



LUKE GORDON

**COLLABORATOR & PROJECT LEADER OF
THE MANTA PROJECT FIJI**

BSc (Hons) in Marine Biology and
Environmental Sciences

Upon finishing school, Luke gained hands-on experience by volunteering in Madagascar on a Marine Environmental Program. Captivated by the tropical marine ecosystem and excelling in his role, Luke was offered a staff contract after three months, and spent the next six months in Madagascar working on empowering local communities with marine resource management strategies.

Following on, Luke worked in Fiji conducting marine resource inventories around the western coast of Gau Island in the Lomaiviti Group. During this time, Luke encountered his first manta ray and became increasingly acquainted with the resident population of reef mantas (*M.alfredi*). These experiences led Luke to enrol into Open University and complete his BSc (Hons) in Marine Biology and Environmental Sciences.

While learning online, Luke continued to gain valuable field experience across the globe. He worked on a variety of marine research projects, including the implementation and management of marine protected areas in the Philippines and Fiji, coral reef regeneration and environmental education in the Maldives, the feeding ecology of oceanic manta rays (*M.birostris*) in Ecuador with Marine Megafauna Foundation, and research into the world of cryptobenthic fauna on soft sediment habitats across S.E Asia in association with Curtin University.

Armed with a career's worth of experience in tropical marine research projects, Luke fell in love with the manta's curiosity, intelligence and majestic nature. With the manta now facing further threats across their global range, Luke is motivated to play his part in helping these beautiful rays and their habitats thrive in the future. After working with the Save Our Seas Foundation's D'Arros Island Research Centre on the Seychelles Manta Ray Project, co-managed by the Manta Trust, Luke was given an opportunity to spearhead the next phase of manta ray research conservation in Fiji.

Luke cites his best Manta experience in Fiji, as being at Kokomo Private Island and the islands surrounding Yaukuve Levu. Not only is the sheer spectacle an incredible experience, their population here has had very little contact with humans, which makes these gentle giants some of the most curious and playful mantas that Luke has ever had the pleasure of sharing the water with.