



Manta Ray Feeding Frenzy • Study Guide

At a remote atoll in the Maldives, Manta rays gather in large numbers for just a few weeks each year to feed on plankton that accumulates in a small lagoon. Will Jonathan manage to time his visit right and find the mantas?

Objectives

1. Introduces viewers to the manta ray.
2. Illustrates concepts in the ocean food web.
3. Shows how tides can influence life in the ocean below the intertidal zone.

Questions for before watching the program

1. What is plankton?
2. What kinds of animals feed on plankton? Small animals, large animals, or both?
3. Large animals that feed on plankton all share one similar adaptation for catching plankton. What is it? (Think about whales).
4. How might tides affect plankton?
5. What is a manta ray? How does it feed?

Discussion for after watching the program

1. Why do manta rays have “wings”?
2. What other animals are related to mantas?
3. How do manta rays catch plankton to eat? What special adaptations do they have for that?
4. If a manta stops swimming, what will happen?
5. Why do the mantas aggregate (gather) at Hanifaru Bay? What makes the bay special that it attracts so many mantas?
6. Are mantas dangerous to people? Why or why not?
7. Why do the mantas sometimes feed in “barrel rolls”?
8. Where is Hanifaru Bay? Try to find the Maldives on a map.