

Palm Beach Manta Rays



NO, THIS IS NOT THE LATEST HOT SPORTS TEAM but a gathering most people don't know exists. As reported recently by the ANGARI Foundation, "Not many are aware that Florida is home to a large seasonal aggregation of adult manta rays and also serves as an important manta ray nursery."

The first study of the South Florida manta ray population was published by The Florida Manta Project, a research group within the Marine Megafauna Foundation. The Florida

Manta Project has been studying manta rays in the area since 2016. "As the first group to study South Florida's manta rays, we were incredibly surprised to learn that this population is composed exclusively of juvenile manta rays," said Jessica Pate, lead scientist for the Florida Manta Project. "We were also disheartened to see so many mantas entangled in fishing line and with injuries from boat propellers. Continued research, mitigation of threats, and increased public education is crucial for the conservation of Florida's manta rays."

ANGARI Foundation and The Florida Manta Project have partnered with Digital Life to bring awareness to Florida manta rays by creating an accurate 3D model of one. In June 2020, a juvenile male manta which was eight feet across his wing tips caught the attention of the researchers. They named it Skye.

Using collected footage and measurement data, Skye has been recreated in exact detail animation, even the ray's scars from a boat prop are noticeable. The animated model accurately depicts Skye's swimming motion and the lifelike movement of his cephalic fins during feeding.

"The 3D model will be used to study the movements as well as body condition and health in manta rays and, therefore, help to preserve these remarkable animals," said Duncan Irschick, co-founder and director of Digital Life. angari.org/3dmantaray

Bug Season



Divers will once again flock to the Florida Keys this July for one of its most popular events—mini lobster season. On the last Wednesday and Thursday of every July, divers are allowed to hunt lobster (lovingly called "bugs") in the Florida Keys. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, divers may bag six lobster per day if they are residents of Monroe County or are hunting in the Biscayne National Park. Divers residing outside of Monroe County may bag up to 12 per person. The lobster must be larger than three inches when measured in the water. Divers must have a measuring device on them

while hunting, and all limits are enforced both in and out of the water. Monroe County does not allow night diving for lobster. Additionally, harvesting is prohibited in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park during sport season and in Everglades National Park. No-take areas are within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary or in Biscayne Bay/Card Sound Lobster Sanctuary during both sport and regular season. myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/lobster

Local, state, and federal agencies strictly enforce lobster harvest and boating safety regulations.