Threats to Manatees

- #1 human cause of injuries/deaths: Boat collisions.
- Manatees are slow and need to surface to breathe air, so they are vulnerable.
- Fast boats can’t see them and don’t give them enough time to get out of the way.
- Other threats include entanglement in or ingesting trash; loss of habitat; red tide algal blooms; and natural causes like cold-related disease.

Learn more about the threats to manatees and read manatee FAQ’s at savethemanatee.org/manatees.
Manatee Identification

- Most living manatees have scars from boat collisions.
- Other scars are from entanglement with fishing lines and ropes, or natural causes like infections that have healed.
- Scientists use these scars to identify individual manatees, give them names, and tell them apart.

When manatees scars heal they become a white color.
The man pictured is Wayne Hartley, Save the Manatee Club’s manatee research specialist. Wayne studies the manatees that spend every winter at Blue Spring State Park. He draws their scars on a sheet and identifies them individually, to study which manatees are spending time in certain habitats, and which ones might have had calves. He also looks for new scars each year. This scar sheet drawing shows 4 roundish scars up near the manatee’s head. This manatee’s name is Moo Shoo. In the photo you can see the matching 4 roundish scars near her head. It can be tricky to identify them depending on how good a view you can get.
Matching Game

- View manatee photo on-screen.
- Match the manatee photo to a drawing on your researcher’s scar sheet.
- The answer will be shown on the next slide.
- Learn these manatee’s stories and learn how to protect them.

The manatee matching game features 8 different individual manatees. An unlabeled photo of the manatee will be shown on one slide. Students can compare the photo to the drawings on their researcher’s scar sheets to try and guess which manatee it is. The next slide will give an answer, alongside the scar sheet drawing so you can compare them, as well as an additional photo of the manatee from another perspective. The notes also include details about that individual manatee. The photos go from “easiest” to “hardest”. Some hints are included in the notes as well if students are stumped.
Take a look at this manatee’s scars and try to find a match on your scar sheet.
No, an alligator didn’t give Gator these scars. These scars are from boats, but they helped us identify a manatee caught on the webcam playing with an alligator. This scarred manatee didn’t have a name so we named him Gator. Alligators and manatees co-exist peacefully and they do not bother each other. Manatees are simply too big for alligators to be interested in. There are no recorded instances of an alligator attacking a manatee, but there are records of manatees bothering alligators!
HINT: Look carefully at this manatee – there might be some letters and numbers on it. Those are called freeze brands and are used by veterinarians to brand an unscarred manatee when it is being released back in the wild. This way scientists can easily identify the manatee and make sure it is adjusting to life in the wild.
Here you can see the A6 and her scars along her right side. Annie got the A6 freeze brand when she was rehabilitated at SeaWorld Orlando. She was rescued as a little tiny orphaned calf who needed help. Eventually she was healthy enough to be released back into the wild. On the right this is an older picture of Annie. She still had the A6 markings, but did not have those scars yet. Every winter when manatees go back to their warm-water sites, unfortunately researchers discover new scars from boat accidents throughout the year. Luckily Annie survived and has had 4 calves.
HINT: Here is a trickier one for you. Look at this manatee’s flipper and check for manatee flippers on your scar charts. Researchers usually do not include the flipper on the chart unless there is something unusual about it.
Lucille has a scar on her right flipper from monofilament fishing line. The line was removed by vets, but unfortunately she lost the lower half of the flipper. Lucille is healthy now and has had several calves. You can also see the chunk missing from her tail in the photo on the right.
HINT: This manatee is missing part of its tail. How do you think a researcher would indicate that on a chart?
Answer: Floyd

Floyd is easy to identify because of his missing tail chunk. All of Floyd’s scars are caused by boat strikes.
HINT: Take a closer look at that tail and also the markings on the manatee’s head.
Poor Merlin is identifiable because of his tail and head scars. He is named after the wizard Merlin in the Arthurian legend, because he is lucky to have survived all those boat hits.
HINT: Take a look at both her flippers.
Una was rescued for fishing line entanglement and had the line removed from her flipper. Unfortunately she got entangled again as it’s easy for manatees to get tangled after they do it once because their flippers are so scarred. So she was rescued again in Feb 2020 and rehabilitated at SeaWorld Orlando. Thankfully she was healthy and released with her calf this summer.
Not all manatees have really bad scars. Look for a manatee with one scar on the right side and a little bit of scarring on the tail.
Phillip is Floyd’s brother with 1 main scar that runs across his back. He is also smaller than most male adult manatees.
Take a look at the shape of his tale...indentation...look at the names.
Here’s Deep Dent hanging out with our friend Floyd, with the missing part of his tail. Deep Dent has a deep indentation in his tail along with other scarring on his back.
How to Help: Boating Tips

- Obey posted speed zones and avoid posted manatee sanctuaries.
- Wear polarized sunglasses to see manatees below the water’s surface. Look for snouts, tails, backs, or “footprints”.
- Stay in deep water channels and avoid seagrass beds.
- Do not feed or give water to manatees. Do not touch, approach, or chase manatees.
- Stash your trash and monofilament line.

Since many of these scars were caused by boating accidents, here’s what boaters can do to watch carefully for manatees.
How to Help: Resources

- Report injured manatees to the FWC at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922) or VHF Ch 16.
- Learn how to spot injuries at savethemanatee.org
- Request free signs, banners, and more at savethemanatee.org/resources
How to Help: Learn & Share

- Learn more about manatees and share this information with your friends, family, and classrooms.
- Volunteer to become a Manatee Outreach Ambassador at savethemanatee.org/volunteer
- Tell policymakers to protect manatees and their habitat. savethemanatee.org/signup
- Adopt-A-Manatee® at savethemanatee.org/adopt
Thank you!

- U.S. Geological Survey Sirenia Project for the initial manatee matching game idea.
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- All activities conducted under permit #MA770191 and #MA791721-5.