

The Manatee Needs Your Help

The West Indian Manatee is a large gray-brown aquatic mammal. Its seal-like body tapers to a flat, paddle-shaped tail. The upper part of its body has two small forelimbs with three-to-four nails on each flipper. The head and face are wrinkled and the snout has stiff whiskers.

Adults have been known to reach lengths of over 13 feet and weights of over 3,000 pounds. Calves are three-to-four feet long and 60-to-70 pounds at birth. Manatees spend most of their time feeding and resting. They graze for food along rivers, coastal bottoms and at the water's surface. Manatees have been known to hold their breath for as long as 20 minutes, but they usually surface about every five minutes to breathe.

Their minimum population is estimated to be about 1900; however, the continuing growth of Florida's coastal areas threatens the manatee's survival.

THE MANATEE IS DEPENDENT ON YOU FOR ITS SURVIVAL



For more information or to send a donation, write to:

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Office of Protected Species Management
3900 Commonwealth Blvd., Ms 945
Tallahassee, Florida 32309-3000

What Can Boaters Do?

You can reduce your chances of encountering a manatee by following these simple steps:

- **Wear polarized glasses while operating a boat.** Polarized lenses make it much easier to see the "swirling" that occurs when a manatee surfaces for air.
- **Stay in the center of the marked channel.** Manatees have shown signs that they are avoiding heavy boat traffic areas. Channel depth reduces the likelihood of pinning or crushing manatees.
- **Stay out of seagrasses.** Grass beds are prime manatee habitat. This includes areas where hydrilla and water hyacinths are present.
- **Slow down.** Your boat has speeds other than idle and "wide open." Reducing your speed gives you greater maneuverability to avoid a manatee when you see one, and you'll also save gas.
- **Observe all manatee speed zones and caution areas.**



What Can Divers Do?

As divers, you are directly entering the manatee's habitat. By following these simple rules you can minimize your impact:

- **Use snorkel gear when diving with manatees.** The sound of bubbles from SCUBA gear can frighten the manatees.
- **Manatees are wild animals and should not be fed.** Close exposure to or dependence on humans can be harmful to them.
- **While swimming or diving, do not approach or chase a manatee.** Give a manatee its "personal space."
- **A cow and her calf belong together.** Please do not separate them. (Do not separate or single out any individual manatee from a herd.)
- **Never poke, prod or stab a manatee with your hands, feet or any object.**
- **Look, but please do not touch the manatee.**
- **Take only as many pictures as the manatees will pose for.**

