



## Project: Project Elasmó

### Project Goals

This project has three areas of focus, which dovetail. One focus is to identify and tag manta rays (Elasmobranchs) within the habitat of Machalilla National Park in Ecuador with approx 14,000 hec-acres within coastal waters. Through our informal observations there appear to be a group of mantas which have been partially identified who return each year to the same location. We would like to photo ID these individuals and tag, in addition to broadening our search for more groups. We suspect there are several others. Questions such as why do they return here? Is this a breeding ground? Do they intermingle and what is their immediate range as well as surface depth in these waters? Does surface depth or structure of sea floor in relation to the Isla de la plata offer clues as to manta behaviour?

Our second focus deals with the sea around these waters and manta yearly migration. By creating a bathymetric map of the area or finding a partial map to initially work from, we can GPS manta coordinates and plot behaviour and range while in these waters. We hope to identify seamounts and large shelves in this area so future dives and research can be completed.

Lastly, there are virtually no marine educational programs in place to try to alleviate pressure from current and future generations of Ecuadorians. We want to begin the process of educating the younger generation in this area, educating them on the value of their oceanic eco-system.

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