



At night off the Kona coast, divers use lights to attract vast clouds of plankton, which in turn attract dozens of Manta rays to feed on the plankton. Jonathan travels to Hawaii to meet these Manta rays, including one particular animal named Lefty who has been coming to this site since 1979.

Objectives

1. Introduces viewers to the manta ray.
2. Illustrates concepts in the ocean food web.

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 light affect plankton?
5. What is a manta ray? How does it feed?
6. Are mantas dangerous?

Discussion for after watching the program

1. Why were manta rays once referred to as “Devil Rays”?
2. What is the function of a manta’s cephalic lobes (other than making it look like a “devil”)?
3. How do manta rays catch plankton to eat? What special adaptations do they have for that?
4. Why should divers not touch the feeding mantas?
5. Why can divers easily recognize “Lefty” and what is her handicap?
6. Are mantas dangerous to people? Why or why not?
7. Why do the mantas sometimes feed in “barrel rolls”?
8. Why do the mantas approach divers’ lights?