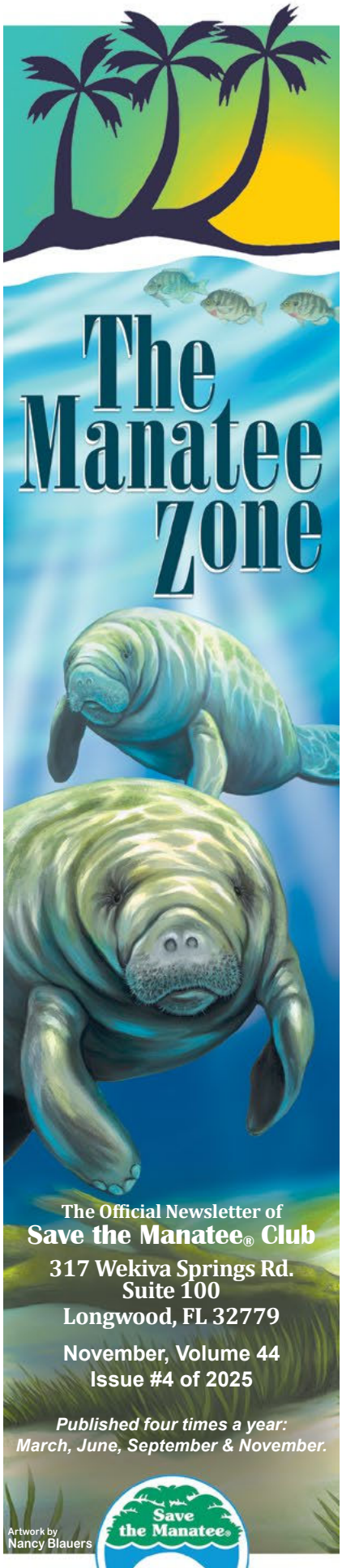

Protecting Manatees with Policy and Purpose

By Elizabeth Neville, Director of Environmental Law and Policy

Policy engagement is an important way that Save the Manatee Club (SMC) protects manatees and their habitat. This work includes advocating for the passage of manatee-positive laws, opposing harmful laws, securing appropriate funding for critical programs, and holding government actors accountable to their legal directives.

Restoring natural warm-water habitat for manatees is a major policy priority for SMC. This is urgently important because thousands of manatees presently rely on warm-water discharges from artificial sources such as power plants to keep warm in the winter, and many of these plants will soon change their technology to systems that do not discharge warm water. In 2020, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) produced a management goal document, the Florida Manatee Warm-Water Habitat Action Plan, to address this issue. Ensuring that the agency has adequate funding to carry out the plan—as well as other important manatee research and management work—is a major policy priority for SMC. State and federal agency funding, generally, is essential for manatee conservation; SMC advocates that FWC and other agencies,

continued on page 2

Carditee Gets Another Second Chance

Manatees On The Mend

By Cora Berchem, Director of Multimedia and Manatee Research Associate

In September, we assisted our Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership partners in returning manatee Carditee back into her natural environment at Blue Spring State Park! Carditee was initially rescued in September 2020 as an orphaned calf and was rehabilitated at SeaWorld Orlando, Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Zoo Miami, and the Welaka National Fish Hatchery before she was released in February of this year at Blue Spring. Just like all manatees with little experience in the wild, Carditee was outfitted with a satellite tracking device so her movements and adaptation to the natural habitat could be monitored by researchers from Clearwater Marine Aquarium Research Institute (CMARI). In late June, the monitoring team noticed that her tag had

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Carditee undergoes a final evaluation before being carried by volunteers into the water at Blue Spring.

Policy and Purpose

continued from page 1

such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have the resources they need to carry out their water quality and wildlife protection directives.

An unparalleled opportunity to restore warm-water habitat for manatees lies in reconnecting the Ocklawaha River to the rest of the Great Florida Riverway, a 217-mile, multi-county system of rivers and springs. For over 50 years, a dam constructed for the long-defunct Cross Florida Barge Canal project has obstructed the Ocklawaha's flow. Breaching the dam and restoring the river will provide manatees with their historic, natural access to the 20 "lost springs" of the Ocklawaha and open access to important habitat in the Silver River and Silver Springs. **SMC will be encouraging our state's leaders to reunite these rivers in the 2026 legislative session, and we need your voice. Please visit *reunitetherivers.com/ocklawaha-restoration-pledge/* to sign the pledge to support Ocklawaha restoration today!**

Restoring the Indian River Lagoon (IRL), where seagrass loss caused a multi-year Unusual Mortality Event whereby over 1,200 manatees starved to death, is another policy priority. SMC supports restoring the IRL by advocating appropriate funding for the National Estuary Program and other state and federal programs that work to improve water quality and restore seagrass in this important ecosystem.

In addition to restoring habitat directly, SMC is dedicated to ensuring that Florida's communities can protect their wild spaces. The Florida legislature has passed problematic bills preempting the ability of local communities to reasonably manage sources of damage and pollution on their lands (e.g., plastic products). Senate Bill 180, passed in the 2025 Florida legislative session with language restricting land-use changes in disaster-impacted areas, is a deleterious example of preemption. SMC is committed to fighting harmful preemption so that Florida's communities are free to manage their own lands without state interference.

Manatee conservation implicates many laws and policies, from bedrock federal laws such as the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act to state-based regulations governing the management of individual springs. This Manatee Awareness Month and beyond, SMC is committed to policies that matter to manatees, from defending our foundational laws to advocating sensible boating policies in Florida communities.

Clog Misses His First Summer in Adoption Program

Alabama/DISL Adoption Update

By Dr. Ruth Carmichael, Director, DISL, & Sophia Corde, PhD Student, Univ. of South Alabama and DISL

Greetings from the northern Gulf! During this year's warm season, the Dauphin Island Sea Lab's Manatee Sighting Network (DISL/MSN) has documented more than 200 manatee sightings—primarily in Alabama waters but also including the Florida Panhandle, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. Several groups of more than eight manatees were observed feeding, socializing, and traveling through local waterways.

Among the documented sightings was a known manatee, Bartlett, who was seen in both Mobile Bay and Orange Beach, Alabama. According to records from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Bartlett was first documented in Tampa Bay, Florida, in 2010, when he was rescued for cold stress. Bartlett has been observed in Alabama waters every year since 2021.

Save the Manatee Club (SMC) adoptees Bama and Clog were not reported this summer, but we're keeping a close lookout for them and continue to track reported sightings!

Part of our mission at DISL/MSN is to raise awareness for manatees that use the region year-round and to promote the safe sharing of our local waterways. In partnership with SMC, we distribute manatee awareness dock signs, flyers, magnets, and boat decals to marinas, dive shops, eco-tour groups, and other waterfront businesses.

If you are located in the northern Gulf and would like educational materials or to assist our network, please contact us at ***manatee@disl.org*** or 1-866-493-5803. Your reports help us reduce risks to manatees and support the long-term monitoring of this growing Gulf Coast population.

Manatees on the Mend

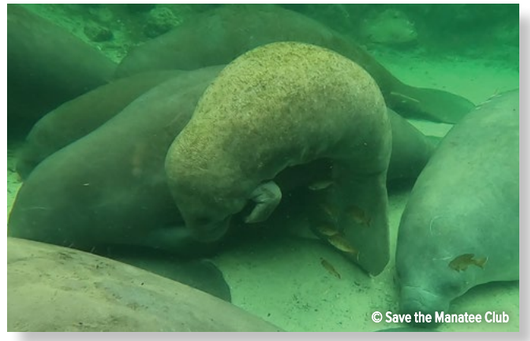
continued from page 1

not updated in a few days, and out of growing concern for her, they investigated and found her entrapped in a mud bank and vegetation patch in a creek off the St. Johns River (the entrapment was not related to her satellite tracking device). Carditee was unable to get out of the muddy pit on her own, so a rescue team from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Jacksonville Zoo and Botanical Gardens, and CMARI responded and transported Carditee to SeaWorld for evaluation. In early September, Carditee was—once again—cleared for release and is now swimming freely again.

You may recall from a previous edition of *The Manatee Zone* that we assisted with the rescue of a small, orphaned calf—later named Mandalore—at Blue Spring in early February. Mandalore was brought to the Bishop Museum of Science's off-site facility in Myakka for critical care and transferred to the Bishop Museum earlier this summer. We are happy to hear from our partners that Mandalore, rescued at 180 pounds, weighed over 400 pounds by mid-July and may even make the required release weight by this winter!

On July 21, we helped our partners with the rescue of a large female manatee who was likely struck by a watercraft in Oak Hill, on Florida's east coast. She had broken rib bones and a punctured lung that caused her to float high in the water, unable to submerge. Although injured, the female manatee was very feisty, and it took the crew five attempts to corral her and get her onto the rescue boat, into the transport truck, and then on the way to SeaWorld—all while a thunderstorm

Manatee Arthur undergoes a health assessment at ZooTampa. Cold stress lesions, the reason for his rescue, are clearly visible on his head.



The small, thin manatee calf named Mandalore was spotted at Blue Spring State Park during SMC staff research.

was edging in. While many people believe propellers are the biggest culprit for manatee injuries and deaths, the impact force of a fast-moving boat can be just as harmful, or even worse. As of the writing of this article, she's still recuperating at SeaWorld.

Finally, we are thrilled to highlight the inspiring story of manatee Arthur, from our partners at ZooTampa at Lowry Park. After being rescued from Crystal River on January 17, 2024, Arthur arrived at ZooTampa suffering from severe cold stress lesions. Cold stress cases like Arthur's are quickly placed into a warm-water pool and given an individualized regime of fluid therapy based on diagnostics (such as blood work) and tailored to each manatee's specific needs. Unfortunately for Arthur, he also had a bone infection that required intensive care and ongoing treatment from ZooTampa's exceptional animal care and health teams. Thanks to the specialized medical attention he received at the David A. Straz, Jr. Manatee Critical Care Center, Arthur eventually recovered from both his cold stress lesions and the bone infection. After a long journey of recovery spanning about 19 months, Arthur was finally cleared for return to his natural environment in August!

With the colder months approaching—or already underway in the northern parts of the country—manatees need to make their way back to Florida. Any manatees spotted outside of Florida at this time are in danger of developing cold stress and need to be reported immediately to local stranding networks for monitoring and rescue. It is important that people do not feed or water these manatees, as doing so encourages them to stay in areas they need to migrate from. You can find more information and a list of rescue organizations in other states at ***savethemanatee.org/rescue***.

The Manatee Zone

Readers interested in having access to the technical scientific literature, along with the popular literature on manatees and their relatives, can find a comprehensive, annotated bibliography and index to all such publications at ***sirendom.org/biblio***. This site encompasses over 500 years of published information on sirenians, with more than 6,500 separate references.

Counting Tails at Dawn

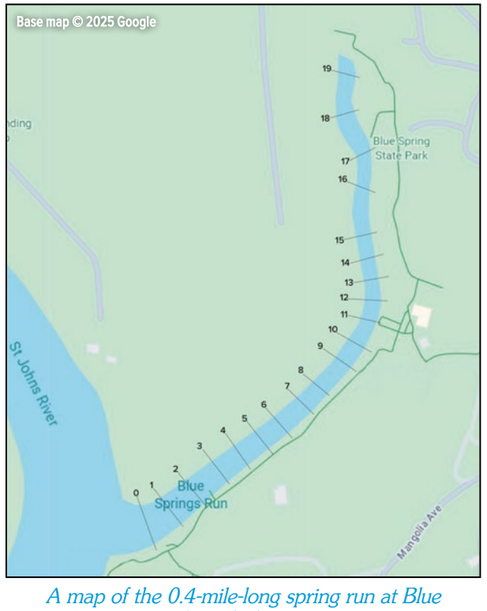
Blue Spring State Park Adoption Update

By Wayne Hartley, Manatee Specialist

Since my last update in *The Manatee Zone*, Phyllis was in on July 17 and Annie on September 7.

For this update, I thought I would describe a manatee roll call at Blue Spring for those not familiar with how we conduct one during the season. Before we head to the park, we get the river temperature online from Whitehair Bridge, just west of Deland. We arrive at the park before 8 a.m. The high and low air temperatures for the past 24 hours are pulled from a weather station at the park administration building and then converted into Celsius from Fahrenheit (science prefers metric measurements over imperial ones).

SMC researchers Wayne and Cora paddle slowly up the spring run on a cold winter morning, counting and identifying as many manatees as they can.



A map of the 0.4-mile-long spring run at Blue Spring State Park, with the imaginary transects used to count manatees in an orderly fashion.

Next, we launch the canoe and paddle up the spring run. The run is divided into transects that are used to locate the position of the manatees. At the start, we also note how far the dark river water has intruded along the bottom of the run. The colder the river is, the farther the intrusion reaches. While we paddle, we identify the manatees we can and count the rest. As we record the manatees, we film and draw them. When we reach the spring boil, the roll call is over. On the way back down the run, we continue to identify and film manatees, but those sightings do not go on the roll call. If we kept adding to the roll call, we would be there all day!

Once complete, we pull still pictures from the films to include in our manatee catalogue. If we find a distressed manatee, we call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and keep watch until the rescue team arrives—then we assist with the rescue.

SMC has a free tool where you can create your own fundraising webpage to share with your family and friends. Visit ***justgiving.com/savethemanateeclubinc*** to see how! To all who selflessly dedicate your birthdays, weddings, or anniversaries to raise funds; or dedicate marathons and cross-country adventures; or have a campaign "just because," we, and the manatees you help save, are grateful for your support.

Another Quiet Quarter for Our Coastal Adoptees

Coastal Adoption Update

By Cora Berchem, Director of Multimedia and Manatee Research Associate

It has been a very quiet summer and early fall, and unfortunately, none of our coastal adoptees—on either the east or west coast—have been spotted.

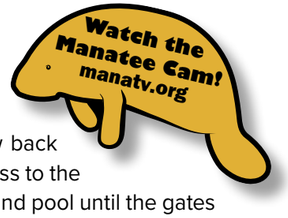
Spotting adoptees during the summer is always more challenging, as they don't congregate in large aggregations but instead spread out into rivers, estuaries, and shallow coastal areas. Since they are not gathered in one place, researchers typically do not go out to specific locations for photo-ID purposes.

Identifying manatees, including our adoptees, during the non-winter months is more opportunistic. This usually happens when a manatee is photographed in a mating herd or when a local resident sends in photos. We hope to share more updates in the next newsletter in March, as manatees are now starting to make their way back to their warm-water sites.

Does the company you work for have a Matching Gifts Program? If they do, your employer may be able to match your donations to Save the Manatee Club. Questions? Call us at 1-800-432-5646.

Face to Face With Florida Nature

Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park Adoption Update



By Kate Spratt, Park Services Specialist, HSWSP

Fall brings us shorter days—and some highly celebrated cooler weather. Walking along the park's 1.1 miles of winding paths and boardwalks provides ample opportunity to see our resident animal ambassadors, such as red wolves, birds of prey, Florida panthers, black bears, alligators, and more. As always, some of the biggest stars of the park are the manatees, both resident and wild.

The gates to the spring open on November 15, allowing wild manatees to come in and enjoy the warmth from the spring during the cold months.

Heinz and adoptable manatees Ariel and Betsy enjoyed time out in the spring and spring run, consuming native vegetation that had grown over the summer during renovations to the park's Underwater Observatory (UWO). Ever curious, Betsy and Ariel had to check every corner and edge of the spring run for anything new and took extra time checking out the new windows in the UWO. I wonder if they see the inside differently through the clear windows, or if they can see their reflection?

All three girls are now back in the paddocks, with access to the warm waters of the in-ground pool until the gates close at the end of manatee season.

Want to know if we have lots of manatees in the spring? Check the Gulf water temperature near Homosassa! We use the USGS station at Marker 14 near Homosassa for water temperature readings. If those readings are under 70°F, we will likely have more manatees. Or you can view our live manatee webcams at ***savethemanatee.org/webcams***.

Another neat way to view manatees is during our Friends of Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park's holiday event, The Celebration of Lights. The event is December 19-23 and 26-27. Come into the park at night, enjoy entertainment, and view wild manatees in the spring. It is truly a unique experience!

Want to support Ariel or Betsy? You can adopt them through Save the Manatee Club and help fund vital care, rescue, and rehabilitation efforts. Visit ***savethemanatee.org/adopt*** to learn more.

Sign up to be a volunteer for Save the Manatee Club and learn more at ***savethemanatee.org/volunteer***.

youtube.com/adoptamanatee

facebook.com/savethemanateeclub

twitter.com/savethemanatee

instagram.com/savethemanateeclub

A Peaceful Escape: Manatee Webcams Live

By Alex Russell, Director of Education and Online Communications

With the colder weather returning, maybe you're dreaming of a vacation somewhere warm with amazing views of wildlife. If that seems too far away, you can still take a day trip from your phone or desk to a Florida state park with our manatee webcams. The webcams are accessible to anyone with an internet connection, making them a wonderful option for relaxing background visuals, providing classroom engagement, and enchanting curious minds of all ages.

The webcam program first started in 2011 with the cameras at Blue Spring State Park thanks to a memorial gift in remembrance of Mrs. Norma Norton. Since then, the program has expanded to include Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park and Silver Springs State Park. These webcams are possible thanks to our partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, ***Explore.org***, and Axis Communications.

The cameras are used as research tools by our team members to look out for manatees in distress and identify manatees in attendance at the park, among other things. However, they are also publicly viewable so that people can observe manatees in their natural habitat and learn more about their behaviors.

Normally, we have the webcams at Homosassa Springs operational during the summer, where residents Ariel and Betsy, in addition to manatees in rehabilitation at the park, are viewable. However, construction at the park has had them down for maintenance this year. The 180-degree underwater webcam at Silver Springs, along with the above-water setup at the same location, has been operational and showing occasional glimpses of manatees, in addition to other wildlife; on one occasion, our researcher spotted an otter!

November also signals the return of the Blue Spring webcams as the park closes for water activities and manatees start to seek refuge in the warm spring water. Our researchers at the park provide near-daily updates in a researcher blog, as well as on our social media accounts, so you can hear about the park's manatee visitors as they are sighted.

Go to ***savethemanatee.org/webcams*** to keep up with the latest on our webcams and watch the livestreams, and bookmark the researcher blog at ***savethemanatee.org/bssp-blog*** for daily updates. At night, or when the cameras are down for maintenance, highlight reels featuring beautiful above- and underwater footage still provide something peaceful to enjoy at any time.

A view from the underwater webcam located at Silver Springs State Park.

A will is a powerful way to plan for the future and protect the people and causes (like supporting manatees!) that you care about. We've partnered with FreeWill to provide a free, online will-writing tool for Club supporters. Get started on your will at ***freewill.com/savethemanatee***. Many supporters also choose to create taxwise gifts from their IRA or appreciated stocks. If you're 70.5 years young, give from your IRA today or transfer appreciated assets and give a gift of stock at ***freewill.com/stocks/savethemanatee***.

Swimming with Manatees: Harmless or Harmful?

Science Sector

By Dr. Beth Brady, Director of Science and Conservation

Swimming with Manatees: Harmless or Harmful?

You may have seen videos or advertisements online regarding swimming with manatees. These clips often highlight manatees interacting with humans by hugging a leg or giving a "kiss." It's easy to understand why people are drawn to the idea: manatees are gentle, curious, and charismatic, and many people want a close encounter. But what many people don't realize is that swimming with manatees can be harmful to them.

Do manatees want to interact with humans?

Research shows that very few manatees actually seek out human contact.[1] [2] In fact, most encounters happen because people approach the manatee, and many of those situations are considered harassment.[2] Harassment is any action that disturbs or stresses a manatee, causing them to change their natural behavior, or puts them at risk of harm. This includes approaching too closely, chasing, stepping on, or interfering with a manatee's feeding, resting, or social behaviors.

Furthermore, manatees change their behavior when humans are nearby. Studies have found that manatees spend more time swimming and less time resting when swimmers are present.[3] At Three Sisters Springs, researchers found that manatees shifted their distribution and used sanctuaries more often as the number of swimmers and boats increased.[2] [4] [5] [6] Sanctuaries are no-entry zones where boats and swimmers are prohibited. In these areas, manatees need to rest and conserve energy, particularly during the winter months, away from the threat of human harassment.

Behavioral changes due to human interactions aren't unique to manatees. Research on other species (such as pinnipeds[7] and dolphins[8]) shows that as humans get closer, animals' disturbance responses increase. Just because a manatee doesn't immediately swim away from human interaction doesn't mean they're comfortable; they may simply be tolerating the situation or unsure of how to safely exit.

But what about manatees that choose to interact with you? Is interacting with them harmful?

One of the greatest risks of repeated human interaction with wildlife is habituation—when animals become so accustomed to humans that they no longer see us as a potential threat. While this may seem harmless, habituated animals often lose their natural caution and are more likely to approach boats, vehicles, or people, which increases their chances of injury or harassment.

This exact scenario has been observed in studies with lone, sociable dolphins. Research shows that those who engage in physical contact with humans experienced increased rates of harassment[9] [10], changes in natural behavior[11], and greater vulnerability to boat injuries.[12] [13] One in four manatees is hit by watercraft at least 10 times during their lifetime.[14] Minimizing human interactions may help reduce manatees' risk of boat collisions.

For all these reasons, it's best to avoid swimming with manatees. We understand, however, that people may still want to have this experience. If you do, we strongly recommend passive observation only and not touching them under any circumstances. Maintaining a respectful distance and avoiding any actions that alter a manatee's natural behavior helps ensure they remain wild, safe, and free to live naturally without added risks from human interaction.

For the Record: Save the Manatee Club engages with eco-tour operators through our Guardian Guides program to encourage safe, responsible manatee viewing. While some businesses in Florida still include swim-with options, our emphasis remains on above-water and passive observation—viewing manatees from a respectful distance so they can remain wild and thrive.

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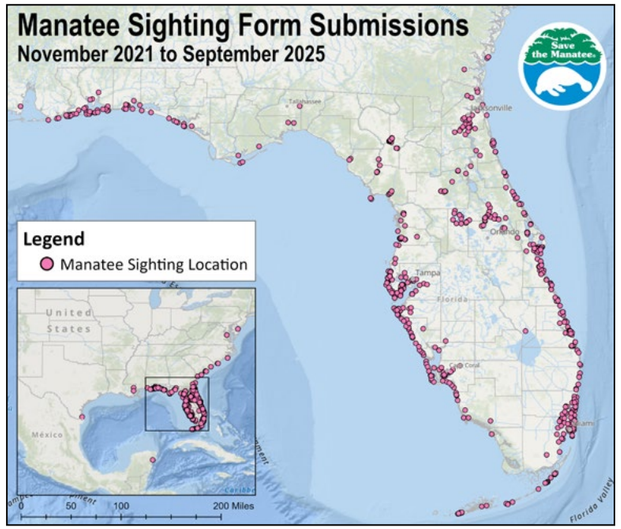
Why Your Manatee Sighting Submissions Matter!

By Tiare "TJ" Fridrich, Manatee Biologist



Manatee research and monitoring programs have been established throughout the state of Florida to collect data on manatee biology, reproduction, and habitat use. These data are used by government agencies to support effective manatee conservation programs. Historically, manatee research and data collection has focused on areas of the state where manatee activity is already known to be high or where there is significant manatee/boater overlap—typically in waterways adjacent to major urban areas. In less developed regions, or where manatee use isn't well documented, there are often gaps in manatee data collection. Because gathering this information can be expensive, labor-intensive, and difficult to coordinate, there's been less focus on areas with few official sightings—even if locals regularly observe manatees in those waterways.

One cost-effective way to collect more manatee data in these areas is through opportunistic public sighting submissions, like our Manatee Sighting Form. When someone sees a manatee in the wild, they can go to our website to submit key details such as the location, date and time, and behavior of the manatee. Save the Manatee Club staff have been recording these sightings since before our organization was founded, with data going back to the 1970s.

And a *lot* has changed since then. There are more people—and more manatees—in Florida than ever before. Yet, many of Florida's lakes, rivers, and springs are impaired by development, nutrient pollution, and excessive water withdrawals, all of which have contributed to the decline of the aquatic plants manatees depend on for survival.

More recently, manatees have started moving into new areas of the state in search of food and better habitat. Locals living along the Florida Springs Coast, the Big Bend Region, and the Panhandle have reported seeing more manatees in their waterways than previously sighted. This trend aligns with shifts in seagrass coverage: while seagrass is declining in almost all other areas of Florida, the beds offshore of northwest Florida are thriving.

Despite this, there are still limited data on manatee activity in northwest Florida—and resource managers need this information to ensure manatees and their habitat are adequately protected. To close this data gap, we've partnered with several organizations along Florida's west coast to encourage more manatee sighting submissions through our sighting form.

For the longest time, it was a common misconception that manatees don't use the Weeki Wachee River—or only did so during the winter months. But recent sighting data submitted through our form shows that manatees are active in the region year-round, and the estuary serves as critically important habitat. In fact, thanks to local advocacy efforts, the county has proposed creating a manatee protection zone in the estuary to help reduce the risk of boat strikes.

We encourage you, our readers, to send us your manatee sightings, even if they aren't recent. Submit them at ***savethemanatee.org/sighting***. And if you've already submitted one, we thank you for helping us to collect this essential information!

The Take-A-Break Activity Corner

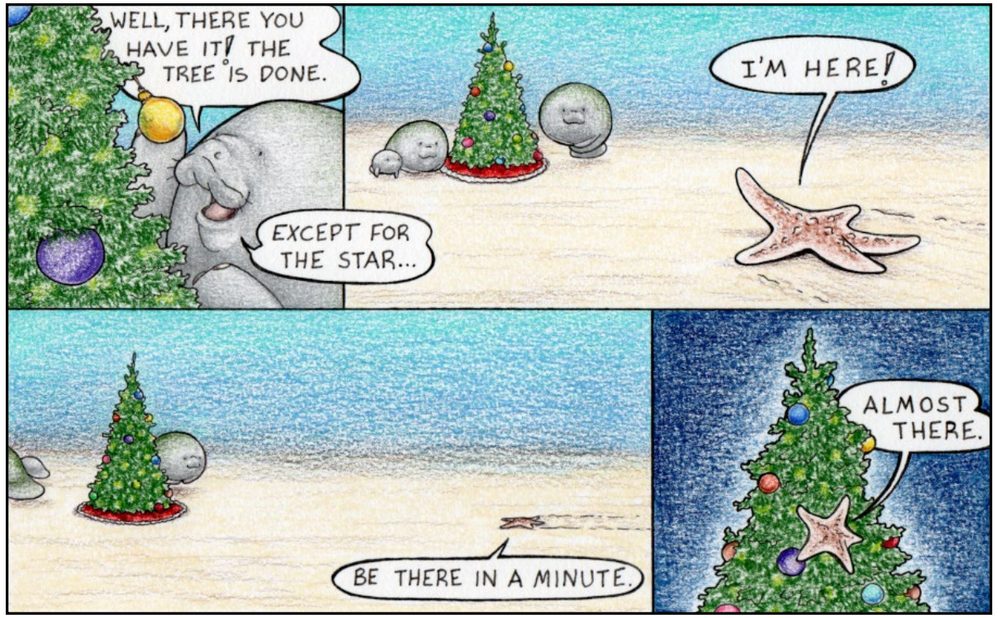
Word Search

Instructions: Find and circle all the words from the list below hidden in the grid.
Words may appear forward or backward, and go up, down, or diagonal.

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

Aggregation
Arthur
Behavior
Blue Spring
Calendar
Canoe
Clog
Cold Weather
Data
Dock Sign
Footprints
Gates
Gift
Giving Teesday
Guardian Guides
Habituated
Harassment
Holidays
Information
Locals
Manatee Season
Manatees
Mandalore
Mermaid
Mobile Bay
Monitoring
Paddle
Photo-ID
PSA
Research
Roll Call
Seagrass
Sightings
Silver Springs
SMC
Stranding
Underwater
Vessel
Weeki Wachee
ZooTampa

Man versus Manatee — "Tree Topper"

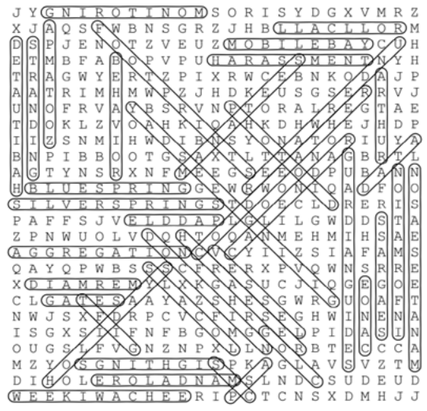


Rachel "Jo" Arnow began illustrating *Man versus Manatee* in 2012. She had no intention of starting a webcomic when she jotted down a sketch of a manatee munching on a diver's hand, but that episode, titled "Man versus Manatee," soon became the start of an entire series that continues to this day. Read more about Rachel's story, and find more episodes, at ***manvsmanatee.com***.

GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tees-day is Just Around the Corner! On Tuesday, December 2, join us on this global day of giving and support Save the Manatee Club's mission to protect manatees and their habitat. Together we are creating a lasting impact, ensuring these gentle aquatic mammals thrive today and for future generations to come. Whether you choose to donate, volunteer, or speak up on behalf of manatees, your involvement is truly appreciated. Every action, big or small, strengthens our efforts to safeguard imperiled manatees and their ecosystems. Visit ***savethemanatee.org/giving-teesday*** for more details on how you can help support manatees and be a part of this impactful day.

You can request a copy of this PSA for your company, website, or local newsletters in standard and custom sizes. Email your request to ***media@savethemanatee.org***.



Dear Fellow Members and Manatee Friends,

As another year comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on the ripples of kindness that have carried us forward through the storms, the milestones, and the challenges. Every person who chooses to care about manatees leaves a mark not just on our work at Save the Manatee Club, but on the future of these incredible aquatic mammals and the fragile habitats they call home.

Your support creates ripples that spread further than you may ever realize. When you adopt a manatee, educate a friend, report a sighting, lend a helping hand at an event, or advocate for stronger protections, you are part of something larger than any one of us. You're leaving a footprint of compassion that strengthens a legacy more than 40 years in the making and helping us build a better future, one act of kindness at a time.

This holiday season, I invite you to give a gift that resonates: adopt a manatee in honor of someone you love. It's a heartfelt way to share your values and bring joy, curiosity, and connection into someone's life. Our Adopt-A-Manatee® program, inspired by our late co-founder Jimmy Buffett as a way to spark love, laughter, and learning, continues to unite families, friends, classrooms, and communities across the world. Each adoption supports the rescue, rehabilitation, and protection of real manatees—some well-known and beloved, like Margarito, and others newer to our program with stories still unfolding.

This year alone, we reached 1,000 sightings reported through our online form. We supported manatee rescue and return efforts in partnership with agencies and rehabilitation centers. We worked to ensure policy decisions reflect what's best for manatees, and we continued educating the public at every opportunity, from classrooms to coastlines.

All of it was made possible because of individuals like you.

We often talk about the "ripple effect" here at Save the Manatee Club, but the truth is, every ripple starts with a single action. And this community, this family of supporters, keeps showing up. Year after year. Gift after gift. Kindness after kindness.

So thank you—for standing with us, for caring so deeply, and for being part of this ongoing story. I hope this season brings you peace, joy, and the quiet comfort of knowing your compassion truly makes a difference.

Here's to the ripples of kindness that carry us forward, and to the community that keeps them going.

With appreciation,

Tonya Higgins

Tonya Higgins
Director of Development and Operations, Save the Manatee Club

Save the Manatee® Club Membership Information

Membership Packet Materials

For as little as $25 per year, you can help save manatees! To show our appreciation for your support, every membership packet includes:

- **A one-year membership** to Save the Manatee Club.
- **Our Membership Handbook** filled with photos and information (with new adoptions).
- **A biography and personalized adoption certificate** of the manatee you choose.
- **Our official newsletter**, *The Manatee Zone*, four times a year.
- **A FREE, optional membership gift,** listed below.
- **A FREE, optional 2026 Save the Manatee Wall Calendar,** while supplies last.

Associate ($25)

Our Associate level is a great way to show support for manatees and the Club without stretching your budget! Associate members receive an adoption or renewal packet, complete with a biography and certificate of adoption for your selected manatee and our membership handbook. You will also receive updates about your adopted manatee (when available) as well as our quarterly newsletters!

Friend ($35)

Friend level members will receive all the Associate level materials and may also request a laser-engraved wooden medallion with a strong magnet on the back. Perfect for your fridge, office whiteboard, or as a fun gift for the manatee fan in your life. Medallion wood is responsibly sourced and crafted in the United States.

Sponsor ($75)


Front

Back

When you become a manatee Sponsor, receive your adoption or renewal packet as well as an exclusive SMC t-shirt featuring our logo on the front and a unique manatee wave design on the back. This special manatee design is screen-printed on a "thyme" colored tee made from a soft and luxurious 99/1 Airlume cotton/poly blend. When requesting your shirt, make sure to include a size—available in Adult Small through Adult 4XL and Youth Small through Youth Large.

Guardian ($100)

Guardians of the manatee can collect a 3.5" round crystal glass ornament along with the rest of the membership materials. Designed for Save the Manatee Club and created in the United States. This beautiful ornament is shipped in a black gift box for your gift-giving convenience.

Steward ($500)

At the highest level of support, our Stewards of the manatees can get their adoption or renewal packet plus a durable grey cinch pack made from 12-ounce, 100% cotton canvas. It measures 17" high by 14" wide. There is a metal zippered front pouch and the cinch straps are dyed to match the material. Hand wash only.

Educator ($20)

When you adopt or renew your class or group membership at the discounted Educator rate, you will receive a certificate of adoption and manatee biography, and the membership handbook as well as an educational packet with posters, activities, and more. Teachers can also adopt at a higher level and still request to receive the educational materials. *Due to tax substantiation laws the discounted Educator level is ineligible for a membership gift.*

Please Note: The gift images you see here are digital mockups. Actual items may vary a bit in color or design—but we promise they'll still be manatee-riffic!

MZNOV25

I want to Adopt-A-Manatee® for the holidays!

Please use the form below to adopt a manatee for yourself or as a gift for someone else or to renew an existing adoption. For last minute adoptions, fill out the adoption form online at *savethemanatee.org/adopt* and receive your personalized adoption certificate immediately.

YOUR INFORMATION

Name:_____

Address:_____

City/State/ZIP:_____

ᵛPhone:_____

Email:_____

Accept/continue emails from SMC?: ☐ Yes ☐ No

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Adoptee Name(s):_____
options on back of page

Adoption Level:
- ☐ Associate ($25)
- ☐ Friend ($35)
- ☐ Sponsor ($75)
- ☐ Guardian ($100)
- ☐ Steward ($500)
- ☐ Educator ($20) discounted level for educators

Student #:_____ Grade:_____

Name on Certificate:_____

Mail the printed materials:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Include the FREE gift:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Include FREE 2026 calendar:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Send renewal notice by:	☐ USPS	☐ Email
Send quarterly newsletter by:	☐ USPS	☐ Email

Notes:_____

IS THIS MEMBERSHIP A GIFT?

Please include recipient information below.

Recipient Name:_____

☐ Gift recipient is a child,_____years old.

Address:_____

City/State/ZIP:_____

Gift message:_____

☐ Gift is for a special occasion:_____

Mail printed materials/gift to: ☐ Me ☐ My Recipient

Send renewal notice to: ☐ Me ☐ My Recipient

PAYMENT INFORMATION

$_____Adoption Dues

$_____Extra Donation

$_____Grand Total

☐ Credit Card

☐ Check

☐ Gift Certificate

For CHECK payments fill out the information below:

Check #:_____ Check Date:_____

For CREDIT CARD payments fill out the information below:

Card #:_____

Cardholder:_____

Billing ZIP Code:_____ Security Code:_____ Exp. Date:_____

Return this form with check or money order to:

317 Wekiva Springs Rd. Ste. 100, Longwood, FL 32779

1-800-432-JOIN (5646) • *savethemanatee.org*

501(c)(3) registered non-profit • EIN: 59-3131709

FOR ANOTHER NEW HOLIDAY GIFT ADOPTION, fill out the information below.

Recipient Name:_____

☐ Gift recipient is a child,_____years old.

Address:_____

City/State/ZIP:_____

Gift message:_____

_____

☐ Gift is for a special occasion:_____

Adoptee Name:_____
options on back of page

Adoption Level:_____

Mail materials to:	☐ Me	☐ My Recipient
Include the FREE gift:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Include FREE calendar:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Send renewal to:	☐ Me	☐ My Recipient

Your recipient will receive a copy of the newsletter by mail. Save the Manatee Club respects the privacy of our members. **We do not share, sell, or publish our members' personal information.**

ᵛYour phone number will only be used if we have questions regarding this adoption form. It will not be used to solicit donations or sold to or shared with any other organizations.

Meet Our Adoptable Manatees

Homosassa Springs manatees are the easiest to meet in person because they are permanent residents of the park and can be visited at any time of the year. Blue Spring manatees, though wild, are spotted frequently at the spring during the winter season and sometimes during the summer. The rest of our adoptees are sighted intermittently and their behavior is more unpredictable. They may travel long distances and be recorded at multiple locations around Florida throughout the year.

BLUE SPRING MANATEES

ANNIE: Rescued as an orphaned calf and released back to the wild in 2008, Annie is not shy and is quite popular with park visitors.

AQUA: First sighted at Blue Spring in December 2011, Aqua has since been a regular visitor. She has had six known calves.

BRUTUS: One of the largest manatees, Brutus weighs in at almost 1,800 pounds and has been a regular since 1970.

DEEP DENT: A medium-sized male who first arrived at Blue Spring in 1979, Deep Dent gets his name from a deep, "dent-like" propeller wound on his tail.

DOC: Returning to Blue Spring every winter since 1976, Doc is nearly ten feet in length and is frequently spotted at the park in the summer.

ESTER: Granddaughter of Emma and daughter of Elaine, Ester is part of a large Blue Spring matriarchy. She has had at least 12 of her own calves.

FLASH: A large male manatee first identified in 1977, Flash is shy and will take off in a "flash" when disturbed.

FLOYD: Born in the summer of 1978, Floyd is easily identified by an old injury that left him with only half a tail.

GATOR: First identified in 2011, Gator got his name when he was spotted on the webcam playing with an alligator.

HOWIE: A large male known to winter at the park since 1971, Howie once tipped over the research canoe – with the researchers in it!

LENNY: Born in 1978, Lenny winters at Blue Spring each year. He prefers rest to all other activities.

LILY: The oldest female at the park, Lily has returned each year since 1974 and is the mother of at least 11 calves.

MARGARITO: The son of Lily, born in 1984, Margarito has returned to Blue Spring every winter. He can be identified by his missing left flipper.

MERLIN: Merlin has been wintering at the spring since 1970. His nickname is "Tail-End Charlie" since he often arrives late each year.

MOO SHOO: First identified in 2010, Moo Shoo loves to nudge the research canoe and is very photogenic. She has had five calves.

NICK: His unusual behavior, such as traveling north when all the other manatees are heading south, has earned him the nickname "Crazy Nick."

PHILIP: Born in the summer of 1982, Philip is playful and seems to love following the research canoe everywhere.

PHYLLIS: Phyllis is believed to have been born in 1985. In 1991, she gave birth to twins—a rare event for manatees. She is a mother of at least 17 calves!

ROCKET: Rescued as a tiny orphan in 2006, Rocket is small for a male and rather shy.

UNA: Rescued as an orphan in 2003, Una was released and gave birth to several calves. She has been rescued multiple times due to fishing line wrapped around her flippers.

WHISKERS: Born to Dana in 1996, Whiskers is an exceptionally curious manatee and ventured away from his mother at a very young age.

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA MANATEES

FLICKER: A female first documented in the winter of 1983, Flicker's name comes from her many small propeller scars that resemble flickering flames.

JEMP: Rescued in July 1995 after being exposed to red tide, Jemp travels in a wide range along Florida's west coast.

VECTOR: A traveling manatee who has been tracked as far north as the Suwannee River and as far south as the Peace River.

EAST COAST MANATEES

CHESSIE: First sighted in the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland in July, 1994, he has been known to travel along the southeast coast of the U.S.

ILLUSION: Illusion was rescued in March 2010 after a boat strike. After being released, she is often seen at the FPL Riviera Beach power plant and along the coast of Southeast Florida.

MILLIE: First identified in 1980, Millie is one of the largest manatees ever recorded. She is a traveler with a long sighting history along Florida's southeast coast as well as Blue Spring. Millie has had several calves.

HOMOSASSA SPRINGS MANATEES

ARIEL: Just two weeks old when she was rescued with her mom, Amanda, Ariel is a regular at the manatee education programs.

BETSY: Betsy, who's mom was also Amanda, is very friendly and curious and is quick to investigate anything new. She was born in captivity in 1990, back when the practice was still legal.

FLORIDA KEYS MANATEES

ZELDA: Zelda was first ID'd in 2002 at the Ft. Myers power plant and was subsequently seen all around southwest Florida. Since 2014 she has been regularly spotted in the Keys. She has had three known calves.

ALABAMA MANATEES

BAMA: The first manatee ever captured and tagged in Alabama waters. Bama migrates from Alabama to Crystal River, Florida, each winter.

CLOG: *Our newest adoptee!* First identified in Florida in 1993, he is a regular summer visitor to Alabama and a winter visitor to Florida's west coast.

THE MANATEE STORE

Find these items and more at ***shopsavethemanatee.org.*** For questions, please call our toll free number at 1-800-432-JOIN (5646), or email ***catalog@savethemanatee.org.***

To pay by check, please give us a call or go to our website to place your order and receive your total, including tax and shipping. Inventory can only be reserved if an order is placed on the phone or via the website.

Festive Florida Holiday Cards Duo Pack

We are thrilled to present two new holiday cards designed around two submissions to our 2025 SMC art contest. Each pack of 5" x 7" cards includes six cards of each design and 12 white envelopes. The first design features the phrase 'Florida sun and manatee fun' over a warm image of a mother manatee and calf. The second design has 'Festive peace and seagrass feasts' over a manatee nestled in orange blossoms.

Item #40608 Price $21.00

Yin Yang Manatee Sand Ornament

This handmade sculpture features two cuddling manatees in a yin-yang shape, symbolizing balance and connection. Crafted from natural sand, it measures 5" from tail to tail—perfect for display on a shelf or desk, or as a gift.

Item #40700 Price $12.00

The Florida Manatee: Biology and Conservation Paperback

Dive into manatee science with this engaging book by researchers Roger L. Reep and Robert K. Bonde. With over 300 pages of insights, photos, and decades of expertise in this 9" x 6" guide, it explores manatee behavior, habitat, migration, and more. A must-read for both scientific and curious minds alike!

Item #40314 Price $32.00

Manatee Baby Booties

Don't go another day without owning a pair of these manatee booties! They are adorable and perfect for any baby—from newborn to one year. These cotton-polyester booties feature a 3D manatee face and flippers on the front and a tail on the back.

Item #40109 Price $9.00

Save the Manatee 2026 Wall Calendar

This calming calendar features peaceful underwater images of manatees—slow-moving mammals that embody stillness and grace. Photos used in this calendar were graciously donated by their photographers for Save the Manatee Club's use. It includes a special message from our Executive Director, Patrick Rose, and a promo code for 20% off your next purchase from our online store. Measures 12" x 24" when open.

Item #40405 Price $15.00

Watercolor Manatee Plush

You've found our watercolor manatee—the cutest stuffed animal around! With its oh-so-squishy body and vibrant colors, this plush pal is sure to make waves in anyone's collection. Available in two color options (blue-green or pink rainbow) and two size options (11" and 17").

11" Plush: Item #41408 Price $15.00
17" Plush: Item #41409 Price $26.00

Save the Manatee Key Ring Charms

This exclusive key ring features an engraved logo charm and a metal manatee charm. Make your key ring unique and show your support for these gentle mammals. Each charm is carefully handcrafted with love in the U.S.

Item #41414 Price $13.50

HOW TO ORDER:

- Order online: Go to ***shopsavethemanatee.org***.
- Order by phone: Call toll-free **1-800-432-JOIN (5646)** in the United States and Canada. Our office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.
- Order by mail: Call us, email us, or go online to place your order and receive your total. Then send a check or money order to **317 Wekiva Springs Rd., Suite 100, Longwood, FL 32779**.

Visit *shopsavethemanatee.org* or call 1-800-432-JOIN (5646) to order today.

Save the Manatee® Club

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Longwood, FL 32779-5950
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If you see an injured manatee, call 1-888-404-FWCC (3922) and press 7 to speak with an operator.

Issue Contents

You can request a copy of this PSA for your company, website, or local newsletters. Email your request to ***media@savethemanatee.org***. Standard and custom sizes are available.

Too Many Manatees in Your Mailbox?

If you received this issue by mistake, are getting duplicate copies, or want to update your mailing or email preferences, we're happy to help! Just email us at ***membership@savethemanatee.org*** or call toll-free at 1-800-432-5646 (weekdays from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.). Your feedback helps us stay connected in a way that works best for you—thank you!

All research, rescue, rehab, and release activities conducted under DEP permit #01122413 and USFWS permits #MA770191 and #MA791721-6.

The Manatee Zone is edited by Cheyenne Canon.

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