



## Fiji's Kokomo Private Island Resort Invests Further in Environmental Sustainability with South Pacific's First Acoustic Manta Tagging Project

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Kokomo Private Island, Fiji's most exclusive private island resort has partnered with the world's leading manta ray research and conservation charities to launch the South Pacific Acoustic Manta Tagging Project.

Expanding the resort's commitment to sustainability, the program works to estimate the size and movement of Fiji's manta population, raising awareness of their conservation needs and the benefits of sustainable tourism.

Developed in conjunction with the UK-based Manta Trust and Manta Project Fiji, the tagging project – the first of its kind in the South Pacific – is led by marine biologist and dive master Luke Gordon who has spent over five years working in Fiji on various conservation topics.

Working alongside Gordon on this initiative is Kokomo's resident Marine Biologist, Cliona O'Flaherty who has implemented interactive practices on island in order to educate guests firsthand on the importance of conservation. Cliona most recently won the 'Sustainable Practices Champion' Award at the Women in Travel Awards.

Blessed with pristine, crystal-clear water and fringed by the Great Astrolabe Reef – the fourth largest on the planet and world-famous for its diving, snorkelling and abundant marine life – Kokomo's stunning white sand beaches are the perfect base to study the species.

Graceful, intelligent and curious, manta rays are familiar to resort guests throughout the year, with snorkelling encounters peaking in the period from April – September. Both species of manta ray are present in Kokomo's idyllic waters, although each has been listed as vulnerable worldwide by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

"The manta ray population here has had very little contact with humans which makes these gentle giants some of the most curious and playful mantas," says Project Leader, Luke Gordon.

"The feeding aggregations [around Kokomo] are currently seen nowhere else in Fiji; being in the middle of a cyclone of 40-plus huge manta rays is an experience you will never forget."

Since 2017 Kokomo and the Manta Trust has helped increase the size of the Fiji database by more than 60% and beginning in August 2019, the South Pacific Acoustic Manta Tagging Project aims to tag 18 animals in its first season, with a network of 11 receivers placed around the island to record their movements.

As well as the incredible opportunity to swim among the ocean's most majestic creatures, Kokomo and the Manta Trust are offering resort guests the opportunity to adopt a manta ray by contributing to research efforts. Guests have the chance to name their ray and receive bi-monthly updates on their manta's progress, including sightings and exciting news from the team's ongoing research.

The South Pacific Acoustic Manta Tagging Project is the latest entry in Kokomo Private Island Fiji's suite of environmentally focused sustainability programs. It builds on a recognised suite of initiatives including mangrove reforestation, an active research program to help coral survive the effects of global warming, and a water-bottling plant that minimises single-use plastic.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.kokomolandfiji.com/sustainability/>

Up Close: Kokomo's Resident Manta Rays: <https://www.kokomolandfiji.com/videos/manta-rays/>