

MANATEE FACT SHEET— SWIM WITH THE FRIENDLY FLORIDA MANATEE

Name:	West Indian Manatee
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Family:	Trichechidae
Genus:	Trichechus
Description:	Large, seal-like body that tapers to a spatulate tail. Two forelimbs with three or four nails on each. Skin thick and wrinkled with stiff whiskers on upper lip.
Color:	Gray or gray-brown
Size:	Can grow to 13 feet and weigh over 3,000 pounds.
Behavior:	Gentle and slow moving. Most of their time is spent eating, resting, and in travel.
Sight:	Depth perception may be limited. Can differentiate colors.
Hearing:	Can hear very well despite the absence of external ear lobes.
Communication:	Emit sounds that are within human auditory range. They make sounds such as squeaks and squeals when frightened, playing, or communicating, particularly between calf and cow.
Breathing:	Nostrils on upper surface of snout which close tightly like valves when submerged. Surfaces to breath every few minutes depending on the amount of activity.
Habitat:	They can be found in shallow, slow moving rivers, estuaries, saltwater bays, canals, and coastal areas, particularly where sea grass beds flourish.
Range:	Within the United States, they are concentrated in Florida during the winter, but can be found in summer months as far north as Virginia and the Carolinas. The West Indian manatee can also be found in the coastal and inland waterways of Central and South America as far south as Recife, Brazil.
Food Source:	Aquatic plants. Manatees are completely herbivorous and can eat 10-15% of their body weight daily.
History:	Manatees are believed to have evolved from a wading, plant-eating animal, and share a common ancestor with the elephant.
Related Species:	West African manatee, Amazonian manatee, dugong, Stellars sea cow (extinct).
Population:	Has grown from 1,200 to 3,300 over the last decade in the United States.
Reproduction:	Females are probably not reproductively mature until 5 to 9 years old and males are not until 6 to 9 years old. It is believed that one calf is born every 2 to 5 years. Twins are rare in the wild. Gestation period is around 13 months.
Problems:	Human related: Boat/barge collisions, loss of habitat, crushing or drowning in flood gates, poaching, ingestion of fish hooks and monofilament line, entanglement in crab trap lines, pollution.
Conservation:	Public acquisition and/or creation of sanctuaries in critical areas; research covering biology, mortality, behavior, habitat, and population; implementation of management plans; establishment of regulatory speed zones and the levying of fines for excess speeds in these designated areas; posting of regulatory speed signs in habitat areas; a MANATEE HOTLINE 1(800-DIAL-FMP) for reports of dead or injured animals or manatee harassment; manatee education and public awareness programs.
Legal Protection:	Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act, 1978; U.S. Marine Mammal Act, 1972; U.S. Endangered Species Act, 1973

**HAVE ANY MORE
QUESTIONS?**

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