

# Manta Trust Chief Executive Update

## Trustee Board Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020

As the World deals with the ramifications of the global pandemic, the Manta Trust continues to handle this disruption as best we can. Fortunately, for the time being, the charity has been able to weather the storm in good standing. The core team and our operations have continued to find new ways to connect with our audience and partners online, raise funds, and generally ensure the charity remains functional and effective. The Maldivian Manta Ray Project is beginning to slowly rebound, although I do not anticipate being back to full operational capacity again for another six months at least. Elsewhere globally, our affiliate partners are also getting back into the field where possible. However, the last six months has seen a large shift towards desk-based research, resulting in some excellent science entering the peer reviewed publication process.

Given that it has only been four months since our last board meeting, and the regular extensive reports that are now being written by the rest of the Manta Trust's operations team, what follows here is a brief update on the charity's operations.

### Awareness & Education

The charity has continued to increase our education and awareness efforts online. The series of Manta Trust webinars came to an end two months ago. However, due to the positive feedback we received, we plan to organise more webinars later in the year. In the meantime, the team and I have continued to participate in other organisation's webinars and online presentation initiatives.



The launch of the first ever World Manta Day (17<sup>th</sup> September) was a huge success, and served as a way to bring together all the different NGOs working on manta ray and ocean conservation. It was great to see everyone working together to celebrate our common passion for these wonderful animals. We hope that each year we can build upon this year's success and expand WMD to reach new audiences.

## Research Activities

Most scientists around the World are still in lockdown, and as a result, have been busy writing up long overdue publications; myself included. I currently have half a dozen publications on my desk in various states of completion and review. These include historical datasets from tagging in the Maldives, several Chagos publications, and a Seychelles paper. I have just finished supervising three master's students, two of which I am now also working with to get their thesis projects published. And finally, the first publication from the global mobulid ray genetics study is currently going through the proof checking process with the journal, and will be published in the next month. I am sure there will also be many more publications to come in the next twelve months.

## Public Events



Despite the Covid-19 restrictions, Niv and Conny represented the Manta Trust at the InterDive Friedrichshafen show in September, and later this month the Manta Trust will have a virtual booth at the Scuba Digital online dive show. Unfortunately, most of the Manta Expeditions scheduled for 2020 had to be cancelled, although Beth was able to lead a mini expedition at the Four Seasons in the Maldives in my absence. I hope that in 2021 we will all be able to get back in the ocean with

our favourite marine creatures. Until then, thank you as always for your continued support, more now than ever before!