

PALM BEACH DOLPHIN PROJECT FACT SHEET



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OCEANIC MANTA RAY

Mobula birostris

CLASS: Chondrichthyes
ORDER: Rajiformes
FAMILY: Mobulidae
GENUS: *Mobula*
SPECIES: *birostris*



IDENTIFICATION: Dark brown to black above, white below. Pectoral fins (“wings”) long and pointed. Two large cephalic fins (rostra) protruding from front of head. Mouth wide, terminal. Tail whip-like, but shorter than the length of body and with no spine. On an oceanic manta the ventral surface is almost absent of spots except for a small central cluster which is usually present near the tail on the manta’s belly. Oceanic manta rays usually also have dark colouration around and inside their mouth’s and around their gill slits. On reef mantas (*M. alfredi*), unique spot patterning can be found all over the ventral surface.

SIZE AND AGE: World’s largest ray. Wingspan of up to 29.5 feet (9 m) with a total length including the tail of about 25 feet (7.6 m). Individuals may weigh as much as 4,000 pounds (1,815 kg). Maximum reported age of 20 years.

HABITAT: Pelagic, mainly in near-shore waters, near coral and rocky reefs, shallow muddy bays and intertidal areas, but have also been seen sometimes found over deep water near water’s surface.

REPRODUCTION: Aplacental viviparity (fertilized stingray eggs remain in the mother’s uterus, ingesting their yolk sacs. Once they have fully consumed their yolk sacs, the embryo is nourished by “uterine milk”), a lipid- and protein-rich fluid, secreted by the mother. Gestation lasts about 12-13 months. Up to 2 pups per litter.

HUMAN FACTORS: Protected in Florida state waters. Often viewed swimming slowly near surface. Easily approached. May be seen leaping out of the water, possibly as part of mating behavior or to dislodge ectoparasites. Of little danger to humans.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The information contained in this document was gathered from various sources, including Florida Ray Identification Guide and <http://www.mantatrust.org>.

FACT SHEETS ARE FOR PERSONAL USE WITHIN THIS PROGRAM ONLY



THE TARAS OCEANOGRAPHIC FOUNDATION - PALM BEACH DOLPHIN PROJECT

*There is no seam between the doings of wild animals and human affairs.
We can't go on losing them and not loose part of ourselves.*

Kenneth S. Norris