

Manatee

Trichechus manatus (West Indian Manatee)

Vulnerable

Fact Sheet · Colouring Page · Activities

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Manatee — Fact Sheet

Scientific name	Trichechus manatus (West Indian Manatee)
Conservation status	Vulnerable
Region	South-eastern USA, Caribbean, and north-eastern South America
Habitat	Warm shallow coastal waters, estuaries, rivers, and springs; water must stay above 20 °C
Diet	Herbivore — sea grasses, water hyacinths, algae, and other aquatic plants
Weight	400–590 kg
Size	2.7–3.5 m
Lifespan	Up to 60 years
Wild population	Around 13,000 West Indian manatees estimated

Did You Know?

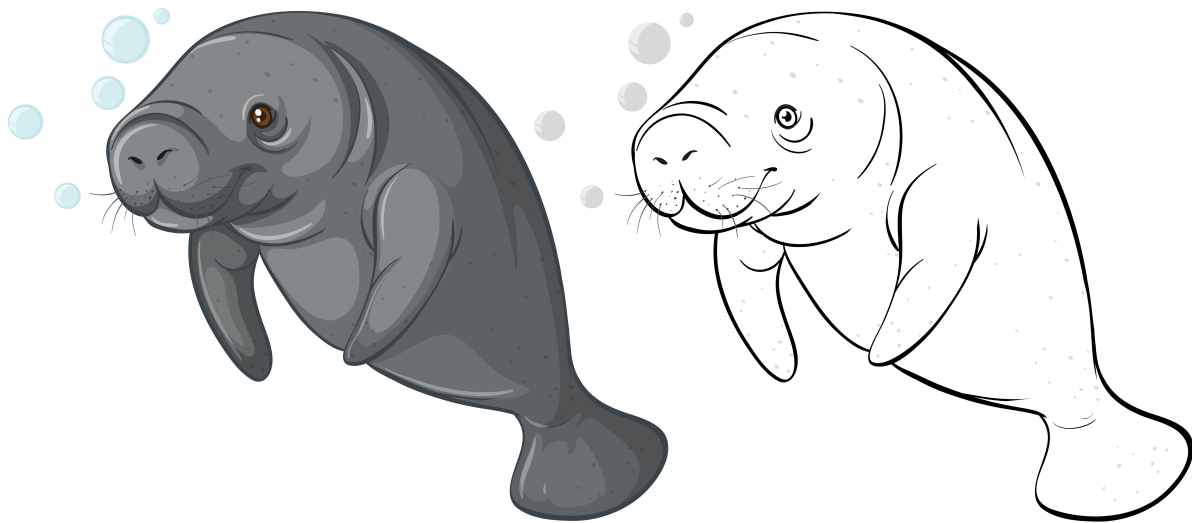
- Manatees are sometimes called 'sea cows' because they graze slowly on aquatic vegetation.
- Their closest living relatives are elephants and hyraxes, sharing a common ancestor.
- Manatees must surface to breathe every 3–5 minutes; resting individuals may hold breath for 20 minutes.
- They move at about 8 km/h but can swim at up to 30 km/h in short bursts.
- Manatees have no natural predators — the biggest threat is boat propeller strikes.

Threats to Survival

1. Boat strike injuries — propeller wounds are a leading cause of death
2. Cold stress syndrome when water temperatures drop below 20 °C
3. Red tide algal blooms that poison the sea grasses manatees eat
4. Habitat loss from coastal development and water pollution

Colour Me: Manatee

Manatees are slate grey to brownish-grey with a lighter belly. Skin is wrinkled, nearly hairless, and often covered in algae. The tail is broad and paddle-shaped.



Manatee — Activities

Word Search

Find all 8 words hidden in the grid.

Y	P	G	H	E	E	C	J	R	Z	D	Q
Y	R	X	Q	B	V	K	Y	E	T	E	T
M	E	F	F	W	Y	T	Z	L	F	M	X
O	B	F	L	A	C	N	L	L	V	A	X
H	O	T	J	Y	X	Z	O	E	H	N	R
W	O	C	A	E	S	H	J	P	Z	A	Z
E	L	E	P	H	A	N	T	O	P	T	G
L	F	L	O	R	I	D	A	R	V	E	S
O	O	Y	J	Y	M	Q	Q	P	N	E	F
S	S	A	R	G	A	E	S	G	Z	T	E
I	B	U	P	L	R	L	A	M	M	A	M
D	W	Q	D	J	C	Y	F	I	O	Q	E

MANATEE	SEACOW	ELEPHANT	FLORIDA
SEAGRASS	MAMMAL	CALF	PROPELLER

Match It Up

Draw a line from each word on the left to its meaning on the right.

Manatee	'sea cow' — a large aquatic plant-eater
Herbivore	eats only plants
Estuary	where a river meets the sea
Calf	a baby manatee
Propeller	the biggest threat to manatees today

Fill in the Blanks

1. Manatees are sometimes called 'sea _____'.
2. Their closest living relative is the _____.
3. They must surface to _____ every 3–5 minutes.
4. The biggest danger to manatees is _____ strikes.

Answers: cows / elephant / breathe / boat / propeller

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