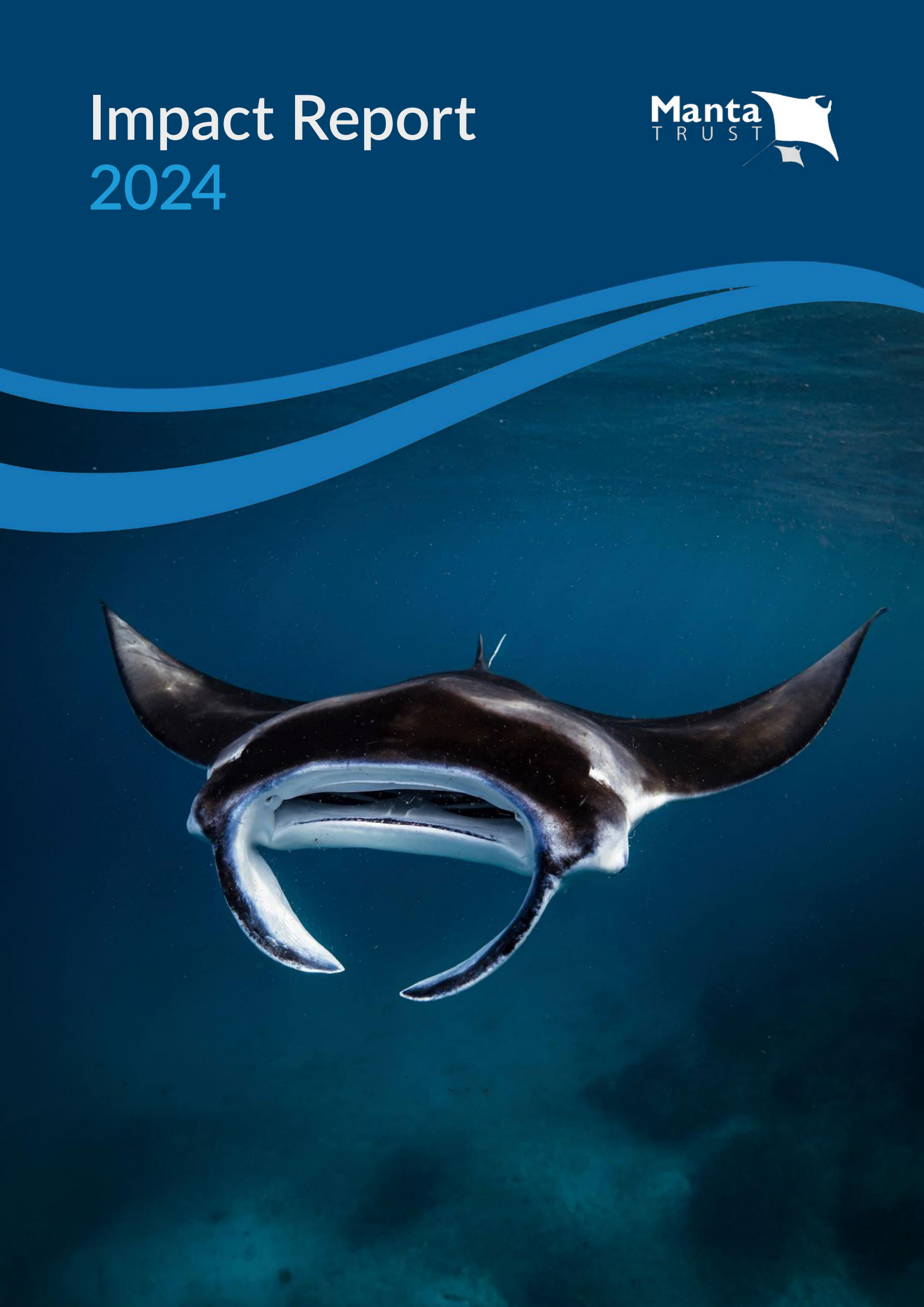
Impact Report 2024

Manta TRUST



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The Manta Trust team at the Natural History Museum, London, for the 2024 World Manta Day event.

A Message from our Chief Executiv

An oceanic manta ray in Fuvahmulah, Maldives.

ve, Dr Guy Stevens

As we reflect on 2024, the Manta Trust continues to make meaningful strides in research, education, and collaboration, strengthening our global network and deepening our impact.

This year saw the launch of our Research Portal, a central hub to access all our published research. With over a dozen new publications added in 2024, our work spanned a range of topics; from groundbreaking discoveries in the Chagos Archipelago and Seychelles, to investigating manta ray injuries in Mexico, and advancing rewilding conservation efforts in the Maldives.

In the Maldives, our research team reached significant milestones, documenting the 6,000th individual reef manta ray—the largest recorded population in the world—alongside the 1,000th oceanic manta ray. The RahVeshi Programme, designed to foster long-term, Maldivian-led research and outreach, achieved new heights, culminating in the launch of a scholarship programme that provided dive training for aspiring marine conservationists.

Expanding our global reach, we welcomed the re-established India Mobulid Project as our newest affiliate, reinforcing our commitment to understanding and protecting mobulid rays worldwide. Our dedication to the next generation took shape through the Ocean Ambassadors Programme, enabling 17 young leaders from 15 countries to develop ocean advocacy projects within their communities. Complementing these efforts, we engaged with nearly 5,000 students in the UK alone, inspiring the conservationists of tomorrow.

This year, we also strengthened our Fisheries and Policy team, taking vital steps toward securing stronger international protections for manta and devil rays. A global fisheries and policy review, alongside an updated assessment of the mobulid gill plate and meat trade, will be instrumental in shaping our future conservation priorities. Additionally, we published a comprehensive guidebook on manta and devil rays, providing a valuable resource for researchers in the field.

The progress we have made in 2024 is a testament to the dedication and collaboration of our global network. None of this would be possible without the support of our partners, donors, and passionate individuals who share our vision for a future where manta and devil rays thrive. As we look ahead to 2025, we remain committed to driving positive change for these incredible animals and the ecosystems they call home.

Dr. Guy Stevens
Chief Executive & Co-Founder

Our Approach

The Manta Trust was formed in 2011, to coordinate global manta and devil ray research and conservation efforts and has grown significantly in size and reputation over the last thirteen years.

Our vision is a sustainable future for the ocean, where manta rays and their relatives thrive in healthy, diverse marine ecosystems.

Our core team, comprised of 15 staff in 2024, supports a global network of affiliate projects, providing expert guidance and assistance with research and scientific practices, regional strategy development, media and press, fundraising, education and outreach, database management, fisheries and policy, charity governance, monitoring impact and facilitating collaboration. We started 2024 with 29 active affiliate projects, but were delighted to end the year with 30 as the India Mobulid Project was revived with the appointment of a new Project Leader in August.

The charity's core team also manages the Manta Trust's central operations, including fundraising, media and communications, finance management, global database management, impact monitoring and strategic development. Over 2024, we were responsible for 18 initiatives focused on changing legislation and policy for manta and devil rays as well as inspiring more people around the world to take positive action for manta and devil rays, and their habitats.

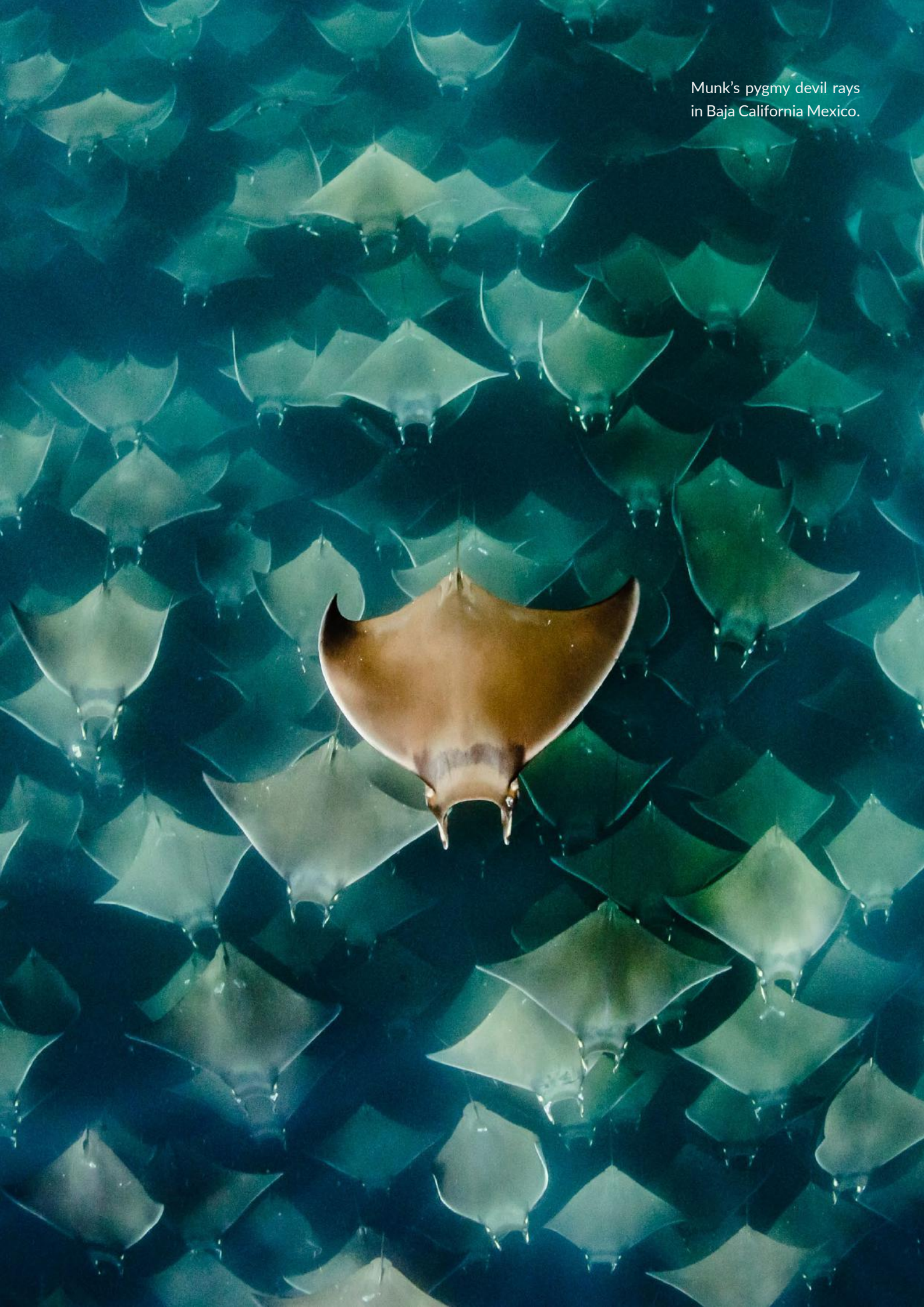
Our mission is to collaborate with affiliates around the world through research, education and by providing expert advice to drive the policies and practices necessary to conserve manta rays, their relatives and habitats.

At the end of 2023 we launched our Five-Year Plan for Conserving Manta and Devil Rays; created by the Manta Trust core team with guidance and input from our global network of affiliates, our board of trustees, and advisors. This document clearly defines our role in conserving manta and devil rays in the near- and medium-term and is used by the core team to direct global efforts. This document underpins our approach to everything, from recruitment to funding allocation, to project management.

The Five-Year Plan defines our four key conservation goals which are supported by our governance aims, also outlined in the same document:

- **GOAL ONE:** Retained bycatch and targeted catch of manta and devil rays by fisheries is reduced.
- **GOAL TWO:** Discarded bycatch and entanglement of manta and devil rays by fisheries is reduced.
- **GOAL THREE:** Manta and devil rays are better protected from growing human intrusion and disturbance, development, pollution, and the impacts of the climate crisis.
- **GOAL FOUR:** A greater number and diversity of people are taking positive action for manta and devil rays and their habitats.
- **GOVERNANCE:** The Manta Trust is a diverse collaborative organisation working with independent affiliates to deliver its mission.

In addition to providing significant fundraising support, the Manta Trust now awards up to £40,000 a year in grants to affiliate projects, PhD students we supervise, and early career scientists from lower- and middle-income countries, to support work significantly contributing to the key objectives in our Five-Year Plan.



Munk's pygmy devil rays
in Baja California Mexico.

Measuring our Impact

The clock is ticking for manta and devil rays, known collectively as mobulids. In the last ten years, the number of mobulid species listed within the Threatened Categories on the IUCN Red List has risen from two to nine, meaning all mobulids are now considered Vulnerable or Endangered. In several parts of the world, our researchers are reporting declines of over 90% in some mobulid species' populations.

A critical part of our approach is therefore to closely monitor our efforts to ensure that all the initiatives we support contribute significantly to our Five-Year Plan, and that they are effective in making positive change. We use information and data provided by our global network during our annual reporting process to track changes within initiatives and to understand the scale and impact of the Manta Trust and our partners across our whole portfolio.

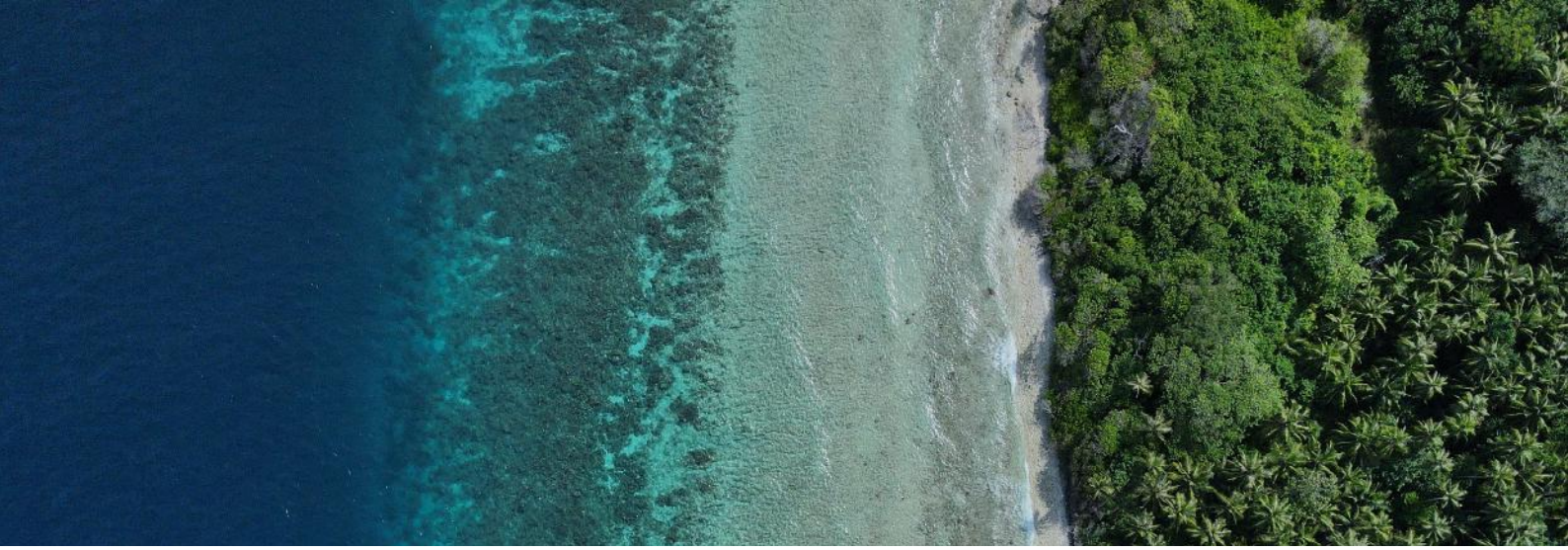
This report pulls together information from across all our active initiatives in 2024 to show how the Manta Trust and our network of affiliate projects have been delivering tangible advances for manta and devil rays and the habitats on which they depend. Each initiative may encompass multiple sites and/or species and employ several conservation, research or education methods. An initiative might be delivered by the Manta Trust directly or by an affiliate project and may be in collaboration with partners and other organisations.

Throughout this document, you will find our impact demonstrated through graphics called impact chains, which show steps leading to our ultimate conservation outcomes:

- ***To reduce threats to manta and devil ray species.***
- ***To reduce threats to manta and devil ray habitats and biodiversity.***
- ***To change legislation or policy to support manta and devil ray conservation.***
- ***To support sustainable livelihoods and develop local capacity for manta and devil ray conservation.***
- ***To inspire more people to take positive action for manta and devil rays, and their habitats.***

We have also shared examples of some initiatives and the stories behind them. For each of these, you can see what level they have reached on the impact chain and how they contribute to the Manta Trust's Five-Year Plan using the key to the right.

The path to conservation success is rarely predictable or smooth, and the timeframes for different approaches vary greatly. However, monitoring in this way helps us to keep developing and improving our approach. If an initiative cannot progress beyond a point in the impact chain or contribute to the success of another related initiative, we take action to try and understand the reasons why. Based on our findings, we may choose to adapt our methods or take a different approach entirely to reach the desired outcome. We share lessons internally by facilitating regular regional- or topic-focused conference calls for affiliate projects, so expertise from our whole network can be capitalised on and applied.



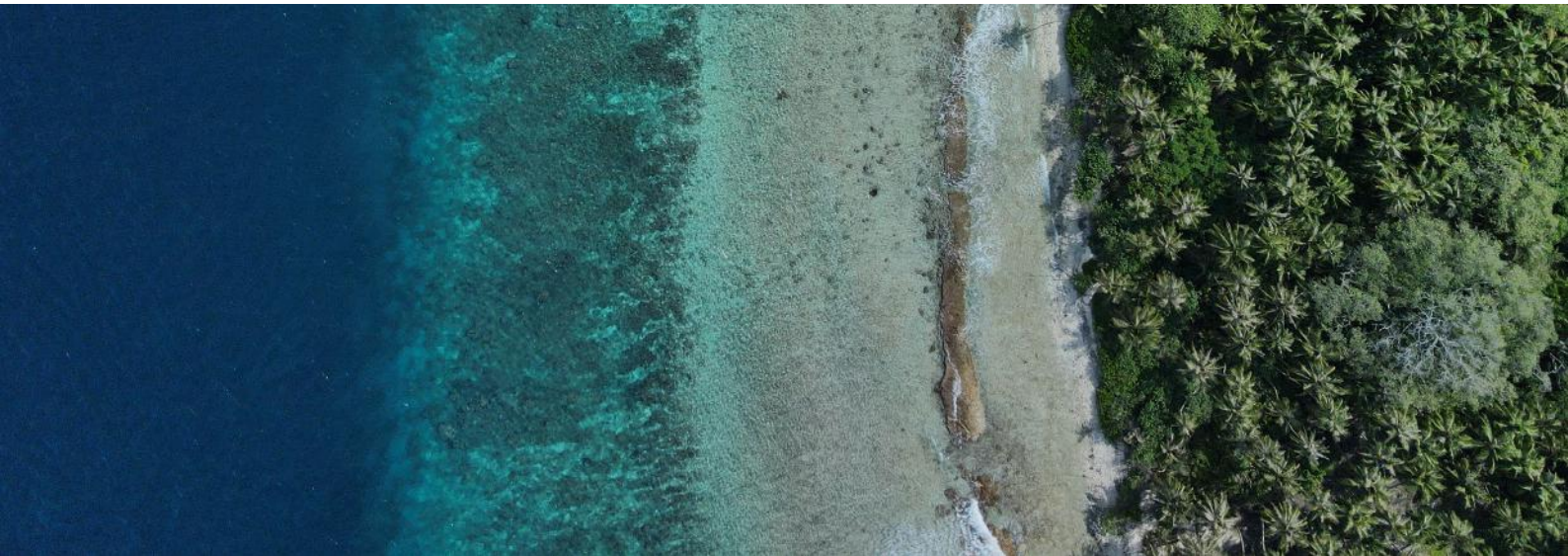
GOAL ONE:	GOAL TWO:	GOAL THREE:	GOAL FOUR:
Retained bycatch and targeted catch of manta and devil rays by fisheries is reduced.	Discarded bycatch and entanglement of manta and devil rays by fisheries is reduced.	Manta and devil rays are better protected from growing human intrusion and disturbance, development, pollution and the impacts of the climate crisis.	A greater number and diversity of people are taking positive action for manta and devil rays and their habitats.

Under each initiative detailed in this report, we have included colour-coded symbols to demonstrate which sub-objectives from our Five-Year Plan the initiative is contributing to. For example, the symbol to the right refers to sub-objective 1.1.3. and is therefore helping us to reduce retained bycatch and targeted catch of manta and devil rays.

1.1.3.

We have also added symbols to indicate where the initiative falls within the impact chain. For example, the symbols on the right represent 'P' for the Planning stage, numbers for progress levels, and 'G' for Goal completion.

P 1 2 3 G



RahVeshi Programme Manager, Fauz Fath-hee (left) leading a community workshop in Makunudhoo, Maldives.

FAUZ FATH-HEE

For many of these students, it was their first encounter with manta rays and witnessing their joy and excitement that day left a lasting impression on me.

Interview with the RahVeshi Programme Coordinator

Can you introduce yourself and your role in the RahVeshi Programme? What inspired you to join this initiative?

Fauz: I'm Fauz Fath-hee, RahVeshi Programme Manager for the Maldives Manta Conservation Programme, the founding project of the Manta Trust. This unique ocean conservation project in the Maldives emphasises community-based conservation and capacity development, enabling local communities to lead their own conservation efforts. I was inspired by the belief that such community-led initiatives are essential for effectively protecting our natural resources, which motivated me to join this important programme.

Since its launch in 2022, how has the RahVeshi Programme strengthened marine conservation in remote Maldivian communities?

Fauz: We engage in research across all our community island bases, which has allowed us to document previously unknown sub-populations of manta rays in the remote areas of the Maldives. The highlight of our work lies in the education and capacity-building programmes we've implemented. Despite being relatively young, we have conducted extensive education sessions for Maldivian school students, community members, and stakeholders, significantly enhancing their understanding of marine ecosystems and fostering a greater interest in conservation. Through our efforts, we have successfully engaged hundreds of community members, providing many with their first snorkelling experience with manta rays. Additionally, we have trained numerous young Maldivians in scientific data collection related to megafauna and ocean conservation education on paid internships and job opportunities. Our scholarship programme has supported three locals in becoming scuba dive masters and pursuing marine biology studies, equipping them with the skills necessary for careers in marine conservation. Two of these individuals are now actively working with us on seasonal projects.

With increasing threats from climate change and coastal development, how is the programme helping communities build resilience and safeguard their marine ecosystems?

Fauz: The RahVeshi Programme focuses on grassroots initiatives to enable local communities in leading conservation efforts. This bottom-up approach contrasts with traditional top-down strategies, where decisions are often made by government bodies and stakeholders without local input. Through our extensive outreach and awareness activities, we aim to equip these communities with the knowledge necessary to advocate against invasive and unsustainable development practices in their regions.

What has been your most memorable moment working with the RahVeshi Programme in 2024?

Fauz: One of my most memorable moments was the open-water snorkel trip our team organised for marine education students from Makunudhoo School. For many of these students, it was their first encounter with manta rays and witnessing their joy and excitement that day left a lasting impression on me. It ignited a passion for their own marine ecosystems and highlighted the importance of protecting their natural environment.

Looking ahead, what are your key goals for the RahVeshi Programme, and how can people support or get involved?

Fauz: Although our projects have achieved remarkable progress in just a few years, they are currently limited to seasonal operations due to funding constraints. Our future goals include establishing year-round bases with full-time roles for Maldivian team members in the RahVeshi Programme across all locations and ideally expanding our model to other remote areas of the Maldives. We welcome support and collaboration from individuals and organisations interested in contributing to marine conservation efforts. The most effective way to support our project is through donations. Whether large or small, every contribution makes a meaningful impact on our programme.

Highlights of 2024

20,000

students from around the world reached with educational outreach

Helped to establish the Atlantic Manta & Devil Ray Research Coalition.

300

school resource downloads

3,000+

manta ray sightings (514 new)

17

Ocean Ambassadors representing 15 countries

Launched our 'Research Portal', a directory of Manta Trust research resources

450,000km²

Size of the 42 designated ISRAs that the Manta Trust network contributed data to, relevant to manta and devil rays in 15 countries

18 peer reviewed publications written to support evidence-based decision making

41 

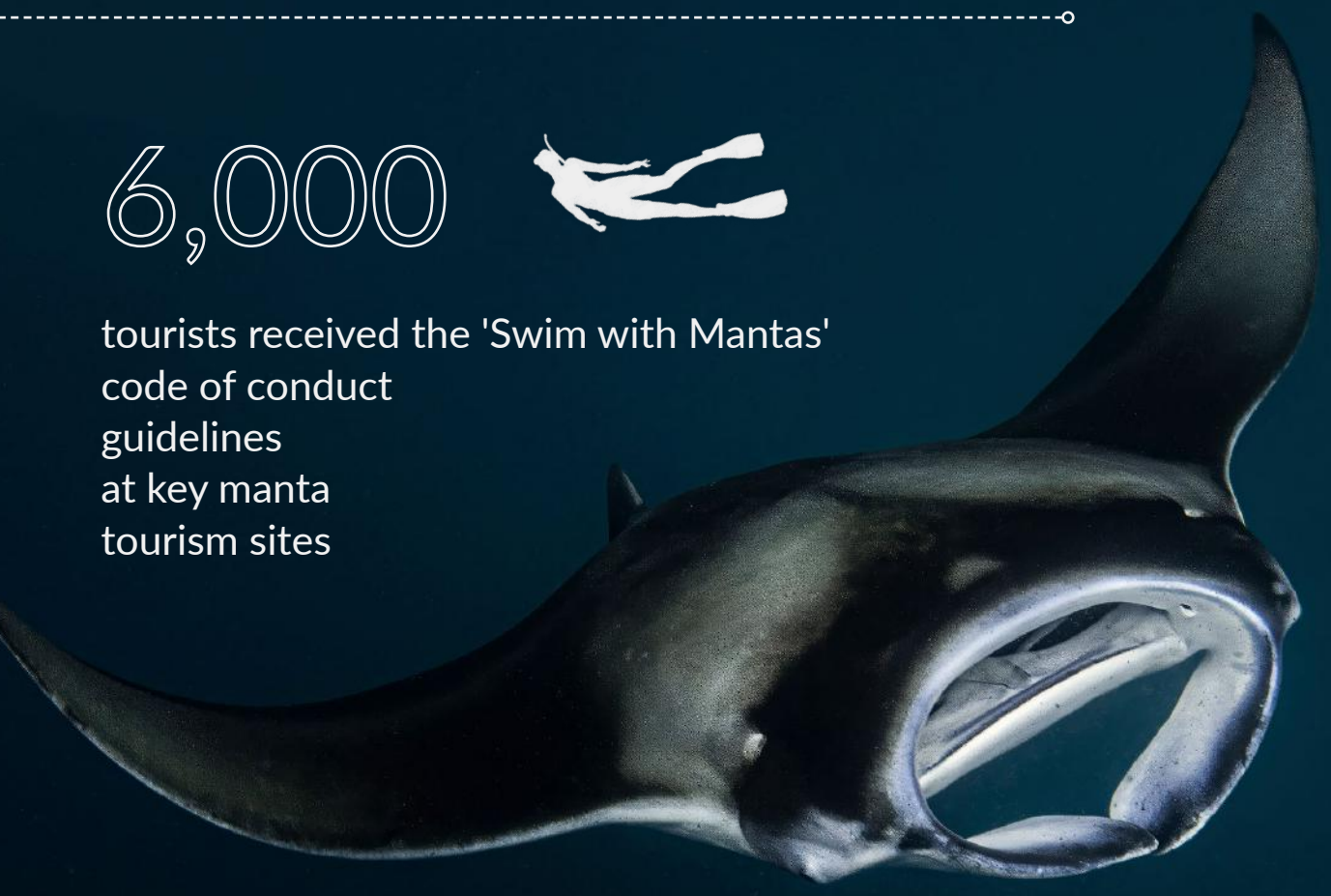
online articles about our work

422 

artisanal fishers worked with worldwide to raise awareness and reduce threats to manta and devil rays

6,000

tourists received the 'Swim with Mantas' code of conduct guidelines at key manta tourism sites



Introducing: The India Mobulid Project

Re-established in 2022 and welcomed on board as our newest affiliate in 2024, the India Mobulid Project addresses critical gaps in our understanding of manta and devil ray fisheries. As a major source of mobulid gill plates, India plays a key role in conservation, yet socio-economic drivers and sustainability remain poorly understood, threatening these species.

Led by Mayuri Chopra, a shark and ray researcher pursuing a PhD at Oxford, the project focuses on fishery assessments, trade dynamics, and socio-economic factors. With Manta Trust's support, Mayuri works to reduce mobulid mortality while supporting fisheries-dependent communities.

By combining socio-economic analyses with species-specific landing data, and leveraging GPS tracking with Manta Trust's Fisheries and Policy team, the project enhances conservation efforts.

Progress in 2024

In its first year, the project prioritised assessing mobulid fisheries and trade dynamics. Collaborations with local communities aim to balance conservation with sustainable livelihoods.

The India Mobulid Project is paving the way for effective conservation strategies, ensuring the long-term survival of these iconic marine species.

Mayuri Chopra, India Mobulid Project Leader, and her team conducting surveys.

Objectives and Approach

The project integrates science, policy, and community engagement to:

- **Advance Scientific Research:** Increase scientific knowledge on the data-poor mobulid fishery in India to drive effective policy change
- **Improve Policy Awareness and Enforcement:** Increase awareness on national and internation policies for better enforcement of mobulid protections.
- **Support Sustainable Fishing Practices:** Work with fishers and local community to mitigate unintentional mobulid catches.

Our goal is to generate knowledge that informs policy, ensuring both community welfare and sustainable mobulid populations.

Mayuri Chopra, India Mobulid Project Leader

In Baja, Mexico, a light is attached to a fisher's net as part of a trial to deter devil rays at night, reducing the risk of bycatch.

Conservation Outcome 1:
Reduce Threats to Manta and Devil Ray Species

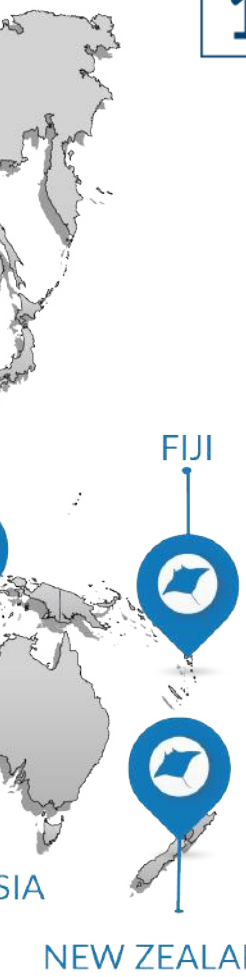
In 2024 our global network had 34 active initiatives working to reduce threats to manta and devil ray species in 12 countries and the Caribbean region.

NUMBER OF INITIATIVES	15	13	6	0	0
IMPACT CHAIN LEVEL	(P) Planning – activities not yet delivered	(1) Activities delivered (too soon to see results)	(2) Populations with evidence of improved enforcement/ protection	(3) Populations with evidence of reduced threats	(G) Populati showing evidence recovery

Maldives Manta Conservation Programme

Ears on the Reef: The First Acoustics Study of Manta Ray Cleaning Stations in the Maldives

1 3.3.1. 3.5.3. 3.6.1.



The Ears on the Reef project is a collaboration between the Manta Trust, the Maldives Manta Conservation Programme (MMCP), the Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI) at Six Senses Laamu, and the University of Bristol, led by Professor Steve Simpson. This research explores the acoustic landscapes of manta ray cleaning stations in Laamu Atoll, examining how natural and human-induced sounds—such as boat noise and scuba diving—affect manta ray behaviour and marine biodiversity.

Launched in May 2023, the project uses HydroMoths—small acoustic listening devices—to record underwater soundscapes at cleaning stations, both day and night. These recordings are paired with Insta360 cameras, linking acoustic data with visual observations to understand how mantas and other marine species interact with sound. Key research questions include whether mantas use sound to locate cleaning stations and how cleaner fish communicate in their presence.

The project's goals include creating a spatial sound map of Laamu Atoll, assessing the impact of human noise pollution, and evaluating how scuba diving and boat traffic affect cleaning stations. Early findings suggest that cleaning stations are acoustic biodiversity hotspots, however human activities, such as unsustainable tourism, may disrupt these fragile ecosystems.

A reef manta ray passes by a 360 camera at a cleaning station in Laamu Atoll, Maldives.

Mobulid Fisheries Ambassadors in Chagos.

Chagos Manta Project: 2 1.1.2. 1.2.1.

Improving Illegal Mobulid Catch Data Collection for Effective Conservation Management

In the Chagos Archipelago, manta and devil rays (mobulids) are protected by a large (640,000 km^2) no-take Marine Protected Area, yet illegal fishing remains a significant challenge. Conservation strategies depend on understanding how many mobulids are caught, which requires accurate catch data. Currently, illegal catches are broadly documented by an enforcement vessel, but prosecution-focused data collection doesn't require species identification. Identifying mobulids to species level is a specialized skill held by few experts, resulting in limited taxonomic knowledge among enforcement personnel. Historical catch photograph analysis suggests that 20 tonnes of mobulid rays were caught in seven instances, likely an underestimation due to incomplete data.

This project, running from March 2024 – March 2025, aimed to improve illegal mobulid catch data through systematic recording and species identification, training local personnel in mobulid identification, establishing a group of trained "Mobulid Fisheries Ambassadors" for long-term data collection, forming partnerships with enforcement bodies and communities, and raising awareness of mobulid conservation.

In 2024 collaborative partnerships were formed with the Marine Resources Group (MRAG) and Senior Fisheries Officers (SFPOs). A standardised catch documentation protocol was developed with the SFPOs and adopted by MRAG. Engagement with US and UK military personnel on Diego Garcia was strengthened, and outreach events attracted over 160 participants. Radio outreach via the Armed Forces Network extended local engagement. Project Leader Dr. Joanna Harris led five Mobulid Identification Workshops in 2024, leading to the recruitment of 12 ambassadors from diverse departments, including port operations, police, and long-term Diego Garcia residents. Joanna is providing ongoing support to ensure data consistency, with all collected data submitted to the Chagos Manta Ray Project for analysis to guide spatial management planning.

Mobula Conservation: P 3.2.1.

Population Genetics of Mobulids in the Eastern Pacific Ocean

Mobula Conservation carries out interdisciplinary research that investigates the biology, ecology, and conservation of manta rays and devil rays (also called mobulids), with a focus on the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean. In particular, they study the threat of fisheries bycatch, or accidental capture in fishing gear, and their research aims to develop collaborative solutions to reduce this impact.

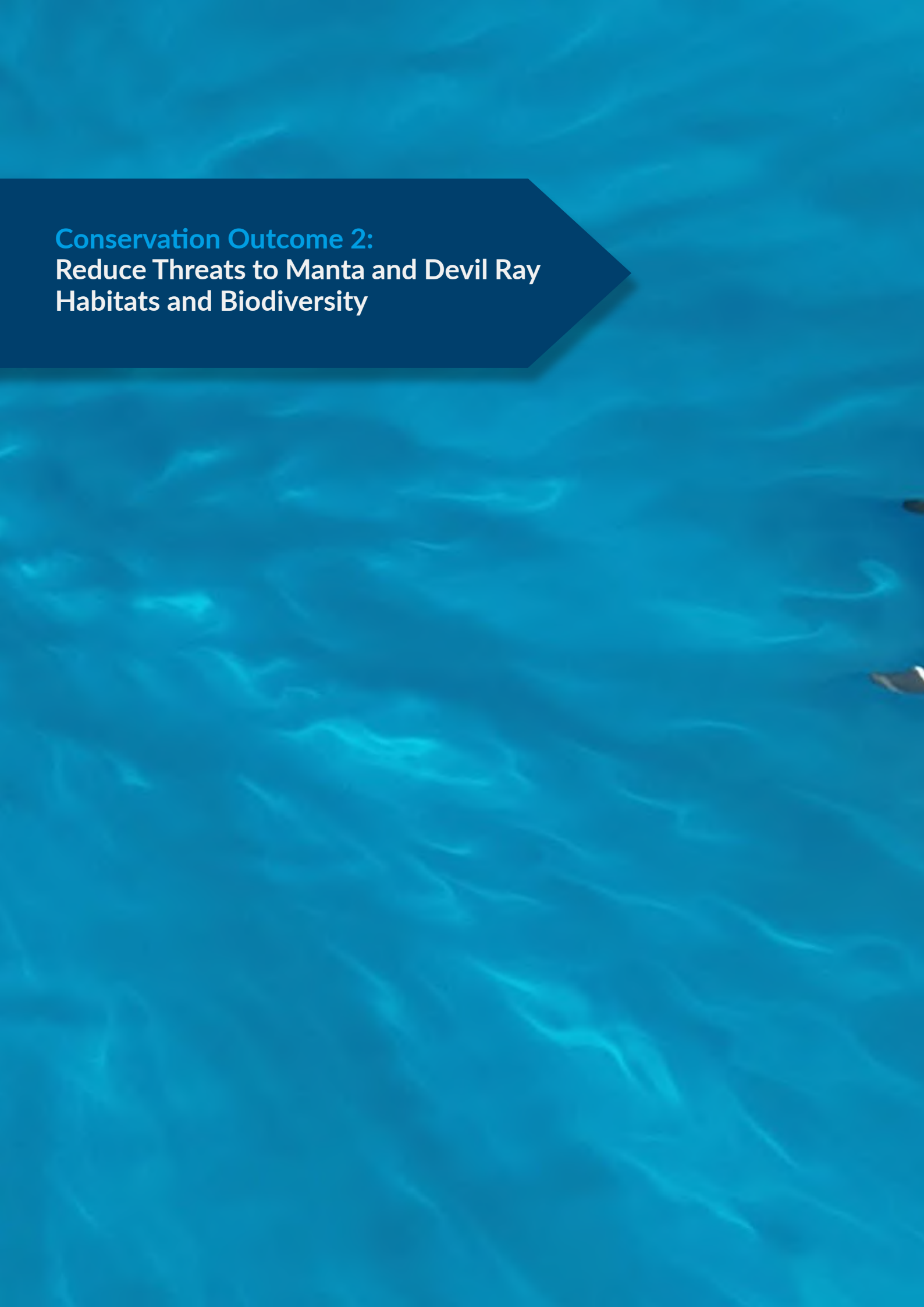
In 2024, Mobula Conservation completed an analysis of the population genetics of three mobulid species in the Pacific Ocean: oceanic manta rays (*Mobula birostris*), bentfin devil rays (*M. thurstoni*) and Munk's pygmy devil rays (*M. munkiana*), to understand what spatial level of conservation and management is appropriate for these vulnerable species. This was the first genetics study of bentfin devil rays and Munk's pygmy devil rays in the region.

Mobula Conservation hopes to publish the results in early 2025, to present their findings to Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and policymakers, and to recommend the creation of official management units in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

> *Protecting mobulid rays starts with understanding them. But right now, we know too little to manage them effectively. Genetic research fills these gaps, revealing population connections and guiding conservation where it's needed most.*
>
> Dr. Melissa Cronin, Mobula Conservation Project Leader

Dr. Melissa Cronin takes a sample from a Munk's pygmy devil ray.

Conservation Outcome 2:
Reduce Threats to Manta and Devil Ray Habitats and Biodiversity



An oceanic manta ray spotted during a research expedition in New Zealand.

In 2024 our global network had 15 active initiatives working to reduce threats to manta and devil ray habitats and biodiversity in nine countries and the Azores Archipelago.

NUMBER OF INITIATIVES	4	9	2	0	0
IMPACT CHAIN LEVEL	(P) Planning – activities not yet delivered	(1) Activities delivered (too soon to see results)	(2) Sites brought under conservation management	(3) Sites with evidence of improved enforcement/ protection	4) Populations with evidence of reduced threats

1 1.1.1. 2.2.2. 3.1.1. 3.1.2. 3.5.1.

Manta Watch New Zealand:

Tracking New Zealand's Gentle Giants

Manta Watch New Zealand (MWNZ), in collaboration with Conservation International and the University of Auckland, have made significant strides in understanding oceanic manta ray (*Mobula birostris*) movements. In 2024, MWNZ deployed 11 satellite tags, as part of their three-year Satellite Tagging Programme to track both local movements and long-term migrations of oceanic manta rays across the South-West Pacific. MWNZ completed their goal to tag 30 manta rays in three years, identifying critical habitats for feeding, reproduction, and migration. Key achievements included tracking one manta ray over three consecutive seasons and confirming regional connectivity between feeding hotspots. The data also contributed to the creation of the Hauraki Gulf and Colville Ridge ISRAs, spanning New Zealand, Fiji, and Tonga, covering 437,371 km².

The programme's broader conservation impact continues to grow, with MWNZ aiming to develop marine management strategies that integrate the needs of oceanic manta rays and broader marine ecosystems. This includes overlaying manta ray migratory data with commercial fisheries efforts and conducting surveys in the South-West Pacific to identify key habitats and migratory routes. These efforts are laying the foundation for long-term, regionally coordinated conservation measures that will help protect oceanic manta rays and other threatened marine species across the Pacific.

> *Everything MWNZ has achieved so far wouldn't have been possible without our ever-growing project collaborators and the support of an engaged citizen science community, we are massively grateful for everyone's invaluable contributions to manta ray and ocean conservation.*
>
> Lydia Green, MWNZ Project Founder

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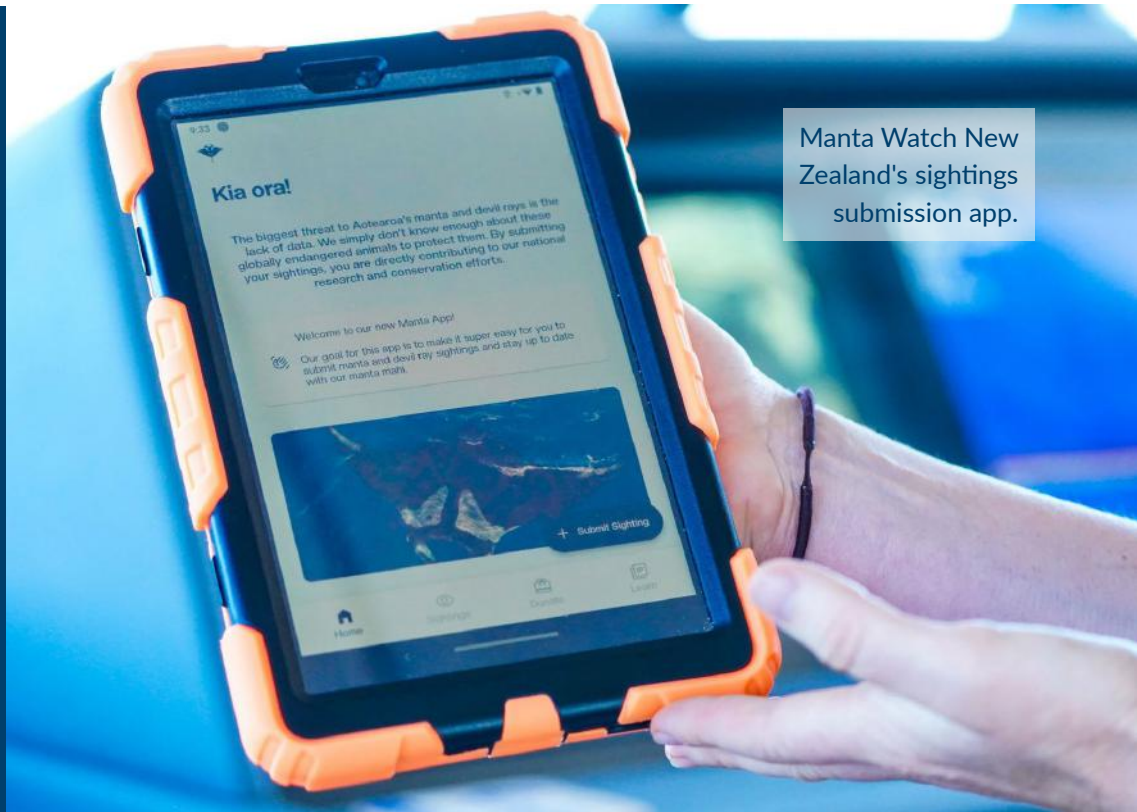
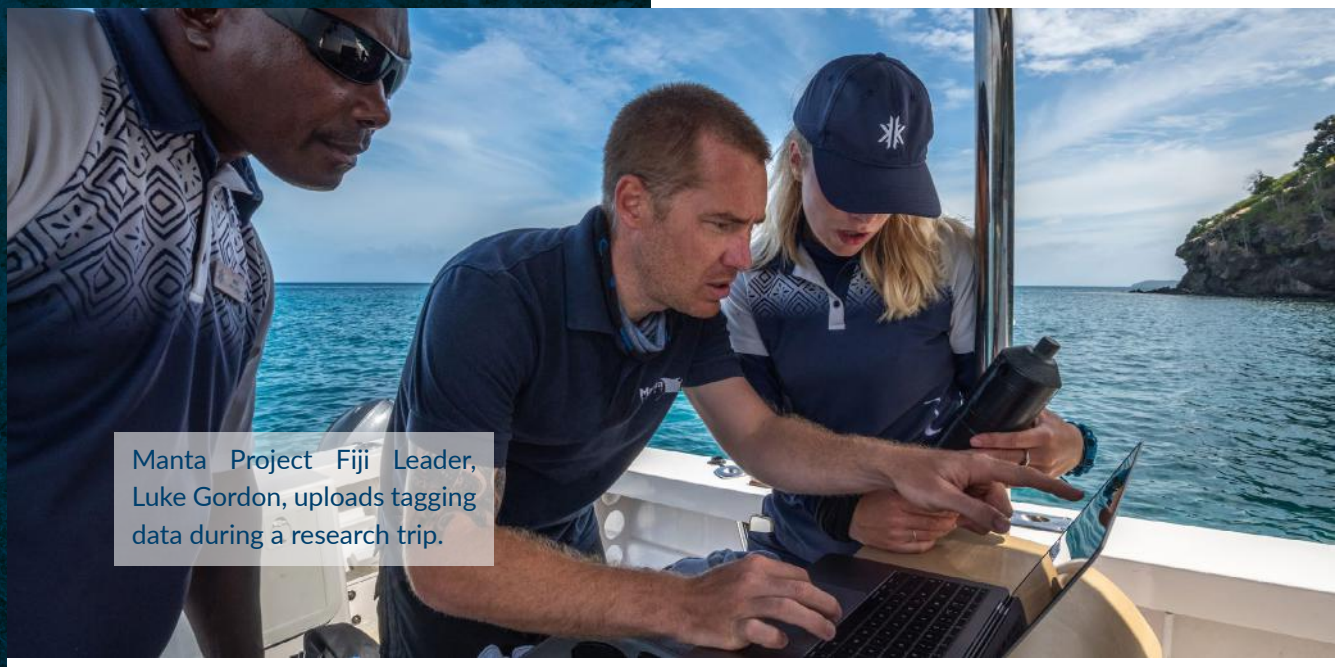
(G) Evidence of habitat/ biodiversity recovery



Manta Watch New Zealand's sightings submission app.



Manta Project Fiji Leader, Luke Gordon, uploads tagging data during a research trip.

Manta Project Fiji: 1 4.2.1. 4.2.2.

Implementation of Management Protocols and Strategies for Manta Tourism in the Yasawa Channel

One of Manta Project Fiji's research sites in the Yasawa Islands is a small channel that reef manta rays gather in to forage from April to October every year. This site is regularly accessed by 13 different operators, all bringing tourists to swim with these incredible animals, but unfortunately there is little management in place and this increased tourism is likely impacting the manta rays when they are trying to feed. Manta Project Fiji's sightings database shows a clear decrease in residency of mantas at this site, which is worrying considering only a few manta rays make up over 70% of the sightings every year.

During 2020, 2021 (the COVID years) and 2022, the average number of snorkelers in the water with manta rays fell dramatically from 36 – 48 snorkelers pre-COVID (2013 – 2019) to only 3 – 18 snorkelers (2020 – 2022), during these years manta sightings increased significantly, however 2023 and 2024 have seen a rise in the average number of snorkelers back to pre-covid levels (n=41 & 47) with this a significant reduction in manta sightings has been recorded, strengthening the link between unregulated tourism and decreased manta sightings.

Through this initiative, Manta Project Fiji aims to disseminate data throughout the communities and relevant stakeholders so that relevant action can be taken to better manage the tourism at this important site. Manta Project Fiji has taken the first steps through community engagements, implementing a code of conduct and conducting in-water training with staff at several resorts and by contributing critical data to get this region designated as an Important Shark and Ray Area (ISRA).

Manta Project Fiji hopes to facilitate regular working groups with stakeholders to develop a management framework, train all operators on responsible practices and employ a ranger to monitor the site and enforce these management measures.

Manta Caribbean Project:

Monitoring Mobulid Ray Species

1 1.2.1 1.1.2. 2.2.1.

Based in Isla Mujeres, Mexico, the Manta Caribbean Project (MCP) studies Atlantic manta rays (*Mobula cf. birostris*) in the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) of the Yucatán Peninsula. Monitoring year-round, with peak efforts from May to September, MCP explores their ecology, biology, and threats.

In 2024, a groundbreaking satellite tagging expedition brought together MCP, the Manta Trust, NOAA Fisheries, ECOSUR, and international collaborators to track manta ray movements. Over four days, eight manta rays were tagged, with data collected on size, sex, colouration, and behaviour. Drones, guided by Jessica Pate of the Florida Manta Project, provided aerial tracking, capturing unique feeding behaviours like somersault feeding.

This effort is part of the Atlantic Manta and Devil Ray Research Coalition, uniting 15 organisations to drive transboundary conservation. Understanding manta movements and critical habitats will help inform science-based policies and marine management strategies to protect these vulnerable species.

Beyond research, the MCP is committed to strengthening conservation capacity in the region. “By strengthening local communities through research initiatives, we can enhance the conservation of mobulid rays in the Mexican Caribbean,” says Karen Fuentes, MCP Project Founder. Through marine training programmes, MCP equips local teams with essential skills, enabling them to play a key role in manta protection efforts.

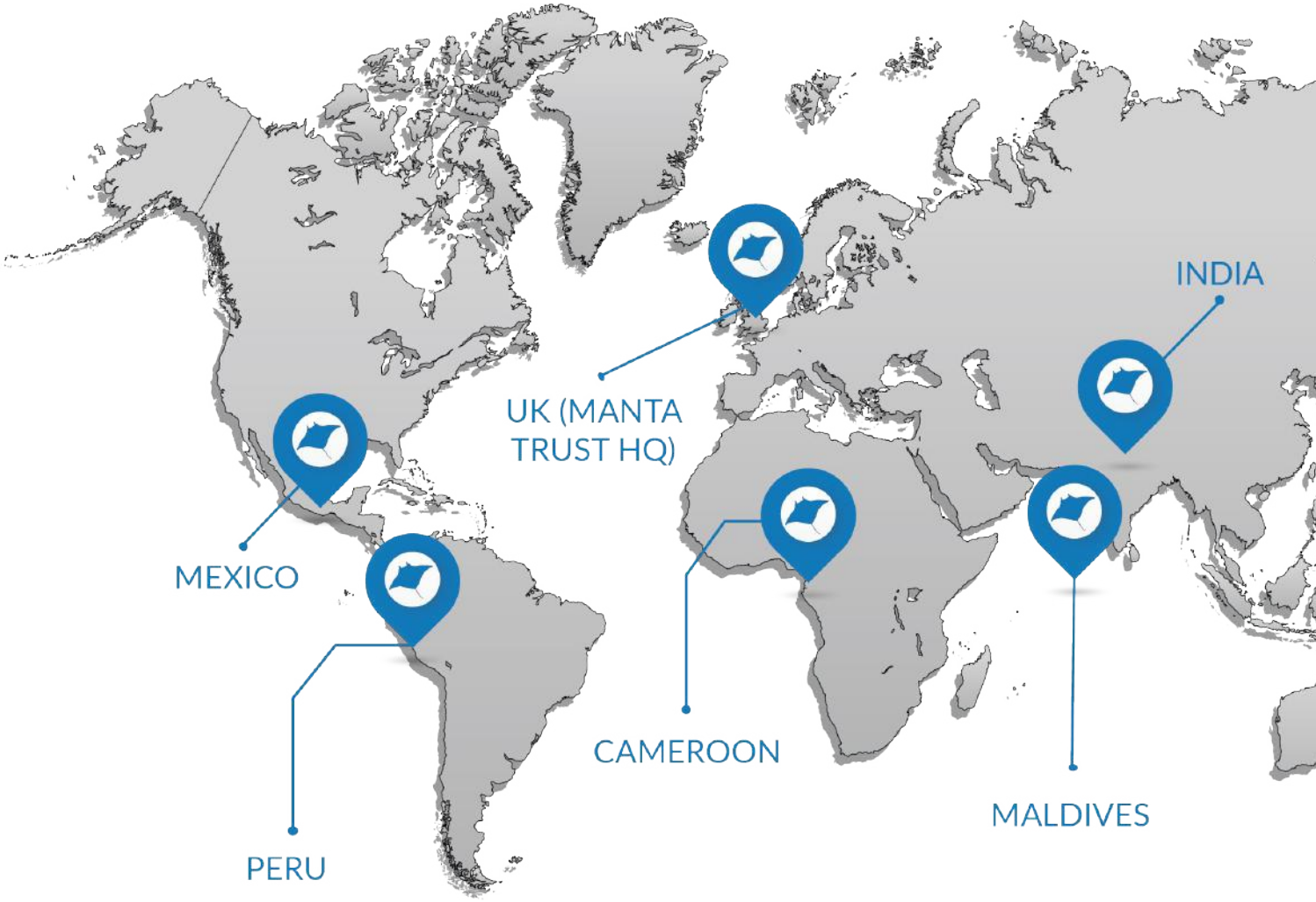
Collaboration is at the heart of this work. “Collaboration strengthens local initiatives, and we are grateful to everyone involved in supporting both species conservation and the well-being of local communities,” Fuentes adds. The data collected will not only reinforce manta protections but also contribute to the sustainability of marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods. As these tagged rays navigate the Gulf of Mexico and the wider Caribbean, each discovery brings us closer to ensuring their survival for future generations.

Project Leader, Karen Fuentes, takes an ID shot of an Atlantic manta ray.

A bentfin devil ray landed for sale in Muncar, Indonesia.

Conservation Outcome 3:
Change Legislation or Policy to Support Manta and Devil Ray Conservation

In 2024 our global network had 15 active initiatives in six countries working towards changes in conservation legislation or policy for manta and devil rays.



IMPACT CHAIN LEVEL	(P) Planning – activities not yet delivered	(1) Activities delivered (too soon to see results)	(2) Policies, legislation, or decisions changed	(3) Legislation or policies actively applied/ enforced	(4) Changed behaviour/ reduced threat because of policy
NUMBER OF INITIATIVES	8	5	2	0	0

P 1.1.1. 1.1.2. 1.2.1.

Manta Trust Fisheries and Conservation Policy Programme:

Global Mobulid ID Guides

Over 2024, the Manta Trust's Fisheries and Conservation Policy team have been gathering vital new data to develop a set of Field Guides to Manta and Devil Rays of the World comprised of one global version (available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) and four regional versions (Indian, Atlantic, Western and Central Pacific, Eastern Pacific Oceans).

These field guides focus on species identification and will be a valuable tool for enforcement personnel, field officers, decision-makers, fishers and researchers dealing with manta and devil rays. Each includes revised ecology, taxonomy, threat assessment and protective legislation for relevant mobulid species, as well as updated species accounts, identification keys for species and gill plates, and standardized data collection protocols. It also features new illustrations, scientific data, and safe handling and release guidelines for fishing gear. These guides will be ring-bound, durable and water-resistant, making them suitable for use onboard boats or in places such as fish markets or customs offices.

The Global Guide and Indian Ocean Guide will be made available in the first quarter of 2025, and the remaining three (Atlantic, Western and Central Pacific, and Eastern Pacific) will follow in quarters two and three this year. With this new set of field guides, we hope to support better compliance of national and international protections, and manta and devil ray research efforts worldwide.

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(G) Evidence of habitat/ biodiversity recovery

The Mobulid ID guide being used aboard a research vessel in Chagos.

Project Leader, Aldo Zavala, uploads tagging data during a research trip.

Proyecto Manta Pacific Mexico:

P 1.1.2. 1.2.1. 2.1.2. 3.1.1.

Oceanic Manta Conservation Through Participatory Marine Spatial Planning in Bahia de Banderas

Proyecto Manta Pacific Mexico (PMPM) aims to conserve oceanic manta rays in Bahia de Banderas through a participatory marine spatial planning approach. This initiative seeks to reduce boat strikes and incidental entanglements while improving the well-being of local communities by fostering collaboration among stakeholders such as fisherfolk, water taxi captains, tourism providers, and local government.

Key to this effort is the use of story maps—digital tools visualising fishing and boating intensity based on GPS tracking of 29 panga boats over two years and manta ray sighting data. These maps guide discussions and decision-making during stakeholder meetings and workshops, enabling the development of practical guidelines to protect manta rays while sustaining livelihoods.

In 2024, the project achieved several milestones. Three meetings with fisherfolk and a session with the mayor of Cabo Corrientes advanced efforts to build local support. A proposal was submitted to the federal government to update the protection category of Los Arcos de Mismaloya, a key manta ray habitat and iconic marine site. The team has also partnered with local marine megafauna research projects to promote effective conservation measures inside the bay.

The next steps include finalising a collaborative marine management plan and presenting it to the local government. The project aims to translate research into official policy, safeguarding both manta rays and their habitats.

By involving diverse community voices and leveraging cutting-edge spatial tools, PMPM is not only protecting a vulnerable species but also creating a model for inclusive marine conservation. These efforts lay the groundwork for sustainable coexistence between human activities and oceanic manta rays in Bahia de Banderas.

Manta Trust Fisheries and Conservation Policy Programme: 1

Global Re-Assessment of the Mobulid Gill Plate and Meat Trade

1.1.1. 1.1.2. 3.1.1.

In 2023, we launched a global assessment of the manta and devil ray (mobulid) trade, using expert surveys, database analysis, and trade monitoring. In 2024, we published *Global Assessment of Manta and Devil Ray Gill Plate and Meat Trade: Conservation Implications and Opportunities*, exposing the alarming scale of overexploitation.

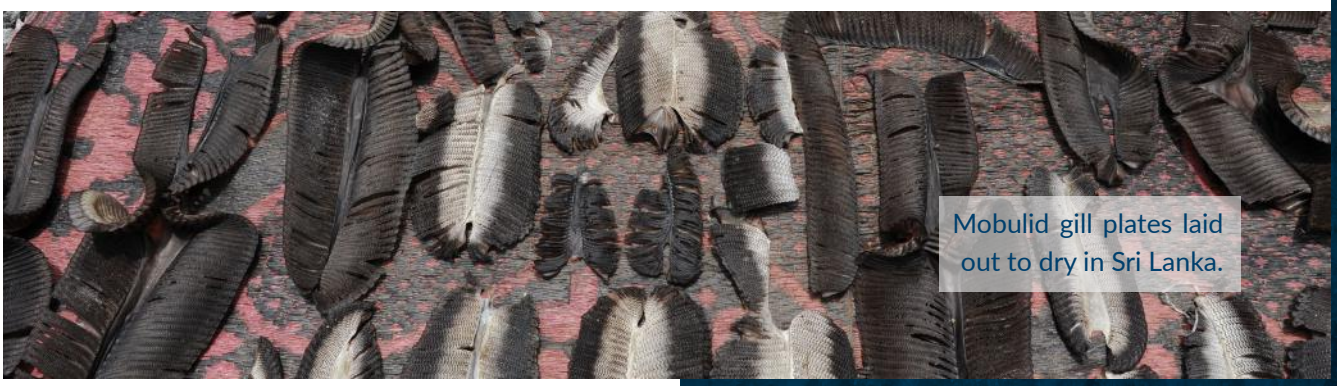
Despite CITES and CMS protections, mobulid trade persists, with landings in 43 countries. 14 countries export gill plates to five major hubs—South Korea, China, Thailand, Singapore, and Hong Kong—where they sell for up to $1,260/kg. Retailers have more than doubled since 2011, with a shift to online sales, complicating enforcement.

The study also revealed the mobulid meat trade as a greater threat than expected, with consumption in 35 countries and exports from 10 to five major destinations. Major trade routes are in Asia and Africa, with Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia identified as critical for conservation action. Myanmar ranks highest due to significant domestic consumption, exports, and its role as a transit hub.

Our findings show significant underreporting. Of 43 countries landing mobulids, only nine reported to the FAO. Of 20 involved in the meat and gill plate trade, just five reported to the CITES Trade Database (2017 – 2021).

These insights guide our Fisheries & Conservation Policy strategy, highlighting the need for urgent action—uplisting all mobulid species to CITES Appendix I, stricter enforcement, better fisheries management, and improved monitoring of trade and online markets.

> *Conservation is not just about laws but ensuring they are enforced. Without urgent action, we risk losing these extraordinary species."*
> Dr. Marta Palacios, Lead Author

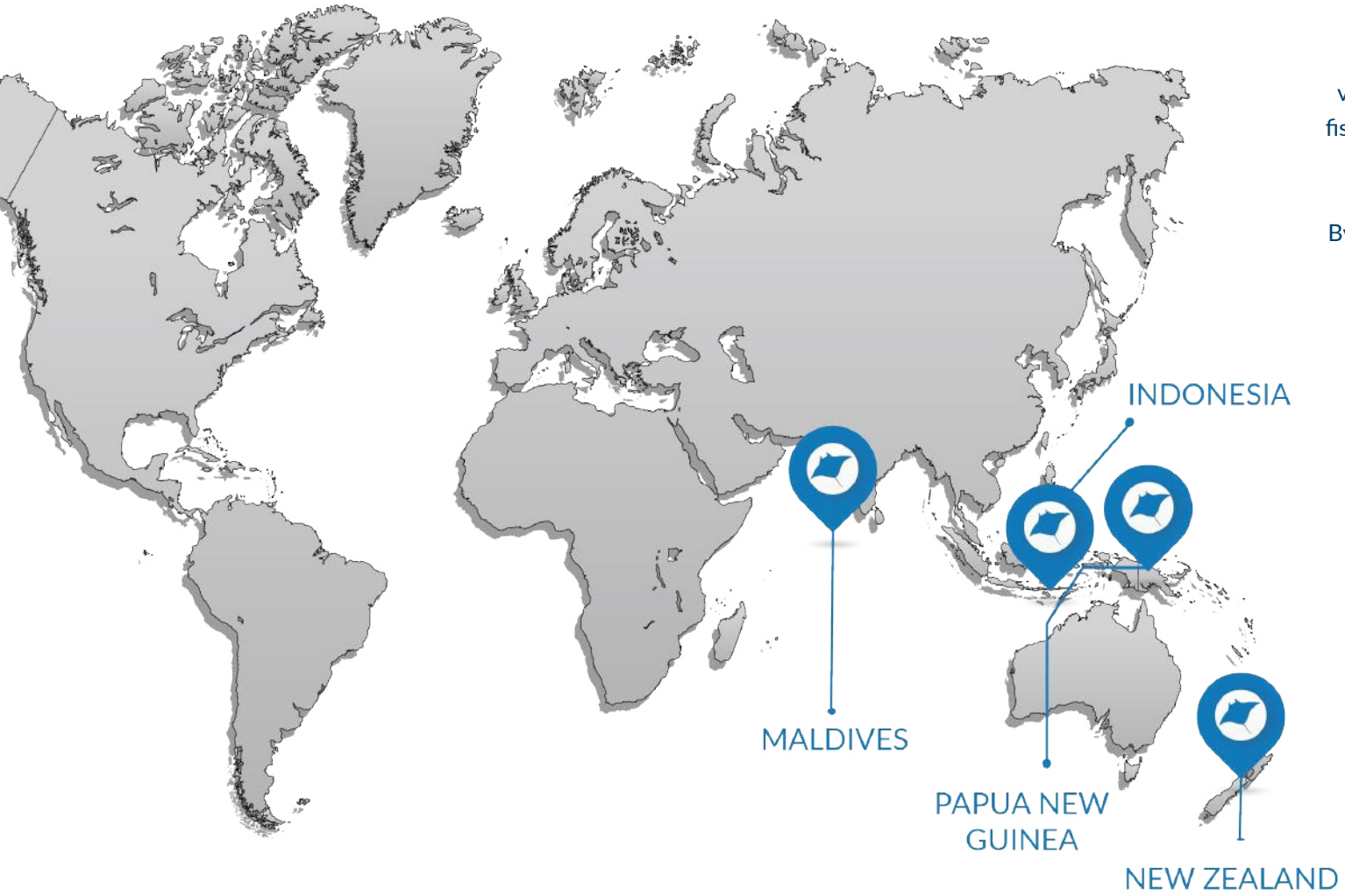


Mobulid gill plates laid out to dry in Sri Lanka.

Conservation Outcome 4:
Support Sustainable Livelihoods and Develop Local Capacity for Manta and Devil Ray Conservation

Commercial fish species for sale at a fish market in Muncar, Indonesia.

In 2024 our global network had 13 active initiatives in four countries working to provide more training and recruitment opportunities in the marine sector for people who live close to manta and devil rays.



NUMBER OF INITIATIVES	2	4	5	2	0
IMPACT CHAIN LEVEL	(P) Planning – activities not yet delivered	(1) Activities delivered (too soon to see results)	(2) Positive engagement in biodiversity conservation	(3) More people local to mobulids involved in their conservation	(4) Changes in attitudes

2 1.3.1. 3.1.2.

Mobula Project Indonesia:

Sustainable Seafood Network

2023, Mobula Project Indonesia launched the Sustainable Seafood Network, aiming to reduce targeted shark and ray fishing in ncar, East Java, while improving fishers' livelihoods. With over 500 mixed-gear fishing boats in the region—including 250 gillnet ls—unsustainable practices pose a serious threat to vulnerable shark and mobulid ray populations. This initiative connects directly with eco-conscious restaurants and hotels, bypassing middlemen to increase fisher profits and promote sustainable fishing methods.

ntifying popular seafood species through surveys of hotels and restaurants, fishers are encouraged to diversify their catch and pt more sustainable gear, such as handlines or crab pots, reducing bycatch of endangered species.The programme has engaged 0 fishers and gained interest from 12 restaurants. While challenges remain, such as aligning fishers' immediate payment expectations with delayed restaurant payment cycles, the project has fostered strong community trust. A core group of 10 fishers—described by Egin as "key collaborators and heroes"—are pivotal to driving change.

Working with local and international partners, including the Banyuwangi Department of Fisheries and The Manta Trust, the project uses GIS mapping to identify bycatch hotspots and employs a before-after-control-intervention (BACI) framework to easure socio-economic and ecological impacts. By leveraging Bali's eco-tourism industry and aligning marine conservation socio-economic benefits, the Sustainable Seafood Network offers a scalable model to reduce bycatch and improve fisher elihoods. The initiative is now documenting its findings to inspire similar sustainable seafood programmes in other regions, helping to protect marine ecosystems while supporting fishing communities.

If fishers can make a living from sustainable practices, they're less likely to target sharks and rays.
Muhammad G. Salim (Egin),
Mobula Project Indonesia Leader

A Mobula Project Indonesia team member collects data on landed bentfin devil ray.

RahVeshi Programme scholars dive training.

Maldives Manta Conservation Programme:

RahVeshi Programme Scholarship

3 4.1.2. 4.3.1. 4.3.2.

Launched in 2024, the RahVeshi Programme Scholarship provides young Maldivians with hands-on training in ocean research, conservation, and diving. This Maldives Manta Conservation Programme (MMCP) initiative includes Open Water to Divemaster certification, led by Manta Trust Patron and PADI Course Director Zoona Naseem, and a Level 3 marine biology course from the Online Learning College. Scholars also receive a stipend to support their journey.

The 2024 cohort featured three passionate individuals:

- Hassaan Mohamed (Fuvahmulah): A pro surfer and open-water diver with experience in MMCP's education programmes.
- Ibrahim Yameen (K. Dhiffushi): A snorkel guide, eager to launch conservation initiatives in his home atoll.
- Lana Jaleel (Malé): An advocate for environmental stewardship with a background in sustainability projects.

Over three months, scholars gained expertise in marine biology, logging over 60 dives while completing advanced diving and rescue certifications. They assisted in dive centre operations, led dives, and contributed to MMCP's research and outreach efforts. Additional activities included a manta ecology session with PhD candidate Niv Froman, a visit to Reefscapers at Four Seasons Kuda Huraa, and insights from the Manta Trust's core team.

Following the programme, Hassaan and Yameen secured internships with MMCP's Makunudhoo Project. Despite an injury delaying Lana's divemaster certification, she remains committed to conservation while pursuing her degree. With overwhelmingly positive feedback, the RahVeshi Programme will welcome a new cohort in 2025, continuing to inspire and equip the next generation of Maldivian ocean advocates.

Indonesia Manta Project:

2 1.3.1.

Local Community Education and Alternative Livelihood Development in Rote Island

In 2021 the Indonesia Manta Project, as part of non-profit Thrive Conservation, established an initiative on Rote which focuses on enabling the island's communities to drive marine conservation by providing education and supporting the development of sustainable alternative livelihoods. Several critical habitats for manta rays have been identified in Rote, including the manta cleaning station in Rote which has been designated as an Important Shark and Ray Area. Through the Rote Initiative, the Indonesia Manta Project aims to reduce reliance on destructive fishing practices with community-based initiatives such as sustainable seaweed farming while promoting economic resilience. Alongside this, they are engaging local youth in marine conservation education, offering classes, hands-on learning opportunities, and internship programmes. By fostering awareness and providing viable alternatives to resource-depleting activities, the initiative seeks to build a sustainable future for both the local communities and the surrounding marine ecosystems.

The project has established a community education centre in Southwest Rote that serves as a hub for bringing the community together to learn about marine conservation and management and they have developed a marine conservation education program in partnership with local primary schools.

A community-based sustainable seaweed farming project is currently underway, involving community members who are heavily involved in large gillnet fishing - often targeting sharks and rays. In 2024 a sustainable and non-destructive seaweed farming method developed by local university researchers was launched. Additionally, in 2024 this initiative also engaged the community in mangrove restoration efforts, planting a total of 670 mangrove trees. Local youth, schools, and enforcement agencies actively participated in these initiatives helping to restore vital mangrove habitats.

The Rote project has been managed and run entirely by young Indonesian conservationists, whose tireless efforts have been crucial in building strong relationships and collaborations, moving the Indonesia Manta Project closer towards its goals.

A shark and ray education session with a fisher in Rote.

A RahVeshi Programme intern learns to use drones for aerial manta ray surveys.

Conservation Outcome 5:
Inspire More People to Take Positive Action for Manta and Devil Rays and Their Habitats

In 2024 our global network had 23 active initiatives in seven countries and the Caribbean region, working to encourage people to take positive action for manta and devil rays and their habitats.

NUMBER OF INITIATIVES	8	4	10	0	1
IMPACT CHAIN LEVEL	(P) Planning – activities not yet delivered	(1) Activities delivered (too soon to see results)	(2) Increased awareness or engagement	(3) Changes in attitudes or increasing support for conservation	(4) Changed behaviour/ reduced threats to biodiversity

4

Manta Trust Education Programme:

4.3.1. 4.1.1.

Ocean Ambassador Programme 2024

In 2024, our Ocean Ambassador Programme brought together 17 young people (aged 13 – 18) from 15 countries, to develop their shared interest in marine science and conservation. Meeting monthly throughout the year, ambassadors gained regular contact with marine professionals, exposure to recent research, engaged in conservation discussions and developed community-based projects to engage others in marine science and conservation.

The programme aimed to improve participants' knowledge of marine conservation, environmental threats, and careers in the sector, whilst enabling them to develop connections with industry professionals and like-minded peers. Over the year, ambassadors explored topics such as manta ray research, fisheries and policy, and marine careers. Collaboration was an important element, with an ambassador joining the RahVeshi Programme team in the Maldives, gaining exposure to field research techniques, and many ambassadors making connections with other conservation NGOs and organisations to assist with youth programmes, develop and run their individual projects and fundraise for initiatives in their location.

The ambassadors developed their own small projects to raise awareness of marine science and conservation within their schools and communities. Implemented projects were diverse and included taking children into the ocean to learn how to harvest and plant coral, creating school groups to run beach cleans, environmental art contests, and implementing a plastic bottle recycling scheme. Ambassadors engaged with over 2,000 people through their projects and collectively raised over £2,500 for conservation organisations.

By the end of the programme, ambassadors had improved knowledge of marine conservation, environmental threats, and marine careers and gained valuable skills in project management. Overall, on completion of the programme they felt better equipped and more confident to pursue a career in the sector. We look forward to using our learnings to work with a larger number of ambassadors in 2025, whilst maintaining our connection with the alumni ambassadors through an online platform.

0

(G) Attributable biodiversity recovery

Ocean Ambassador, Tarun Moizuddin, leading a project fundraiser.

'Manta Mondays' education sessions in Bonaire.

Caribbean Islands Manta Conservation Program:

2 4.2.2.

Manta Monday in Bonaire

Throughout the Caribbean, diving and snorkelling are popular tourist activities, and the Caribbean Islands Manta Conservation Programme (CIMCP) has received numerous photos from citizen scientists who have encountered manta rays in the region. Combining this with additional information from fishermen, researchers, and local community members has allowed the CIMCP to confirm the presence of six mobulid species across the region: oceanic manta rays and Atlantic manta rays (a new species of manta ray found in the Caribbean), plus sicklefin, bentfin, spinetail, and Atlantic pygmy devil rays.

Over the last three years, the CIMCP has been working to further connect with tourists, community members and potential citizen scientists on the island of Bonaire by hosting free Manta Monday presentations. The Manta Monday presentations take place in various local dive shops and spaces provided by resorts. During the talk, they cover fascinating information about manta and devil rays, the threats they face, and how people can get involved in their conservation. Over 2,100 people have joined CIMCP Project Leader Nicole Pelletier for Manta Monday in Bonaire.

In the future, Nicole hopes to expand the initiative to reach schools, community members and other islands throughout the region.

French Polynesia Manta Ray Project Leader, Alice Carpentier, leading the education programme.

French Polynesia Manta Project: 2

French Polynesia Education Programme

4.3.1. 4.3.2.

Throughout 2024, the French Polynesia Manta Project has delivered a comprehensive education programme to over 300 students, aged 11 – 17, mostly from Bora Bora, but also Taha'a, Hiva Oa and Maupiti. The programme is organised in close collaboration with local schools and non-profit organisations, and introduces children to manta rays, teaching them about their biology, ecology, threats and how to swim with them responsibly. Children are taken on field trips to participate in data collection, using underwater cameras to collect photo IDs of manta rays to add to the French Polynesia Database. During their final educational session with the team, students are taught how to analyse this data, can name the recently identified mantas from their island, and are given career guidance on entering marine research.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

The Manta Trust core team and affiliate project network has continued to work hard turning years of data collection into peer-reviewed publications which advance science and conservation.

18

Published Papers

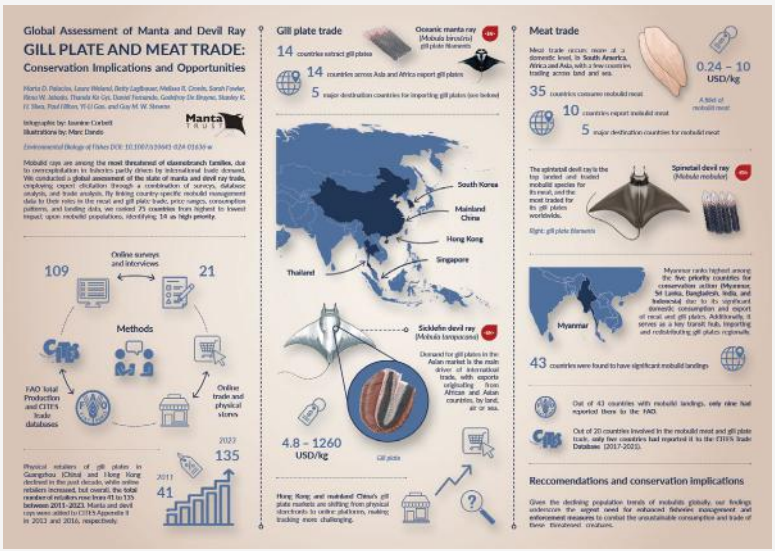
Manta Trust core personnel and affiliate project researchers were lead or co-authors on 18 peer-reviewed publications this year.

>15,000

Accesses

Each paper was accessed over 1500 times on average. The number of citations will be a true indication of impact but this will not be known for a while.

Highlighted Publication



Investigating the Manta and Devil Ray Gill Plate and Meat Trade

The Manta Trust, in collaboration with a global network of experts, published a landmark study exposing the alarming scale of international trade in manta and devil rays. The study highlighted the overexploitation of these threatened species driven by demand for their meat and gill plates, and underscored the urgent need for more robust and effectively enforced protections.

Marta D. Palacios, Laura Weiand, Betty Laglbauer, Melissa R. Cronin, Sarah Fowler, Rima W. Jabado, Thanda Ko Gyi, Daniel Fernando, Godefroy De Bruyne, Stanley K. H. Shea, Paul Hilton , Yi-Li Gao, Guy M. W. Stevens, 2024. Global assessment of manta and devil ray gill plate and meat trade: conservation implications and opportunities

List of peer reviewed publications from 2024

The Manta Trust is committed to breaking down barriers in science communication. One such barrier is the cost of accessing publications. The Manta Trust is committed to making all papers open access where the lead author's primary affiliation is to our charity. This costs between 3-5,000 USD per paper.

	Publication title	Journal	Authors
1.	Rays in the Shadows: Batoid Diversity, Occurrence, and Conservation Status in Fiji	Biology	Kerstin Glaus et al.
2.	Spatiotemporal variations in reef manta ray (Mobula alfredi) residency at a remote meso-scale habitat and its importance in future spatial planning	Aquatic Conservation Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems	Joanna L. Harris et al.
3.	First records of the sicklefin (Mobula tarapacana), bentfin (Mobula thurstoni), and spinetail (Mobula mobular) devil rays in the Chagos Archipelago	Journal of Fish Biology	Joanna L. Harris et al.
4.	Remote hideaways: first insights into the population sizes, habitat use and residency of manta rays at aggregation areas in Seychelles	Marine Biology	Lauren R. Peel et al.
5.	Bycatch mitigation from the sky: using helicopter communication for Mobulid conservation in tropical tuna fisheries	Frontiers in Marine Science	Jennifer L. Waldo et al.
6.	The illegal exploitation of threatened manta and devil rays in the Chagos Archipelago, one of the world's largest no-take MPAs	Marine Policy	Joanna L. Harris et al.
7.	Behavior, site use and demographics of shortfin devil rays, Mobula kuhlii, at a newly-discovered cleaning area in South Africa	Marine Biology	M. M. Carpenter et al.
8.	Characteristics, residency and site fidelity of photo-identified reef manta rays (Mobula alfredi) population in New Caledonia	Marine Biology	Hugo Lassauce et al.
9.	Individual flexibility in group foraging behaviour of reef manta rays (Mobula alfredi)	Marine Biology	Annie Murray et al.
10.	Evidence of environmental niche separation between threatened mobulid rays in Aotearoa New Zealand: Insights from species distribution modelling	Journal of Biogeography	Rikako Ozaki et al.
11.	A review of elasmobranch breaching behavior: why do sharks and rays propel themselves out of the water into the air?	Environmental Biology of Fishes	A. Peter Klimley et al.
12.	Get them off the deck: Straightforward interventions increase post-release survival rates of manta and devil rays in tuna purse seine fisheries	Biological Conservation	Joshua D. Stewart et al.
13.	A regionally significant population of White-tailed Tropicbirds Phaethon lepturus on Kurehdhoo (Lhaviyani Atoll), Republic of the Maldives	Marine Ornithology	James C. Russell et al.
14.	Oceanic manta rays aggregating near a major population center have far higher injury rates than at an offshore protected area	Endangered Species Research	P. Santiago Dominguez-Sanchez et al.
15.	Length-weight Relationship of the Endangered Devil Ray Mobula mobular (Bonnaterre, 1778) off Gulf of Mannar, India	Fishery Technology	T. Mohanraj et al.
16.	Insular and mainland interconnectivity in the movements of oceanic manta rays (Mobula birostris) of Mexico in the Eastern Tropical Pacific	Environmental Biology of Fishes	Robert D. Rubin et al.
17.	Global assessment of manta and devil ray gill plate and meat trade: conservation implications and opportunities	Environmental Biology of Fishes	Marta D. Palacios et al.
18.	Fisheries, trade, and conservation of manta and devil rays in Peru	Environmental Biology of Fishes	Stefany Rojas-Perea et al.

In the Media

Online Articles

This year, we were featured in a wide range of respected media outlets, including *Forbes*, *New Scientist*, *Oceanographic Magazine*, *Dive Magazine*, and *Discover Wildlife*. These publications helped us bring global attention to manta and devil ray conservation, highlighting our key research, conservation challenges, and groundbreaking education initiatives.

150,000+

Social Media Following

In 2024, our social media following grew to over **150,000** followers, significantly increasing our ability to share conservation news, raise awareness, and boost fundraising efforts.

40+

Media Publications

We had over 40 articles and media features, which significantly increased the reach of our research and conservation news.

On Television

Our research and conservation efforts were showcased in several high-profile productions in 2024. A highlight was the BBC Natural History series Asia, which featured our Mobula Project Indonesia's Sustainable Seafood Network in the *Saving Asia* episode—narrated by Sir David Attenborough. We were also featured in two segments on TF1, France's largest TV network, and on TNVZ news, which covered the work of Manta Watch New Zealand.

Our Own Media

Throughout the year, we shared inspiring research and conservation stories through impactful campaigns, engaging infographics, and educational videos. Notable productions include *Collaborative Conservation*, which highlights our Mobula Project Indonesia's Sustainable Seafood Network, and *Mantas of the Mexican Caribbean*, which showcases the work of our Manta Caribbean Project.

Awareness & Fundraising Campaigns

We ran four major awareness and fundraising campaigns in 2024. A highlight was the launch of and fundraiser for the **India Mobulid Project**, supporting efforts to reduce mobulid mortality while ensuring sustainable livelihoods for fisheries-dependent communities.

Another key effort was our **World Manta Day** campaign in September, themed *The Power of Storytelling*. This two-week campaign underscored the role of storytelling in manta ray conservation, featuring an online storytelling workshop with Ocean Culture Life and a special event at the **Natural History Museum in London**, hosted in partnership with Focused on Nature. Conservationists, wildlife enthusiasts, and supporters came together for a night of inspiring talks, with keynote presentations from renowned conservationist **Prince Hussain Aga Khan**, who shared his stunning photography, and **Steve Backshall**, BAFTA award-winning wildlife presenter, who delivered a powerful speech on the urgency of marine conservation.

Manta Trust patron Steve Backshall speaking on the World Manta Day panel.

Photography & Film Awards

Our Media and Communications Manager, Jasmine Corbett, was a finalist in three major photography and film awards:

- **Ocean Photographer of the Year** (*Conservation: Impact category*) – featuring images of our Mobula Project Indonesia's work.
- **Smiley Charity Film Awards** (*Finalist*) – for *Mantas of Makunudhoo*, a film highlighting our RahVeshi Programme.
- **Big Syn International Film Festival** (*Finalist*) – for *The Manta Trust: Global Network of Collaborators*, filmed in Ecuador and recognised at the world's largest sustainability film festival.

Ocean Women Project Leader Flossy Barraud was a *runner-up* in the **Global Observatory for Gender Equality and Sport** photography competition with an image of a Maldivian woman, newly able to swim, experiencing the reef beside which she has always lived.

From global media coverage to award-nominated storytelling, 2024 was a landmark year for us in raising awareness about manta and devil ray conservation.

Ocean Photographer of the Year finalist images on display at the Piccadilly Lights.

Financial Report

We are very grateful to all the grant giving bodies, sponsors, and donors who continue to provide a lifeline for the Manta Trust and vicariously for our global network of research and conservation projects.

This has been a year of continued steady growth for the Manta Trust. We have seen an increase in support from corporates, public donations and grants. This has allowed us to support new Affiliate Projects in their manta research around the world, and to set up the RahVeshi Programme Scholarship for young Maldivians. The funds have also enabled us to cover the Open Access fees for many significant scientific papers, as well as support more PhD and Masters students worldwide in their manta research and data collection studies. We extend our thanks to everyone who has donated in 2024, each contribution is vital to help ensure we can continue with our manta and devil conservation efforts.

Income

£907,599

This year 47% of our funds have come from unrestricted sources such as public donations and corporate supporters. We continue to diversify our income sources, slowly relying less on restricted grants for our core operations by bringing in more corporate sponsors and increasing marketing efforts to increase public donations. At the same time, we have been able to secure more funding to carry out our conservation and education projects through restricted grants from trusts and foundations.

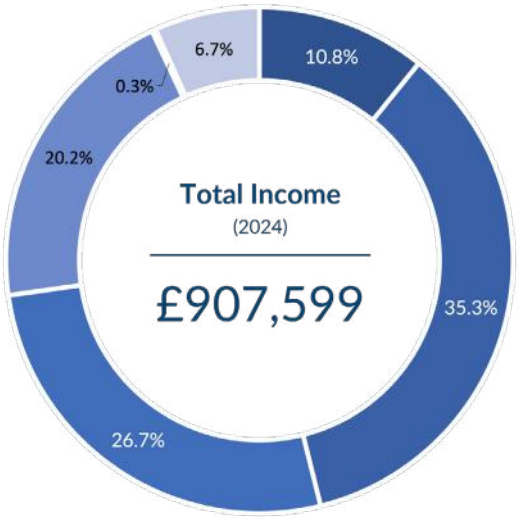
Expenditure

£1,030,663

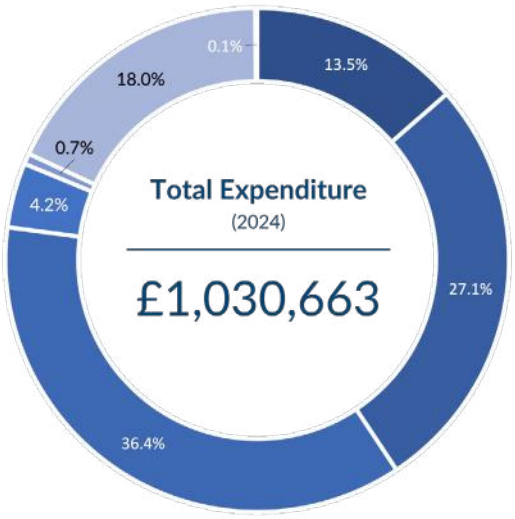
How our funds are allocated is determined by the Core Operations Team, with guidance from our Board of Trustees, and direction from our 5-year strategic plan.

Finance Breakdown

Please note that the following figures are unaudited and approximate. For detailed financial information please view our audited Financial Statement for 2023-24. Manta Trust Reserves: To safeguard the core activities of the charity in periods of fluctuating income, the Trustees have established unrestricted reserves to cover six to twelve months operational costs £200,000 to £250,000. In 2024 there were adequate funds to ensure the charity was able to meet all current operational costs and some estimated possible future liabilities. Our free reserves on 31st Dec 2024 were: £200,675 (2023: £278,783).



- Partnership with Maldives Resorts
- Trusts & Research Grants
- Public Donations & Fundraising
- Corporate Social Responsibility Funding
- Investments Income
- Other



- Maldives Manta Conservation Programme
- Operations & Overheads
- Research & Conservation Projects
- Education & Outreach Programme
- Studentship Programme
- Research Expeditions
- Other

*Our personnel are one the greatest conservation tools at our disposal. Our core team is only small, but its influence is far reaching; as an umbrella organisation, we coordinate activities for, provide expert guidance to fundraise for, and encourage collaboration between 30 affiliated projects worldwide. Charities are often criticised for spending funds on their operations and overheads; making it difficult for charities to maintain a highly skilled core operational team and pay them a fair wage (We highly recommend watching this short but powerful TED Talk on the topic). So, we are especially grateful for the incredible support our core team has received from several progressive sponsors and donors over the years, without whom we could not continue our work.

Thank You & Summary

The success and achievements of the Manta Trust in 2024 would not have been possible without the incredible support of the following groups:

The Bail Family | J Berman Memorial Foundation | The Milazzo Family Foundation | The Rochester Family

Steve Weinman | Nina Brooke | The Laura Ellen & Robert Muglia Family Foundation | Susan Stevens | Daniel Roozen

Sewell Trust | The Loke-Hassell Family | David Keens | The Cunningham Family | Patrick Firouzian

We would like to give a special mention to our Patrons who have been extremely supportive over 2024, helping us to highlight our special events and using their unique platform to raise awareness of the Manta Trust. Thank you to our Trustees for guiding and supporting the core operational team as we strive to grow and develop our charity, and to the Action for Mantas (our partner registered 501 (c)(3)) Board for their continued support of us and our US-based supporters. Thanks to Manta Expeditions for helping us to get our researchers into the field and raising much needed donations for our charity. We would also like to extend a huge thank you to our cyclone members, commercial supporters, supporters who adopted a manta ray, purchased our merchandise, donated to us directly, or through Action for Mantas, supported our crowdfunding campaigns, or took part in our Cross the Oceans challenge! Without your support, none of this work would have been possible. Our growing number of supporters is incredibly inspiring and we are grateful for everyone of you.

When it comes to manta and devil ray conservation, there is no time to waste.

Our global re-assessment of the mobulid gill plate and meat trade has clearly demonstrated that the acute threat to these vulnerable species from targeted fisheries and retained bycatch is only increasing, compounded by threats from discarded bycatch, growing human intrusion and disturbance, development, pollution and the impacts of the climate crisis. Several other important peer-reviewed publications from our global network this year show steep population declines, of over 90% in some regions (visit our Research Portal to access these). We must work efficiently to fulfil our key objectives and secure a sustainable future for manta and devil rays and the habitats on which they depend before it is too late.

Over 2024, the Manta Trust core team has greatly improved how we monitor our work and measure the impact of our activities, as reflected in this report. A guiding principle of this approach is that we never assume impact; qualitative or quantitative evidence that an initiative has achieved the desired results is required for each stage before further funding or resources are allocated to it. When an initiative has not delivered results as expected, we take action to understand why the method is failing and either adapt our method or take a new approach entirely. By working in this way, and prioritising support for initiatives contributing the most towards meeting the key objectives in our Five-Year Plan, we ensure that every pound donated to us by our incredible supporters is used responsibly.

In 2024 we also completed a global mobulid fisheries and policy review which will be published this year. The results from this and our trade assessment are shaping our priorities for 2025, emphasising the urgent need for better fishing regulations and enforcement to protect these vulnerable species. Implementing and advocating for work that helps to break down barriers to inclusion in the marine conservation sector also remains a crucial part of our approach. There are so many ways to support our research and conservation efforts: from adopting a manta ray to booking a Manta Expedition, taking part in our Cross the Oceans Challenge or joining The Cyclone, sponsoring us through your business, or simply making a donation. Any support you can give, big or small, to help us in our mission will make a difference for manta and devil rays, and the habitats they depend on.

Bex Carter
Director of Conservation Programmes

An oceanic manta ray in
Fuvahmulah, Maldives.

Image credits:

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Caribbean Islands Manta Conservation Program: 44
Jean-Yves Meyer: 45T
Alice Carpentier 45B

Authored by: Manta Trust core team
Document created by: Jasmine Corbett

Impact Report
2024

The Manta Trust

The Manta Trust is a registered charity in England & Wales (Charity Number 1145387).

Catemwood House
Norwood Lane
Corscombe
Dorset
DT2 0NT
United Kingdom

info@mantatrust.org

www.mantatrust.org