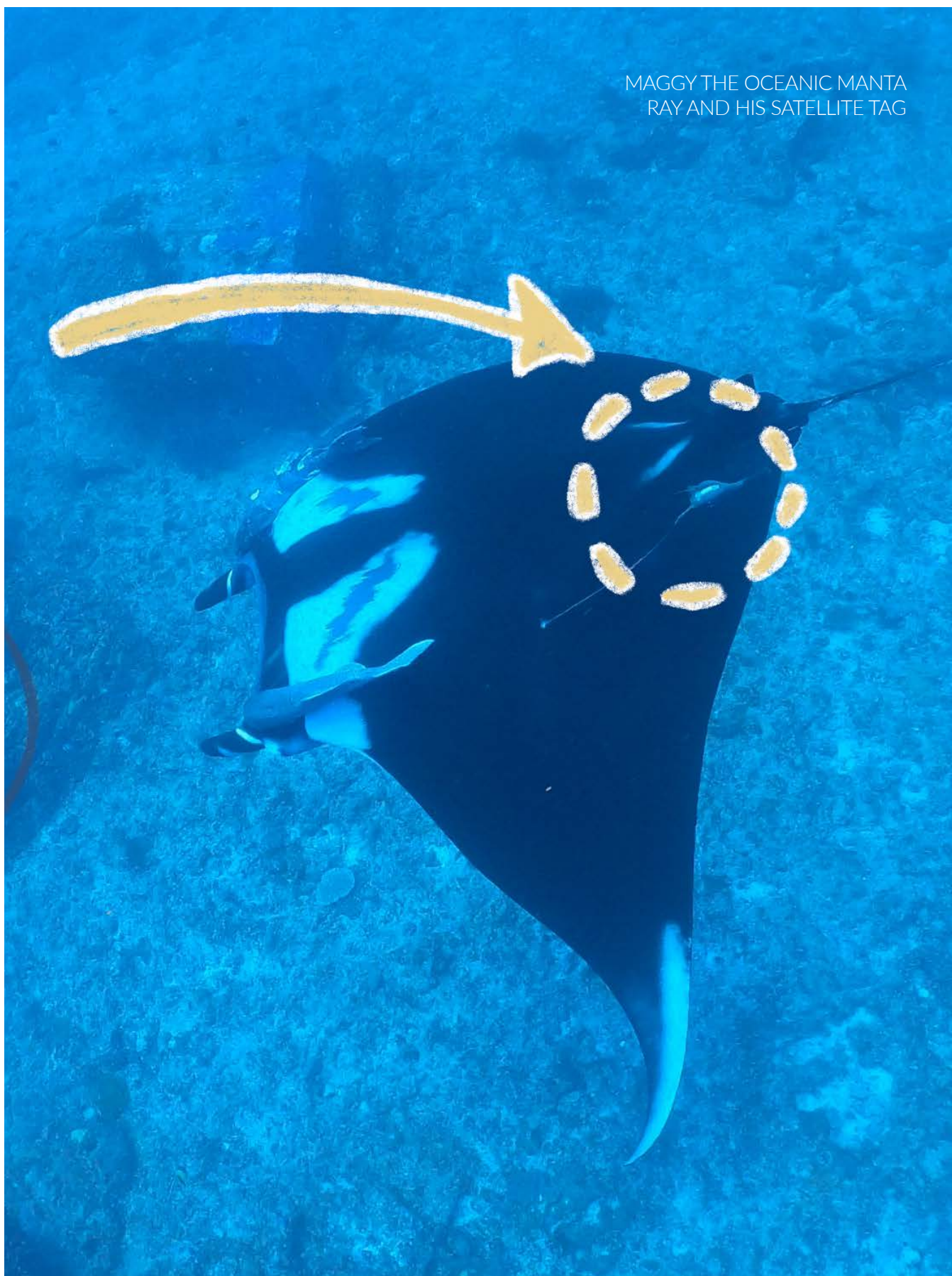
Okinawa sits along the powerful Kuroshio Current, a warm ocean flow that travels north from the Philippines. Although it's low in nutrients, this current helps shape some of the most diverse coral ecosystems in the world—and creates perfect conditions for fish to spawn and grow. And now, we're starting to learn that it might also play an important role in the lives of oceanic manta rays.

Maggy, the first manta ever satellite-tagged in Japan, surprised us. Unlike many of his Pacific cousins who spend most of their time near the surface, Maggy hung out much deeper—his median depth was around 300 meters! Globally, oceanic mantas usually stay above 250 meters (Andrzejczek et al., 2021), so what was he doing down there?

One possibility is that Maggy was tapping into Okinawa's deep scattering layer (DSL)—a zone packed with tiny fish and zooplankton that migrate up and down the water column each day. Mantas in other parts of the world, like Peru and Ecuador, have been seen foraging in these deep layers, diving for prey at



MAGGY THE OCEANIC MANTA  
RAY AND HIS SATELLITE TAG



night and surfacing to rewarm in shallower, sunlit waters. Like these manta rays, Maggy was also recorded taking deeper excursions at night time and coming back up during the day, spending a higher percentage of his time deeper at night. But Maggy didn't seem to need to warm up much at the surface—he stayed between 50 and 100 meters during the day, likely because Okinawa's waters are already warm enough.

The DSL in Okinawa sits around 400–500 meters deep and is present all year round (Min et al., 2018), providing a steady food supply. Could this be why Maggy preferred the deep? Was he targeting this hidden buffet of mesopelagic life? We're still piecing the story together—but one thing is clear: there's a whole world of manta behaviour happening far below the surface, and we're only just beginning to uncover it!

### What's Next?

This is just the start. Maggy's journey has already taught us so much—and we're just scratching the surface. A massive thank you to everyone who helped make this possible, and to our wonderful Manta Cyclone community for all the support along the way.

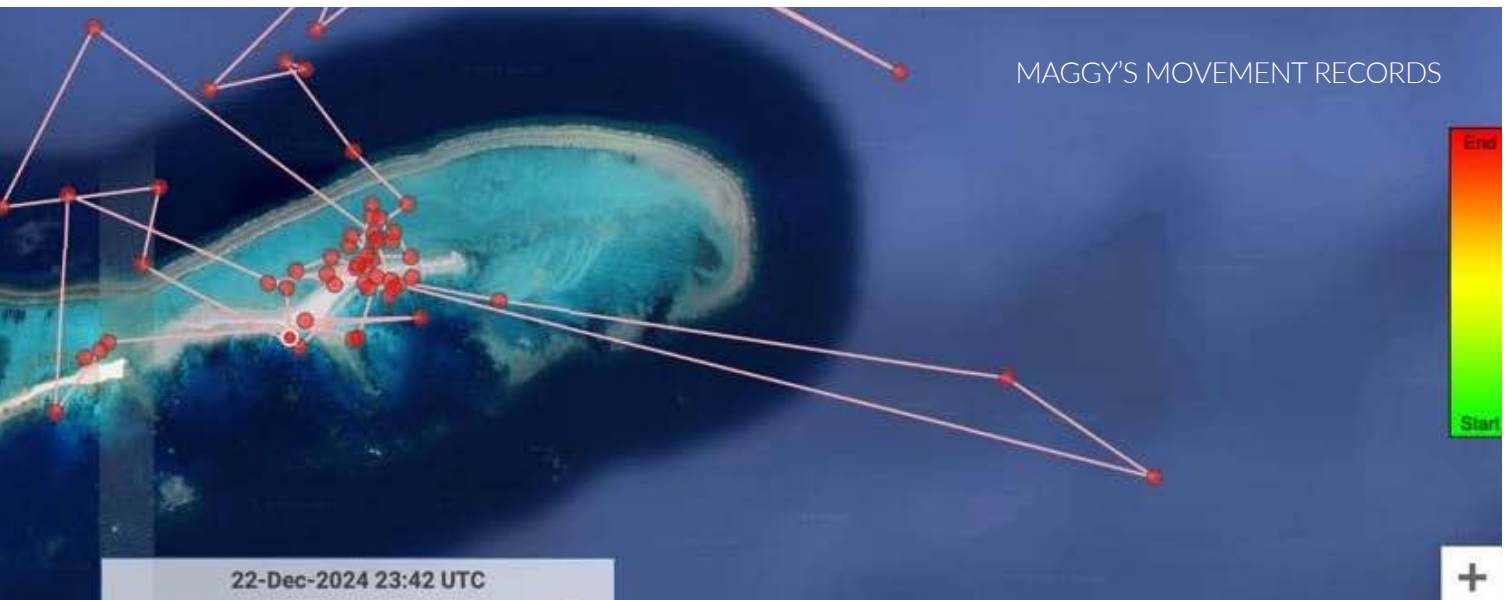
More updates coming soon. For now—here's to Maggy, and to many more manta adventures to come.



Words and photographs by  
**Rika Ozaki**  
Japan Manta Project  
Project Leader







# Sharks International Heads to Sri Lanka



For the first time, Sharks International will take place in Asia, with Sri Lanka set to host the world's largest gathering of shark and ray experts. From marine scientists and policymakers to conservation leaders, the 2026 event in Colombo will bring together hundreds of delegates to share research, forge collaborations, and tackle urgent challenges facing chondrichthyans. We spoke with the organising team to learn what this historic move means for regional conservation and global momentum.





# SHARKS

## INTERNATIONAL

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### SRI LANKA 2026





**H**eld every four years, Sharks International is the premier global event focused on these critical yet vulnerable marine species, chondrichthyans, which includes the manta and devil rays. The 2026 edition will provide a vital platform to share new research, promote effective conservation strategies, and build global collaboration to protect shark and ray populations.

Manta and devil rays are among the world's most threatened marine species and their populations are under severe pressure from fisheries and trade. Large-scale artisanal and commercial fisheries across South Asia, including Sri Lanka, land thousands of manta and devil rays annually as bycatch or target catch, leading to significant population declines. Demand for gill plates, marketed as pseudo-remedies in traditional medicine in some parts of the world, and local meat consumption, continues despite regional and international legal protections, largely due to insufficient national-level regulations.

A recent study, *High bycatch rates of manta and devil rays in the "small-scale" artisanal fisheries of Sri Lanka* ([Fernando & Stewart, 2021](#)), highlights the alarming scale of overfishing in Sri Lanka. Catch curve analysis for species such as the Spinetail devil ray shows that fishing pressure far exceeds sustainable levels. Sri Lanka is also a major exporter of mobulid gill plates, yet many fishers and traders remain unaware of their role in international trade or of regulations or protections under agreements like CITES and CMS. As a result, another study (*Global assessment of manta and devil ray gill plate and meat trade: conservation implications and opportunities* by [Palacios et al., 2024](#)) considered Sri Lanka a high-priority country for manta and devil ray conservation, with global assessments placing it among the top nations driving declines through high catch volumes and trade activity. Researchers are calling for urgent action: stronger enforcement of international agreements, more effective fisheries management, and targeted education and outreach to coastal communities.

Against this backdrop, hosting Sharks International 2026 in Colombo is more than symbolic; it is a strategic opportunity. The conference, hosted by the Manta Trust's Sri Lankan affiliate,

Blue Resources Trust, will bring together the global chondrichthyan science and conservation community to share knowledge, determine how best to strengthen policy, and build lasting regional and global capacity to protect manta and devil rays.

Blue Resources Trust is a non-profit organisation dedicated to marine conservation, sustainable fisheries, and science-based policy in the Indian Ocean. With deep regional expertise and global partnerships, Blue Resources Trust aims to deliver the most inclusive and accessible edition of Sharks International to date. Daniel Fernando, Co-Founder and Director of Fisheries and Policy at Blue Resources Trust, expressed his enthusiasm for this event:

“

***We are honoured and excited to host this prestigious conference in Sri Lanka. It's a tremendous responsibility, especially as this marks the first time it will be held on the Asian continent, but we're confident that this platform will not just expand research and conservation knowledge for sharks, rays, and chimaeras across the world, but also build new collaborations and partnerships across scientists and policymakers.***

”

**Daniel Fernando**

Blue Resources Trust  
Co-Founder and Director  
of Fisheries and Policy





**T**he conference programme is designed to inspire and connect the global shark and ray research and conservation community. Attendees can look forward to daily keynote addresses from leading experts in chondrichthyan science and policy, covering the most pressing issues facing these species today.

Thematic sessions will delve into a range of topics, from species behaviour and sustainable fisheries management to innovative conservation strategies. Practical workshops will provide hands-on opportunities for problem-solving and knowledge-sharing, encouraging collaboration across disciplines and regions.

Alongside the formal sessions, informal networking events will create valuable opportunities for attendees to build partnerships, exchange ideas, and foster lasting connections within this worldwide community. As a result, the 2026 conference will offer a unique platform for Manta Trust' affiliate projects and researchers from around the world, including teams from Mexico, Cameroon, Maldives and Indonesia, to connect, share their insights, and build meaningful collaborations.

To make Sharks International 2026 as inclusive and impactful as possible, the conference is committed to ensuring that researchers and students from all backgrounds, especially those in underrepresented regions, have the opportunity to attend and share their work. That's why they've introduced a staggered and subsidised fee structure focusing on offering the best rates possible to participants from Sri Lanka and all low-income nations, along with additional discounts to students and professionals from low-income nations whose abstracts are accepted

or who are leading a symposium. In addition, 100 small grants will be awarded to eligible students from these regions, based on the strength of their abstract submissions.

Delivering a conference that is both globally inclusive and impactful requires significant support. Sharks International 2026 is actively inviting sponsors to help offset participant costs and ensure the success of this landmark event. Sponsorship contributions will directly support equitable access and the delivery of a high-quality, collaborative programme. In recognition of their support, sponsors will receive:

- Logo placement on the official conference website and in the abstract book
- On-site branding, including pull-up banners at the venue
- Opportunities to showcase a promotional video during the opening or closing sessions

This is a unique opportunity for businesses, foundations, and philanthropists to demonstrate leadership in marine conservation and scientific equity, while gaining visibility among a global network of scientists, policymakers, and changemakers.

Join or support Sharks International 2026 and play a vital role in shaping the future of manta and devil ray science and conservation. For more information on sponsorship opportunities, event details, registration, or abstract submissions, please visit [si2026.org](https://si2026.org) or contact [info@si2026.org](mailto:info@si2026.org).

Words by  
**Leila Scheltema**  
Sharks International  
Media and  
Communications Manager





SAMPLING MOBULA  
HYPOSTOMA IN CAMEROON

© Simon Hilbourne



# Member





# Benefits



**E**njoy Your Exclusive Cyclone Member Perks!

As a valued member of The Cyclone, you're already making a huge difference for manta rays—and we want to thank you with some exclusive perks you're now entitled to!

You can enjoy a Buy One, Get One Free offer on our Maldives Manta Adoption Packs. Adopt a manta for yourself and receive a second Digital Adoption Pack free (worth £25)—a perfect gift for a friend or loved one! Each pack includes a personalised adoption certificate, fascinating facts about your manta, and updates on their latest sightings.

You also receive an exclusive 10% discount on everything in the Manta Trust Clothing Store, including our eco-friendly t-shirts, tote bags, and more. Every purchase helps support our vital conservation work and spreads the word about protecting manta rays.

Thank you for being such an important part of The Cyclone. Together, we're creating a brighter future for manta rays and their ocean home!



APPLY CODE **CYCLONEB1G1**  
AT CHECKOUT

[mantatrust.org/adopt-a-manta](https://mantatrust.org/adopt-a-manta)

UNDONE + Manta TRUST

# AQUA

CARBON MAGGY





**C**elebrate Maggy's Journey with an Exclusive Cyclone Discount!

Maggy made history in 2024 as the first-ever manta ray satellite-tagged in Japan, and now you can carry a piece of that groundbreaking story with you.

The Aqua Carbon Maggy timepiece by UNDONE is inspired by Maggy's deep dives through Okinawa's rich, mesopelagic waters; a tribute to the remarkable discoveries made by the Japan Manta Project.

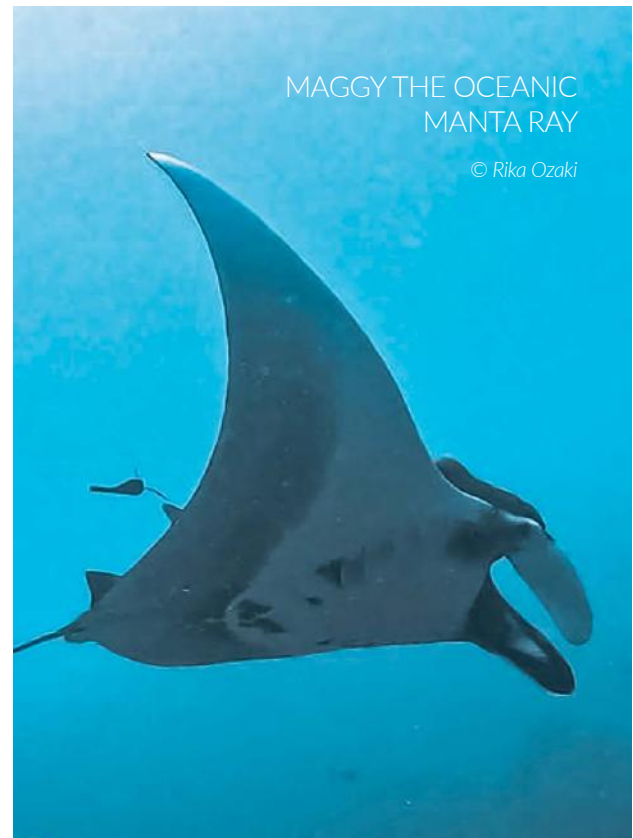
As a special thank you to our Cyclone community, you're entitled to **5% off** the Aqua Carbon Maggy. Simply add the product to your cart and enter the promo code **CYCLONEMAGGY2025** at checkout. Available while stocks last at [UNDONE.com](https://undone.com) or [UNDONE Japan](https://undone.co.jp).

You can also unlock even more benefits like free worldwide shipping and exclusive early access to new releases by signing up for a free UNDONE CLUB membership. It only takes a moment to create your account!

Thank you for being part of The Cyclone and for supporting our efforts to explore and protect the hidden lives of manta rays like Maggy.

### Promo Code – Terms & Conditions

- The promotional code is effective from 00:01 on January 1, 2025, until 23:59 on December 31, 2025.
- The Promo Code is only applicable for Aqua Carbon Maggy (SKU : COL-AQD-MAT), while stocks last.
- The Promo Code is only applicable to <https://undone.com/products/maggy> and <https://undone.co.jp/products/col-aqd-mat>.
- To redeem the Promo Code, please enter and apply the Promo Code in the field of "Discount code or gift card" on the checkout page.
- Only one Promo Code can be used per transaction.
- The Promo Code is not valid for use in combination with other Promo Codes or discounts, is not applicable for business purposes, and cannot be redeemed for cash or alternative offers.
- The Promo Code is not applicable for settling delivery fees.
- The discounted price shall be rounded to the nearest dollar (if applicable).
- All time references are determined by the server's receipt of UNDONE.
- UNDONE reserves the right to modify the Terms and Conditions at any time without notice.
- In the event of any disputes, UNDONE retains the authority to make the final decision.
- If there is any inconsistency or conflict between the English and Japanese version of this Terms and Conditions, the Japanese version shall prevail.



MAGGY THE OCEANIC  
MANTA RAY

© Rika Ozaki



© Simon Hillbourne



Thank you for your generous support! Your Cyclone Membership is helping us protect manta rays and preserve marine habitats. Every contribution fuels research, conservation, and education around the world. Together, we're making a difference for our oceans and future generations. Thank you for standing with us!

