Oceanography-2013
OMICS Group Conferences
Accelerating Scientific Discovery
International Conference on
Oceanography
August 21-23, 2013 Orlando-Florida, USA

Past, present and future of manta rays

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Abstract

Manta rays were considered mysterious sea monsters at the beginning of the 19th century. Little attention was given to this group of elasmobranches other than an easy target for fishing industry in many developing countries. After the revolution of scuba diving in the 1950s divers discovered their docile nature, but in many regions it was too late to restore decreasing manta ray populations. During the last decade more extensive manta ray research started around the world and many important features of their lifestyle and biology have been revealed, including that manta rays have the largest brain of all fish species studied so far. A handful of activists and scientists worked throughout the world to ban the trade of manta ray parts and research results pushed international organizations to protect manta rays from extensive fishing that is mainly triggered by the demand of traditional chinese medicine and the poverty of local communities. After the huge success of CITES listing on Appendix II our goal is to make the enforcement of the fishing and trading regulations possible by a worldwide manta ray conservation project that focuses on helping people in developing countries by providing them alternative income options.

Biography

Csilla Ari has completed her Ph.D. at the age of 29 years from Semmelweis University, Hungary. At present she is a postdoctoral scholar at the University of South Florida, at the Hyperbaric Biomedical Research Laboratory. She is the director of the Foundation for the Oceans of the Future, and Board of directors at the Manta Pacific Research Foundation, not-for-profit organizations focusing on research and protection of marine life, especially on manta rays. She has published several scientific papers in reputed journals on the neurobiology and behavior of elasmobranches, including manta rays.