I was lucky enough to spend my summer placement in the Maldives, working with the Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme (MWSRP) a fantastic organisation. My aims were to assess the injuries and healing rates of the whale sharks seen in the South Ari Atoll MPA since 2006. This involved looking through all the data collected from whale shark encounters by MWSRP, dive centres and resort marine biologists in the area. As well as this, I was on the boat 5 days a week going up and down the reef searching for whale sharks. Once spotted, we’d snorkel with these magnificent creatures to observe them and therefore get a better understanding of their behaviour.

Whilst on the boat we would also look for other megafauna and had snorkel breaks along the reef looking at the different fish found there, so I got the chance to learn about other organisms as well as whale sharks. I now feel confident about being able to identify different marine species that are found in the Maldives. I was also able to swim with mantas, dolphins and other sharks (harmless don’t worry!) multiple times so had many very interesting snorkels!!
During my placement I was living in a local on the island Dhigurah, so was able to experience the Maldivian culture and lifestyle. I really enjoyed this and everyone on the island were so lovely and friendly which made my placement even more special. I also got the opportunity to be involved in many community projects. It was the 3rd Whale Shark festival and 1st Science Festival whilst I was there, so I was involved with the preparation and organisation on the day. Was a very busy two days, but was definitely worth it and I loved working with all the schools.

Overall this was an amazing experience and I feel so privileged that I got the chance to do this placement.