



Mantas of Yap • Study Guide

Jonathan travels to the Micronesian island of Yap in the middle of the Pacific to investigate large gatherings of the world's largest ray—the Manta. A research program there is tracking dozens of these animals and Jonathan learns what they're doing hanging around certain coral heads every morning and how they keep track of all the individual animals.

Objectives

1. Introduces viewers to the Manta ray and its basic anatomy.
2. Illustrates how research can be performed on a population of animals using natural markings to identify individuals.
3. Illustrates the concept of cleaning stations and why they are important.

Questions for before watching the program

1. What is a Manta ray? Mantas were once called “Devil rays” Any guess why that might be? (Hint...look at their cephalic lobes.)
2. Are Mantas dangerous to people? Can divers get close to them?
3. What do you think a massive animal like a Manta might eat?
4. Can you think of a way you might be able to keep track of several dozen wild Mantas so you could determine if the same individuals were sticking around?

Discussion for after watching the program

1. What is a “cleaning station”? Why do the Mantas of Yap go to cleaning stations?
2. How do Mantas keep from sinking?
3. How does current at the cleaning station assist the Mantas?
4. What do Mantas eat, and how do their cephalic lobes help?
5. How do the nearby mangroves contribute to the food supply for the Mantas of Yap?
6. There are many individual Mantas at the cleaning stations in Yap. How do the divemasters tell them all apart?
7. Internet research: How can a Manta defend itself? (Does it have a stinger like a stingray? Big teeth? Any weapons at all?)

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