

Project Update: September 2013

Proyecto Mantas Ecuador, a project of the Marine Megafauna Foundation, has had an incredibly productive start to the 2013 field season. Thanks to the generosity of The Rufford Foundation, the first acoustic telemetry study on giant manta rays off mainland Ecuador is underway. Our main study site, Isla de la Plata, boasts the largest documented sub population of giant mantas in the world. However, despite the incredible size of this population little is known about drivers of movement patterns or habitat use. Acoustic telemetry will help us start trying to answer these critical questions.

So far, three acoustic stations have been deployed around Isla de la Plata and an additional two have been placed at another known aggregation site that is not in the protected area of the national park. Temperature loggers have also been attached to the stations so we can start to investigate environmental drivers that bring such vast numbers of manta rays to this aggregation site each year. Out of 12 acoustic tags, 10 have been deployed on individuals representing a range of sizes and colourations. One of the tags was placed on a male that photo identification records show has been the most highly sighted manta ray around Isla de la Plata over the last 3 years. The acoustic listening stations will be a permanent fixture around the island and we are highly anticipating the results from our first season.



A photo of our team and the first acoustic listening station deployed at Isla de la Plata.



A successfully tagged manta ray at Isla de la Plata



Dr Andrea Marshall checking that an acoustic tag was securely on a large female manta ray at Isla de la Plata.