

THE CYCLONE

ISSUE 7 - OCT 2026

THE MANTA TRUST



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EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to Issue 7 of *Cyclone Magazine*. This issue is centred on collaboration - the people, partnerships and shared ideas that make meaningful manta and devil ray conservation possible. It was also the theme of World Manta Day 2026, celebrated globally on 17 September, making it a fitting theme for the stories we're sharing in this edition. From long-standing partnerships to new initiatives and community-led action, each reminds us that lasting conservation is something we achieve together.

At the heart of this issue is the power of people coming together. We look back on World Manta Day at Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru, marking 20 years of partnership with the Manta Trust, and celebrate the research, local knowledge and relationships that have shaped manta conservation in Baa Atoll. We also meet the team behind the Manta Foundation, a new chapter in efforts to protect manta rays and their habitats. And yes, that really is a pink manta ray on our cover! Read on to discover the story behind this remarkable manta. We also explore how investing in the next generation of ocean champions is helping build a future for conservation.

Elsewhere, our *Species Spotlight* introduces Munk's pygmy devil ray, a remarkable species whose spectacular aggregations also leave it vulnerable to fishing. In our *Cyclone Member Spotlight*, Adam Brown shares the unforgettable encounter that inspired his support for manta conservation - a reminder of how a single experience can create a connection that lasts a lifetime. And, of course, *Manta Moments* brings together some of our favourite encounters with these extraordinary animals.

Whether through research, education, community engagement or the support of people like you, collaboration takes many forms. Thank you for being part of The Cyclone, and for helping us work towards a future where manta and devil rays can thrive.

With warm regards,

Jasmine Corbett

Media & Communications Manager, Manta Trust



A MUNK'S PYGMY DEVIL RAY (*MOBULA MUNKIANA*) BREACHING IN THE WATERS OF BAJÁ CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

© Shawn Heinrichs



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.

The Munk's pygmy devil ray (*Mobula munkiana*) is a small but remarkable member of the mobulid family, found in the coastal waters of the Eastern Pacific, from the Sea of Cortez in Mexico to Peru. Despite its small size, it is known for forming spectacular aggregations of up to tens of thousands of individuals. During these gatherings, the rays are often seen breaching several metres above the water, a behaviour thought to be linked to social dynamics, although its exact purpose remains unknown.

These large aggregations can also leave Munk's pygmy devil rays particularly vulnerable to fishing, with schools at risk from gillnets, trawl nets and purse seine fisheries. A study published in October 2025, [*Composition and conservation status of rays sold in Baja California Sur, Mexico*](#), used DNA analysis to identify 14 ray species in seafood markets, including Munk's pygmy devil ray. More than 78% of the sampled rays belonged to threatened species, highlighting the continued presence of vulnerable and protected rays in fisheries and seafood markets.

The study highlights the importance of accurate species identification and improved seafood traceability to support mobulid conservation. By revealing the presence of protected species in the trade, this research provides valuable evidence to help strengthen monitoring, fisheries management and conservation efforts for Munk's pygmy devil ray and other threatened rays in the Eastern Pacific.

Munk's Pygmy Devil Ray
Mobula munkiana



The Manta Foundation

A New Chapter for Manta Ray Conservation

Somewhere off Lady Elliot Island, a pink manta ray moves gracefully through the blue water. Known affectionately as Inspector Clouseau, he is the only confirmed pink manta ray ever recorded. Since 2015, he has returned to the same reef almost every year. Not far away swims Taurus, a reef manta ray first identified in 1982. Now believed to be in his 50s, Taurus continues to provide valuable insights into the remarkable lifespan of these animals.

These manta rays are more than fascinating individuals. They are part of a population that scientists believe is among the healthiest and least threatened in the world. Their stories help reveal how much there is still to learn about manta rays and why Australia's waters are so important to their future. Now, a new organisation has been launched to help ensure that future remains secure.

This year marks the launch of the Manta Foundation, a registered Australian charity dedicated to protecting manta rays and their habitats. Many readers may already know of Project Manta, the pioneering research program founded in 2007. For nearly two decades, Project Manta has built rich manta ray datasets, tracked individual manta rays across record-breaking distances, and helped identify Australian reefs as important strongholds for the species.

A REEF MANTA RAY (MOBULA
ALFREDI) ON A CLEANING
STATION IN AUSTRALIA

© Pat Uramowski





© Simon Hillbourne



TAURUS, THE
WORLD'S OLDEST
MANTA RAY

© Jordan Robins



© Kathy Townsend



INSPECTOR CLOUSEAU, THE
WORLD'S ONLY RECORDED
PINK REEF MANTA RAY
(MOBULA ALFREDI) AT LADY
ELLIOT ISLAND, AUSTRALIA

© Kristian Laine

But research alone cannot guarantee protection. Turning scientific knowledge into lasting conservation outcomes requires funding, long-term commitment, and strong community support.

The Manta Foundation was created to help bridge that gap by transforming decades of research into meaningful conservation action.

Why It Matters

Across the globe, manta rays face a growing list of threats. Commercial fishing, unsustainable trade, habitat loss, and changes to the marine environment continue to place pressure on populations. Manta rays are particularly vulnerable because they mature slowly and produce few offspring. When numbers decline, populations can take many years, or even generations, to recover.

In many parts of the world, conservation efforts focus on preventing further losses. Australia presents a different opportunity. Thanks to relatively strong protections and populations that have not yet been pushed to the brink, Australia offers a rare chance to act before a crisis occurs. Healthy manta ray populations found here can provide valuable lessons about what successful conservation looks like and what is needed to maintain it. The Manta Foundation was established to ensure that opportunity is not lost.

The Foundation brings together the expertise of Project Manta and the Manta Trust, combining years of scientific research and conservation experience. It is led by Executive Officer and Principal Scientist Dr Asia Haines, with a board that includes Josh Heller, adviser to the Manta Trust; Dr Kathy Townsend, founder of Project Manta; Dr Christine Dudgeon, senior shark and ray researcher; and former Manta Trust Head of Conservation Strategy Isabel Ender. The Manta Foundation also benefits from the guidance of Dr Guy Stevens, founder and director of the Manta Trust, who serves as an adviser. Together, they share a common goal: securing funding, supporting long-term monitoring, and strengthening conservation efforts in Australia and across the wider region.

Three Pillars, One Purpose

The Manta Foundation's work is built around three areas of focus: Research, Conserve, and Inspire. Research forms the foundation of all conservation efforts. The Foundation supports long-term monitoring, tagging programmes, habitat mapping, and other scientific projects that help build a clearer understanding of manta ray populations. This information provides the evidence needed to guide conservation decisions and policy.

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**THE MANTA FOUNDATION'S
WORK IS BUILT AROUND
THREE AREAS OF FOCUS:
RESEARCH, CONSERVE, AND
INSPIRE.**

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Scientific knowledge must lead to practical action. The Foundation works to support marine protected areas, improve fisheries management, and strengthen international conservation measures. These efforts build on important protections already achieved for manta and devil rays through agreements such as CITES and CMS.

Conservation success also depends on people. Through education and citizen science initiatives, the Foundation aims to inspire the next generation of ocean advocates. By helping people connect with manta rays and the marine environment, it encourages broader support for conservation efforts.

Looking Beyond the Borders

Manta rays travel freely across oceans, and the challenges they face do not stop at national boundaries. Many of the fishing and trade pressures affecting manta rays occur beyond Australian waters, particularly throughout the Indo-Pacific region. With strong scientific foundations and an established conservation network, the Manta Foundation is well placed to support research, training, and advocacy efforts across neighbouring countries. The goal is to turn Australia's success into a model that can benefit manta rays throughout the region.

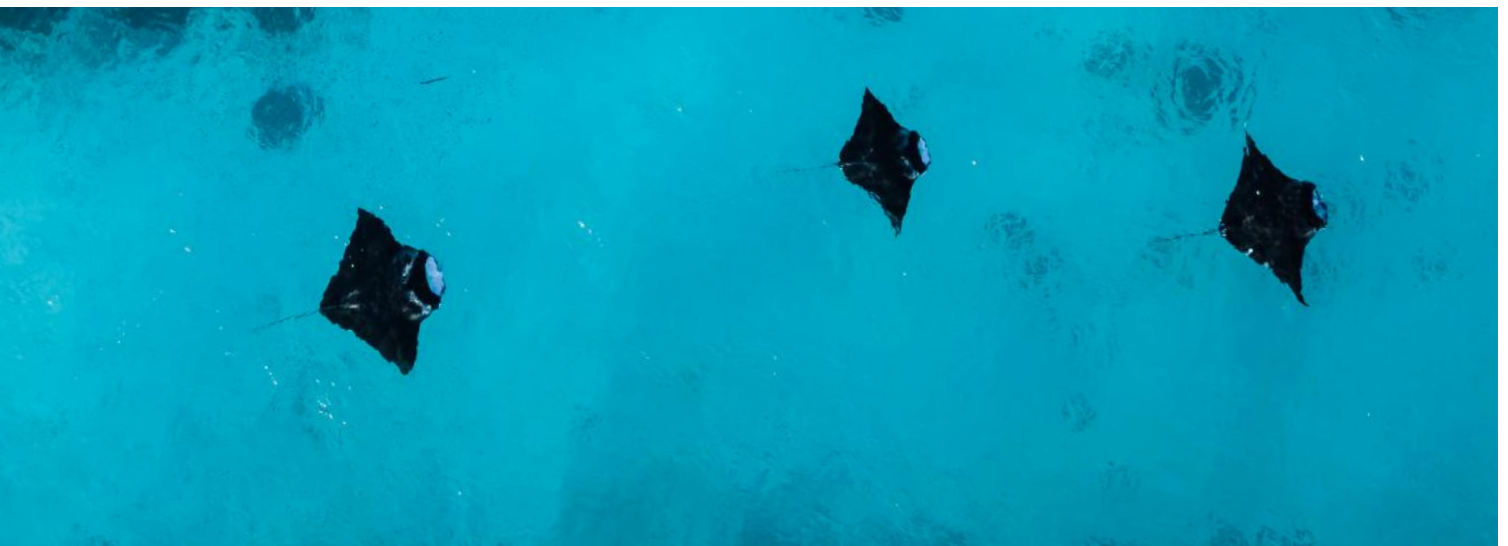
Stories about wildlife conservation often focus on declines and losses. Australia's manta rays offer a different narrative. They show that healthy populations can exist when science, protection, and community support work together. Rather than serving as a warning, they provide a powerful example of what is possible. The Manta Foundation's mission is to ensure that this success story continues, and that the knowledge gained in Australian waters helps protect manta rays wherever they roam.

Learn more or support the Foundation's work at mantaoundation.org.au.



Words by
Dr Asia Haines
Manta Foundation
& Project Manta





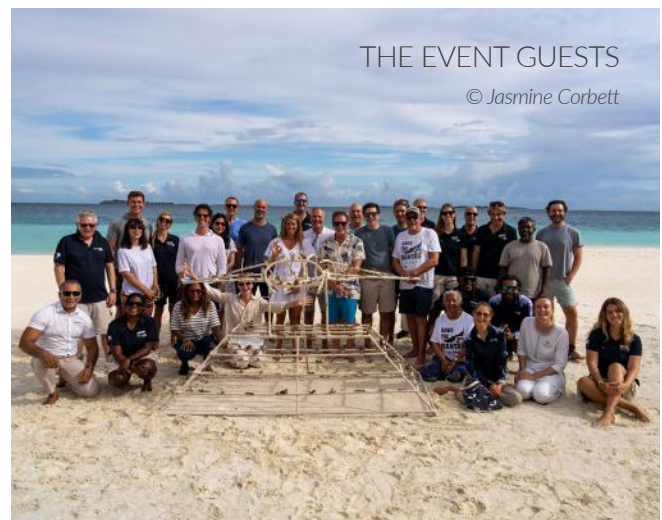


World Manta Day

At Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru: Twenty Years of Collaboration

To celebrate World Manta Day, we hear from Tam Sawers of the Maldivian Manta Conservation Programme about 20 years of collaboration between Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru, the Manta Trust and local communities in Baa Atoll. Tam reflects on the partnerships, research and community-led conservation that have helped protect this remarkable ecosystem.





This September, Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru in Baa Atoll celebrated World Manta Day alongside two milestones worth celebrating together: the resort's 20th anniversary and 20 years of partnership with the Manta Trust. Here's what those milestones represented, and how this year's celebrations brought that shared legacy to life.

There's a particular kind of light in Baa Atoll in the late afternoon, when the tide starts pulling plankton into Hanifaru Bay and the mantas begin to arrive. By that time of day, most tourists have already headed back to base, and the 'Bay' settles into something close to silence. Slipping into the water and finding yourself surrounded by mantas gliding and looping through the plankton, lit up gold by the last of the light, is hard to put into words – it's peaceful in a way that feels almost otherworldly, like the rest of the world has simply fallen away and there's nothing left but the water, the light, and these enormous, graceful animals moving around you.

I first saw that light as an intern, offered the chance to complete my research as part of the Manta Trust team at Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru – a three-month internship, or so I thought. I was hooked almost from the moment I arrived, and not only because of the ocean and the animals in it, though that was certainly part of it. It was the people; a team that had built an environment where you could genuinely contribute, be trusted with real responsibility, and feel like part of something, not just an extra pair of hands. That sense of camaraderie is what turned three months into 10+ years, as I never really left.

This September, we brought together three things worth celebrating in the same breath: World Manta Day, the resort's 20th anniversary, and 20 years of partnership between Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru and the Manta Trust. I wasn't there for the start of it, but I've spent enough time here to understand what those two decades represent, and to feel the weight of stepping into a project with that much history behind it.

It felt fitting that this year's World Manta Day theme was collaboration, because that's exactly

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**NO SINGLE ORGANISATION
PROTECTS AN ECOSYSTEM
LIKE THIS ALONE.**

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what it took to bring this partnership to its twentieth anniversary, and it's exactly what will carry it into the next twenty.

Where It All Began

Long before Hanifaru Bay became a Marine Protected Area, before Baa Atoll was recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, it was just a group of people – resort staff, researchers, government officials, and, crucially, the local island communities of Baa Atoll – who believed the atoll's manta rays and reef manta feeding aggregations were worth protecting, and who were willing to work across very different institutions to make that happen.



MANTA TRUST PATRON, ROGER MUNNS,
SWIMMING ALONGSIDE A MANTA RAY
DURING THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE TRIP

© Jasmine Corbett



That collaboration between Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru, the MMCP (Manta Trust), the Ministry of Environment, and the communities who call this atoll home was the quiet foundation everything else was built on. Without it, Hanifaru Bay simply wouldn't exist as the protected, globally significant site it is today.

Twenty years on, that same spirit of collaboration is what keeps the work going; different faces, same principle: no single organisation protects an ecosystem like this alone.

Research With Real-World Weight

It's easy, from the water, to think of the research happening in Baa Atoll as data collection, but it's worth pausing on what that data has actually done in the wider world. The long-term research carried out from this field base has fed directly into the case for listing reef and oceanic manta rays as Vulnerable and Endangered on the IUCN Red List, and into their listing under CITES Appendix I, which restricts and monitors the international trade of manta ray products.

Those are not small things. They're the difference between mantas being protected by law across borders and being left exposed to unregulated fisheries and trade. Every dive, every survey, every identification photo logged in Baa over the past two decades has been part of building the evidence base that made that possible...proof that careful, patient, long-term science can change policy on a global scale.

Rooted in the Local Community

If there's one thing my research on traditional knowledge taught me early on, it's that conservation in Baa Atoll didn't begin with researchers arriving with clipboards. Local fishers, boat captains, and island communities had been reading these waters – the tides, the plankton blooms, the seasonal arrival of the mantas – for generations before any of us showed up. That knowledge, and the willingness of local communities to share it, sit at the heart of why Hanifaru Bay's protection has worked as well as it has.

Over the past 20 years, that relationship has grown

into something structural rather than incidental. Local island councils and communities have been part of the conversations that shaped Baa Atoll's designation as a Biosphere Reserve. Local guides, boat crew, and dive staff are often the first to spot a manta, the first to notice when something in the bay has changed, and the ones who carry that awareness back into their own communities.

Twenty years in, I don't think we could have got here – a functioning MPA, a Biosphere Reserve, a manta population people travel from all over the world to see – without local involvement being treated as essential rather than optional.

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**EVERY DIVE, EVERY SURVEY,
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It's a lesson we try to carry into everything the MMCP does now, and it's something we try to build into the work itself, not just talk about.

A Home for the Work, for Twenty Years

None of this happens without a place willing to host it, year after year, long after the novelty of “having researchers on site” would normally wear off. Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru has been that place for two decades; providing the field base, the boats, the logistics, and just as importantly, the belief that a resort and a research programme can be genuinely

intertwined rather than existing side by side.

That's not a small commitment. It's shown up in the apprentices, interns and students who've had somewhere to live and work, in the guests who've been able to witness Hanifaru Bay responsibly because the resort has invested in doing tourism the right way, and in a staff culture that treats conservation as part of what the resort is, not an add-on.

Twenty years of that kind of partnership is rare, and it was very much worth celebrating.

A Celebration Twenty Years in the Making

When we gathered in September, it wasn't just a celebration of an anniversary on a calendar. It was a celebration of everything that collaboration has made possible: a biosphere reserve, a marine protected area, a generation of researchers, and a partnership that has quietly outlasted a lot of things in this industry that don't.

This year's World Manta Day celebrations at Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru brought the community together for a full day of events – from a community day connecting local islands to the celebrations, to manta swims in Hanifaru Bay itself, to talks and presentations from the researchers and partners who've shaped this story. Here's a look at how it all went.

Kendhoo Community Day

One of the highlights of the week was our visit to Kendhoo, where we were welcomed with traditional bodu beru drumming, warm island hospitality and coconuts on arrival. Guests had the opportunity to explore the island, learn about its culture and history, and visit the oldest mosque, before joining a series of community activities, including a marine-themed sandcastle competition and an exhibition of artwork from the Baa Atoll School Art Competition.

The afternoon was a lovely reminder that conservation is about far more than what happens in the water. It's about people, shared experiences and creating opportunities for communities to connect with the ocean and with one another.



Manta Excursions

The weather may not always have played along, but the mantas certainly did! Despite the cloudy skies and rain typical of the southwest monsoon, we enjoyed some fantastic research trips with our guests, heading out onto the water alongside the MMCP team.

From snorkelling in search of mantas to learning how our scientists observe, identify and study these incredible animals in their natural environment, the excursions offered a hands-on glimpse into the work behind manta conservation. There was something particularly special about sharing that experience with guests, especially when the ocean delivered a few unforgettable encounters of its own.

Presentations and Talks

Across the week, guests had the opportunity to hear from an inspiring group of researchers, conservationists and storytellers, each offering a different perspective on the ocean and the work needed to protect it.

We began at the Marine Discovery Centre, introducing guests to the MMCP team and our research and education programmes, before moving into more in-depth conversations with Dr Guy Stevens, Prof. Phil Hosegood and Sophie Owsianka. From exploring the currents and plankton that make Hanifaru Bay so extraordinary, to discovering MantaBase, MantaStory and the role of digital storytelling in conservation, there was plenty to spark curiosity.

The Conservation in Conversation session brought together voices from science, tourism, government and marine conservation to explore the realities of protecting our oceans. We also heard from the Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Rangers, discussed the relationship between conservation and the economy, and explored the question of whether tourism and conservation can work hand in hand.

The week concluded with further insights from Dr Guy Stevens on 20 years of manta research and Roger Munns on the power of underwater storytelling. Together, these talks highlighted the



many different people, perspectives and approaches that contribute to meaningful conservation.

Looking Ahead

Celebrating 20 years of collaboration was a genuinely wonderful experience, filled with so much support, enthusiasm and conservation spirit. One of the most special parts was seeing our team come together like a family, sharing their love for these animals and commitment to their protection with a wider audience.

It was incredibly heartwarming to see that enthusiasm resonate with guests who were just as curious, engaged and eager to make a difference. We all left feeling incredibly grateful and with a renewed sense of motivation, knowing that the work we care so deeply about is supported by so many wonderful, like-minded people.

Bringing people together around a shared love for the ocean was a beautiful reminder of why we do what we do, and how much more we can achieve when we work together.



Words by
Tam Sawers
Maldives Manta Conservation
Programme



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.

A REEF MANTA RAY (MOBULA
ALFREDI) ON A CLEANING
STATION IN AUSTRALIA

© Pat Uramowski



MUNK'S PYGMY DEVIL RAYS (*MOBULA MUNKIANA*) AGGREGATING IN THE WATERS OF BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

© Shawn Heinrichs





AN OCEANIC MANTA RAY (*MOBULA
BIROSTRIS*) ALONGSIDE A SCUBA
DIVER IN FUVAHMULAH, MALDIVES

© Simon Hilbourne





Nurturing the Next Generation of Ocean Champions

One of the things I have found most exciting during my time working at the Manta Trust is seeing how much our youth engagement has grown over the last five years. When I think about the future of manta and devil ray conservation, I think about the young people we reach through our work and the different roles they might play in ocean science and conservation in the future.

At the Manta Trust, we often become connected with children at a young age through our school programmes, such as Moodhu Madharusaa (Ocean School) in the Maldives. These early experiences can be incredibly powerful, allowing children not only to learn about the ocean environment, but also to experience it first-hand through activities such as swimming and snorkelling, helping to foster a lifelong connection to the environment.

For young people who have already developed an interest in the ocean environment, our Ocean Ambassadors programme, developed in collaboration with 71Blue, gives teenagers from around the globe the opportunity to connect with other like-minded people, deepen their knowledge on marine issues and to develop their skills as ocean advocates. What I particularly enjoy about working with the Ocean Ambassadors is seeing their confidence grow as they see their ideas become reality and as they begin to inspire those around them.

The diversity of the Ocean Ambassadors is particularly encouraging. They don't all live close to a marine environment and they don't all want to work in the marine science and conservation sector, but they are united by their desire to take action and make a positive difference for our shared ocean. This diversity matters, because the future of manta and devil ray conservation depends not only on people who work directly in the sector, but on a much wider community of people who understand,

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I USED TO RECYCLE AND STUFF, BUT I WOULD JUST BE LIKE, 'OK, DON'T THROW TRASH, PLANT MORE TREES', BUT IN REALITY, THAT WAS JUST NOT ENOUGH. THANKS TO THE MANTA TRUST, I HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE OCEAN AND I WANT TO BECOME A MARINE BIOLOGIST. YOU MADE ME WHO I AM TODAY. YOU MADE ME FIGHT FOR WHAT'S RIGHT.

– FORMER MOODHU
MADHARUSAA PARTICIPANT

”

2025 Ocean Ambassador: Eyvah Zulaal Zaeem

The Ocean Ambassador programme is designed to inspire participants to become long-term advocates for the ocean. Eyvah is a great example of this in action. Following her time as a 2025 Ambassador, she recently helped to organise a four-day plastic drive with her school's Environs Club, collecting an impressive 755kg of recyclable plastic and raising awareness among students about the impact of plastic consumption in the Maldives through an education session.

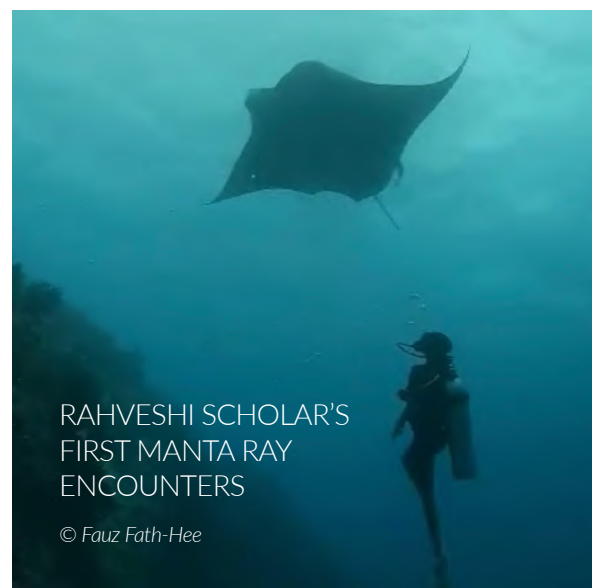
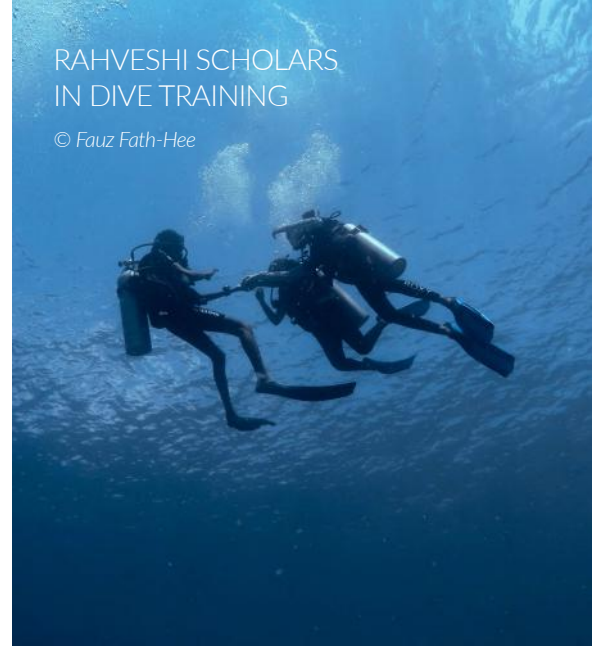


For some young people, the opportunity to gain practical experience is a key milestone on their journey to working in this sector. The Ocean Giants Programme, run in collaboration with the University of Plymouth in the UK, gives students the opportunity to gain training in charity operations such as fundraising, finance, and media and communications, before putting their new knowledge to the test by fundraising for conservation. In the Maldives, young people can gain scuba and freediving skills and certifications through our RahVeshi Scholarship, which provides training and practical experience for young Maldivians interested in pursuing careers in marine conservation. Our internships provide a further opportunity for young people to gain hands-on experience, working alongside conservation teams in areas such as research, education and community engagement.

2025 RahVeshi Scholar: Mariyam Nawha Ibrahim

Towards the end of 2025, Nawha spent three months with us as a RahVeshi Scholar, gaining PADI Rescue Diver and Divemaster certifications, Molchanovs Wave 1 freediving certification, and a Level 3 qualification in Marine Biology. The experience gave Nawha valuable skills and practical experience to help prepare her for a career in marine science and conservation. Following her scholarship, she worked with the Maldives Manta Conservation Programme (MMCP) on its Oceanic Manta Ray Project before securing a position with the Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme.

"The Scholarship was definitely one of the greatest experiences of my life. It has made it easier for me to get into the field of marine science and conservation by providing me with the basics that are needed."





MALDIVES MANTA CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

Education and Outreach Coordinator: Hassaan Mohamed

Hassaan's journey into marine conservation began at 15, when the Maldives Manta Conservation Project (MMCP) delivered a marine education programme at his school as part of their Oceanic Manta Ray Project. This, combined with several opportunities to join the project's research boat, gave him his first experience of marine science and his first encounter with a manta ray. This was the start of a journey that would take him from school participant to conservation professional.

In 2024, Hassaan was part of the first cohort of MMCP RahVeshi Scholars, gaining a Level 3 qualification in Marine Biology and his PADI Divemaster certification. From there Hassaan continued his journey with the MMCP, undertaking a three-month internship, before gaining employment with the same Oceanics project team that had first inspired him.

Today, Hassaan is an important part of the MMCP team, working as the Education and Outreach Coordinator. Having once been inspired by an opportunity to learn about marine science, Hassaan is now helping to create those same opportunities for the next generation of children and young people.

Opportunities to gain hands-on experience and relevant skills are particularly important in the regions where manta and devil rays are found. For conservation to be effective in the long-term, we need local people with the knowledge, skills and experience to lead and sustain that work. I feel fortunate to have seen the progression of young people through education and capacity strengthening programmes, such as those mentioned above, and into the conservation workforce. Across the Manta Trust network, early-career professionals are taking on roles in research, education and community engagement, while supporting and inspiring other young people to follow their lead into the sector.

Of course, creating these opportunities takes a lot of work behind the scenes. It means developing relationships with education partners, communities and funders, designing programmes around young people's needs, providing mentoring and support, and continually evaluating what is and isn't working. It also means looking for ways to connect these programmes, so that a young person's involvement doesn't have to end when one programme finishes.

There is still so much potential to build on this work, but when I look at where we are now I feel incredibly positive about the future and the young people who may one day be at the forefront of ocean conservation. For me, building this network of inspiring young people is one of the most exciting things about working at the Manta Trust.



Words by
Jennifer Spacagna
Manta Trust
Education Manager

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TRUST EDUCATION
PORTAL

education.mantatrust.org



Cyclone Member Spotlight

As much as we love sharing the behind-the-scenes of our work, we are equally inspired by YOU — the people who support it. In this issue, we meet Adam Brown, whose childhood fascination with mobulids grew into a lifelong passion for their protection. After a memorable first encounter with around 30 manta rays at Hanifaru Bay in 2013, Adam began supporting the Manta Trust and has remained a committed advocate for manta and devil ray conservation ever since. His story is a wonderful example of how one unforgettable experience can inspire a lasting connection to the ocean and a desire to help protect it.

Have you ever had the chance to see a manta ray in the wild? If so, can you share a memory that stands out as particularly special?

As a child I was always captivated by the gracefulness of mobulids. My first experience of rays, like most people, was at aquariums. Giving feelings of both wonder and sadness; even at a young age I understood the tension between the benefits of increasing public awareness and holding these astonishing creatures captive.

Fast forward twenty or so years, in 2013 whilst

holidaying in Baa Atoll in the Maldives we booked a trip to the manta feeding area at Hanifaru Bay. I had no idea what to expect but as soon as I got in the water a calmness descended on me as I floated on the surface with around 30 mantas feeding below me. I was struck by their playfulness, often swimming directly at me, dipping down at the final moment to avoid a collision, like they were saying 'you are in my space but that's OK'.

I was captivated as I watched the mantas loop the loop and veer in one direction then another with no effort whatsoever. I recall thinking to myself at the time – this is a memory. An unforgettable moment that will stay with me for ever.

What first inspired you to get involved with the Manta Trust? Was there a particular moment or experience that sparked your passion for manta conservation?

The trip to Hanifaru Bay was overseen by the Manta Trust and I was struck by how carefully visitors were briefed on mantas, their behaviours and what to do and not to do when in the water with them. When I was unpacking after the holiday I found the trip leaflet and saw the Manta Trust logo and started to donate as soon as I got back.

ADAM BROWN, LONG TIME
CYCLONE MEMBER, BY THE COAST





Supporting manta and devil ray conservation is a powerful commitment. What motivates you personally to stand behind this cause?

Two things stand out. Firstly that experience at Hanifaru Bay had such a profound impact on me that I felt I needed to contribute somehow towards the research, conservation and preservation of mobulids.

Secondly it's a connection to the Manta Trust because I admire the single-minded nature of their mission, how they build a consensus through rigorous scientific observation and research and how donors are stewarded in a way that makes you genuinely feel part of the mission.

If you could describe the work of the Manta Trust in one word, what would it be?

Effective.

Whilst the job is clearly not done, the outcomes speak for themselves. Achieving an international ban on the trade of all ten species of manta and devil rays is probably the biggest single achievement in mobulid conservation and a direct consequence of the hard work of the Manta Trust team and their partners.

I've played a very small part in that achievement and that makes me feel proud.

For someone who has never seen a manta before, how would you describe their presence in the water? What makes them unique in your eyes?

Graceful and effortless. More gliding than swimming. In total control of their environment; you are in their place, but you are very welcome. It's a very odd sensation to feel the exhilarating adrenaline rush when they are close, paired with a sense of calmness and safety. I was mesmerised; so much so they practically had to drag me out of the water...

Their shape is what makes them unique. Nature throws up these odd designs that just work; the strange almost prehensile spiral cephalic fins, an enormous mouth and immensely powerful wing-like fins. Each with individual markings that set them apart. Evolution at its very best.

As a supporter of the Manta Trust's mission, what

are your hopes for the future of manta and devil rays?

In an ideal world? As odd as it sounds, for the Manta Trust to put themselves out of business from a conservation point of view. Clearly we don't live in an ideal world, so I'll settle for a reverse in the decline of manta and devil ray populations through the implementation of key conservation recommendations, particularly fisher engagement, habitat protection and a reduction in the use of non-selective fishing gear.

If you could be any sea creature for a day, what would you choose and why?

The obvious answer would be a manta of some kind, but second on my list would be a Wobbegong Shark. They are so strange and different from any other shark. Sadly I've never seen one, then again maybe I have but didn't realise, they are masters of camouflage.

There are so many incredible species of manta and devil rays. Do you have a favourite? What draws you to that species?

I don't have any favourites – they are all special in their own way.

Finally, what message would you share with others who are thinking about supporting the conservation of manta and devil rays?

You can name your own manta – how brilliant is that? Mine's called Monty. She's a female short-tail last spotted in the Maldives.

If you have a fascination for sea life (and frankly I'm obsessed) in my experience the Manta Trust is doing some of the best conservation work there is, whether through research, education or improving protection. By supporting the Manta Trust you know that you are helping to make a real difference.

Adam Brown
Cyclone Member





Member

Manta
TRUST

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Manta and Devil Rays Coll

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A man with dark hair and a beard is smiling and holding a white tote bag. The tote bag has a graphic of several manta rays in different colors (black, white, and brown) arranged in a cluster. Another man's face is partially visible on the right side of the image.


Benefits



Enjoy 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 £30) - 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 our new Manta & Devil Rays Collection, created in collaboration with scientific illustrator Marc Dando. Every purchase helps support our vital conservation work and spreads the word about protecting manta and devil 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!



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mantatrust.org/adopt-a-manta



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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!

