

# MOBULID CONSERVATION IN THE PACIFIC

MANTA PROJECT  
FIJI

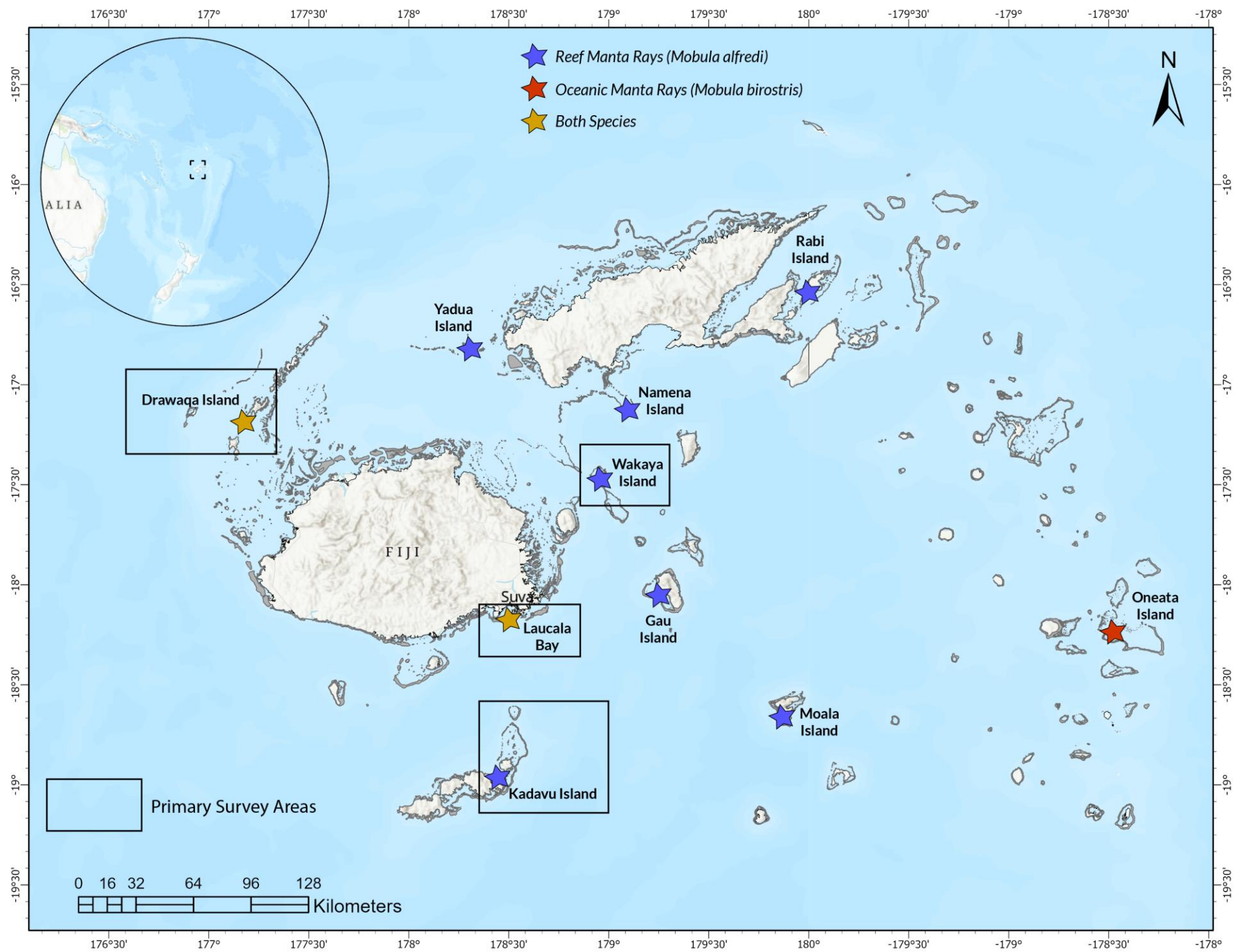


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"To see all species of manta rays and their relatives protected or effectively managed for sustainable / non-consumptive use by the people closest to them, in a means that promotes wider ocean conservation."







## Current Research and Conservation Focus (2018-2022)

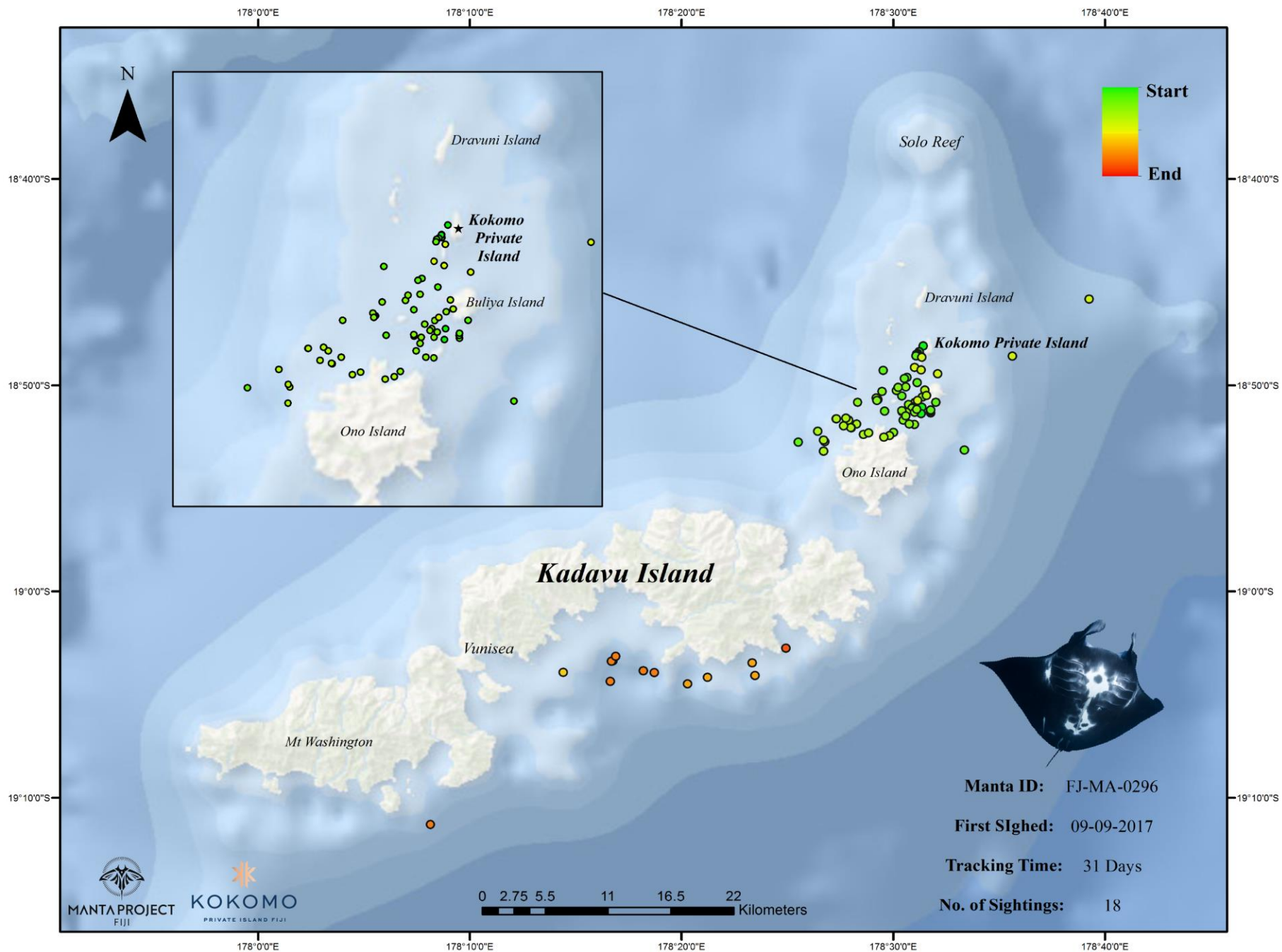
### Objectives

1. Investigating **the population dynamics, connectivity and movement ecology** of Fiji's manta ray populations, both oceanic (*M.birostris*) and reef manta rays (*M.alfredi*)
2. Increase **education and awareness** of the conservation needs of the species at local and national level
3. **Build Capacity** amongst government agencies, local universities, and local communities for the conservation and research of mobulid rays

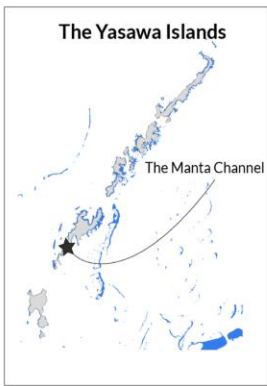


## Key Research Accomplishments

- Increased population of database by 250% since 2018
- Successfully deployed **35 acoustic transmitters** and **14 satellite tags** on manta rays across Fiji, the first for both research methods in country
  - Collected over **196k location data points** in the first 16 months of acoustic research project
    - Collected over **3000 satellite data** points on manta ray habitat use
- Gathered the first photographic **evidence of *M.birostris*** in the Fiji Islands with 3 confirmed identification and 2 re-sightings







## The Fiji Islands

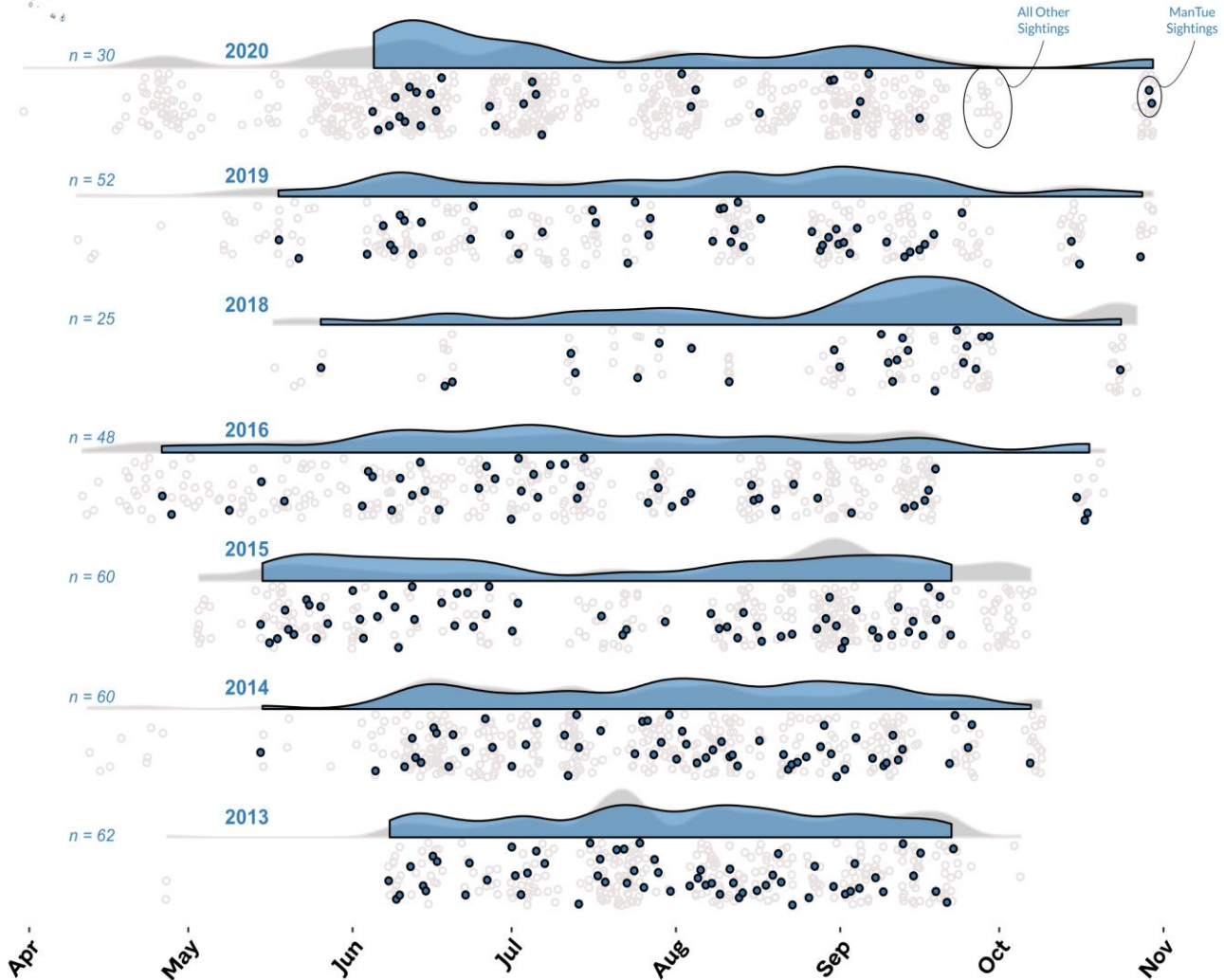


# Sighting Distribution of Fiji's Most Sighted Manta Ray

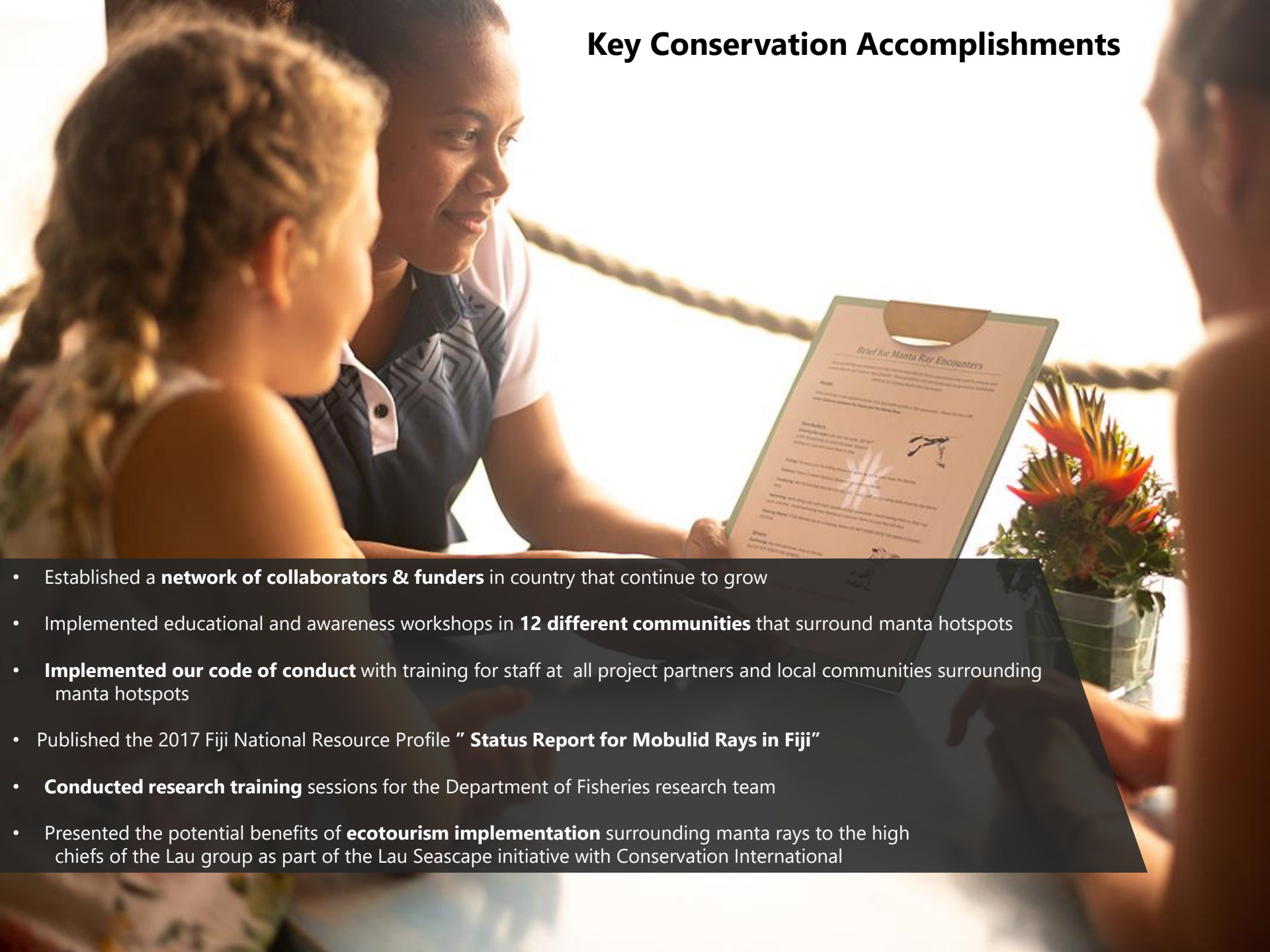
The **Manta Channel** is situated between the largest island in the Yasawa's, Naviti Island, and nearby Drawaqa Island. Reef manta rays visit this site every year from April-October to forage on the dense zooplankton. This plot shows the whole population's sightings distribution with **FJ-MA-0013's sighting distribution highlighted**.

**FJ-MA-0013**, affectionately known as ManTue, is Fiji's most sighted manta ray with 337 sightings at 'The Manta Channel' in the Yasawa Islands.

Interestingly, his number of sightings have **decreased** over the years, data analysis is currently ongoing to determine if any correlation is apparent with **environmental variables, biological influences and/or anthropogenic influences** such as **tourism pressures**.

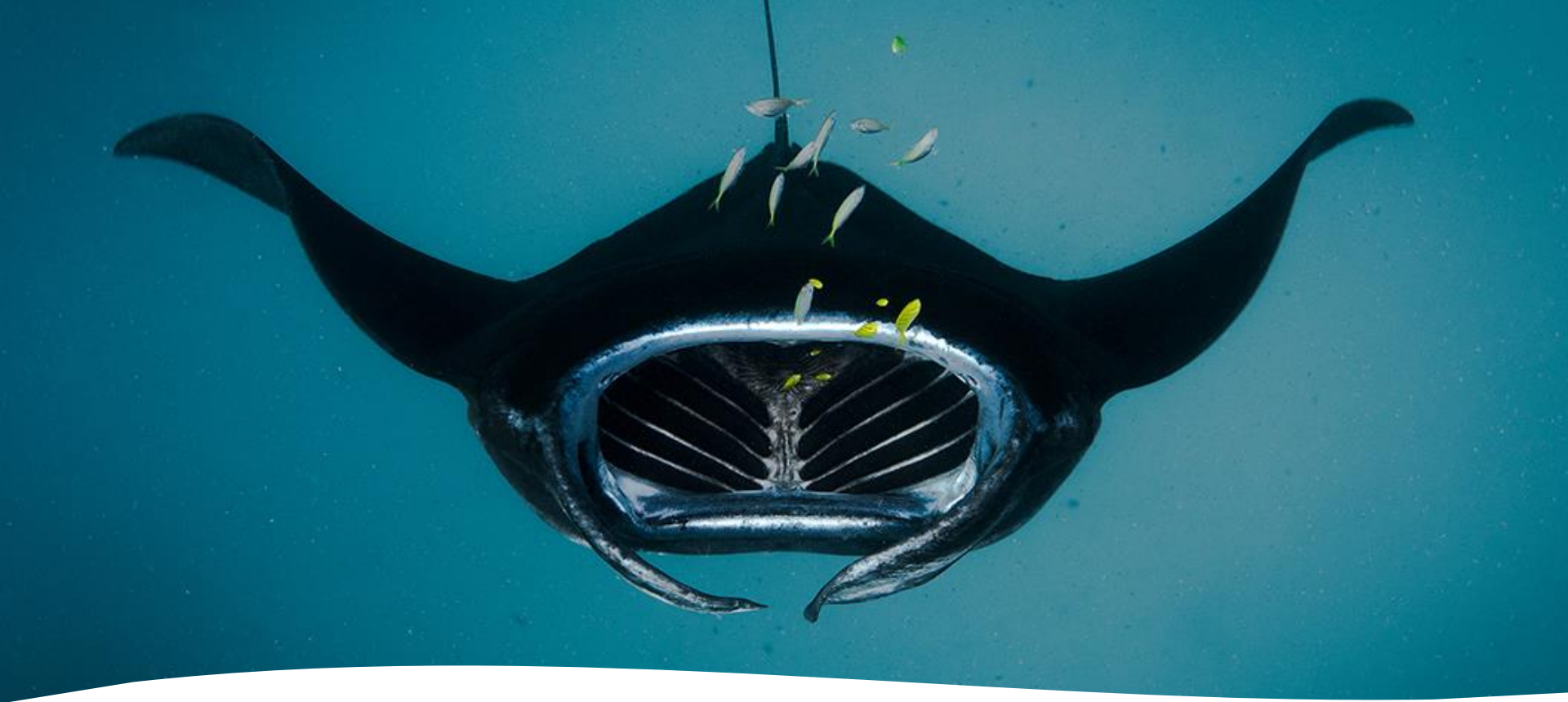


# Key Conservation Accomplishments



- Established a **network of collaborators & funders** in country that continue to grow
- Implemented educational and awareness workshops in **12 different communities** that surround manta hotspots
- **Implemented our code of conduct** with training for staff at all project partners and local communities surrounding manta hotspots
- Published the 2017 Fiji National Resource Profile " **Status Report for Mobulid Rays in Fiji**"
- **Conducted research training** sessions for the Department of Fisheries research team
- Presented the potential benefits of **ecotourism implementation** surrounding manta rays to the high chiefs of the Lau group as part of the Lau Seascape initiative with Conservation International





## Challenges

- Project capacity – challenging to link to national and regional levels
  - Government capacity
- Complexity of community and resort relationships across the country



## Lessons Learned

- Recent community buy-in at the Yasawa data collection site have informed best approach to engage with communities across the country
- With a robust dataset being formed there is now potential to inform evidence-based practices and policies at national and regional level
- Private sector and institutional partnerships to build in-country capacity surrounding mobulid research and conservation .i.e. students attending facilities at manta hotspots for research and training purposes





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THANK YOU FOR  
LISTENING

