

THE SMARTEST FISH IN THE SEA NEEDS YOUR HELP

Imagine a 6-meter manta ray circling your boat as you cruise the clear blue waters of the Hauraki Gulf. Well, no need to imagine it!

Founder & Project Manager Lydia Green started *Manta Watch Aotearoa New Zealand* in 2017 when she realized Aotearoa had an important and overlooked population of oceanic manta rays (*Mobula birostris*).



Since then, MWANZ has done incredible work, including being the first to track oceanic manta rays making pelagic migrations -- nearly 4,000 km! However, one of the biggest threats to NZ's mantas is the lack of data; we simply don't know enough about this population or the hazards they are exposed to. Getting out on the water to identify individuals is crucial in order to increase protection for this endangered species.

Manta surveys are carried out by drone from yachts and launches -- and that's where you come in. MWANZ needs volunteer vessels to take researchers out for single or multi- day expeditions anywhere along the upper northeast coast of the North Island. Our boat, sy Migration, completed 2 multi-day surveys and it was a great experience: fun and interesting, with visits to the Mokohinau Islands and Hauturu (Little Barrier).

Lydia is easygoing, happy to answer questions and share her extensive knowledge of the sea. If conditions – and the mantas – permit, you may be able to swim with the rays and assist with ID photos.

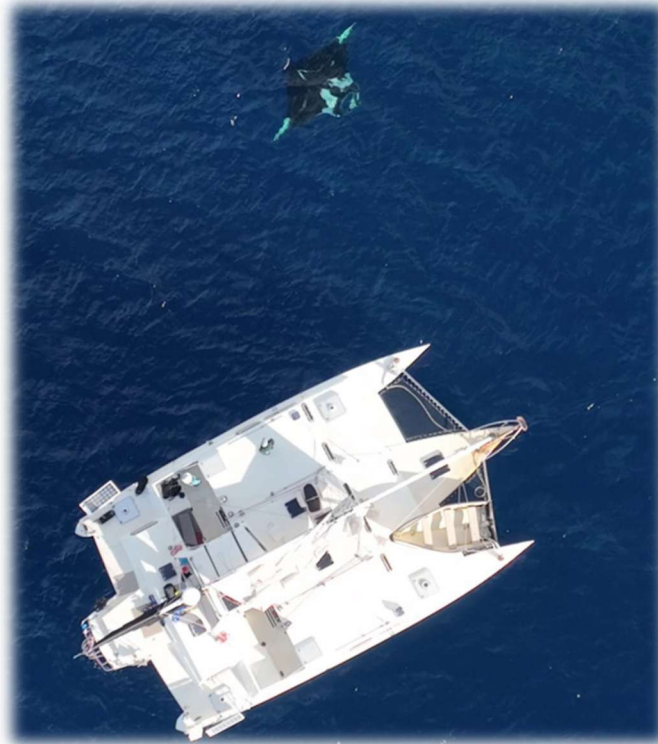
Here's what you need to know:

- Vessels must be seaworthy with all required safety gear.
- You'll host one or two researchers aboard.
- For multi-day trips, berthing and meals should be provided for the researchers. This, as well as your time and use of your vessel, is your donation to the project.
- Weather is the determining factor. Conditions must be calm with winds less than 10 knots; thus, motoring may be required for sailing vessels.
- A/C power (110 or 220) needs to be available to charge drone batteries on multi-day trips.
- Because nature is sometimes fickle, you may not see any mantas. But you will be out on the water in a truly beautiful part of the world. And even when mantas are not spotted, it adds to an important knowledgebase.

To be a part of this exciting project, please email Lydia Green at lydia.green@mantatrust.org.



If you are unable to participate but would like to help, please download the MantaWatchNZ app (Android or IOS) to easily report any sightings while in NZ waters.



ABOUT OCEANIC MANTA RAYS:

Oceanic manta rays (*Mobula birostris*) have the largest brain to body mass ratio of any fish, yet we know very little about them. We do know they are gentle, curious, social creatures that seem to be intelligent.

Because of their size, the only threats to oceanic manta rays are large sharks, orcas and humans. As with so many of the ocean's species, overfishing and bycatch are a dangerous threat as well as loss of critical habitat.

Additionally, over the last two decades, practitioners of Chinese medicine have

sold the lie that manta gill rakers (filter pads) can cure dozens of ailments, even though their use has never been documented in any traditional Chinese medicine text.

Manta rays have only one offspring every 2 to 4 years and thus their numbers have plummeted dangerously as they've become a targeted species. Global populations are estimated to have declined 50-79% over the last 90 years resulting in the giant manta ray being listed as an endangered species.*

*See IUCNRedList.org

