

What protections are in place for the Florida manatee?

Manatees are protected by the Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act (F.S. 379.2431(2)), the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act and the federal Endangered Species Act. It is illegal to feed, harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, annoy or molest manatees.

What FWC programs are in place to conserve manatees?

The Imperiled Species Management section is responsible for the management of the manatee, which includes outreach and education, permitting, regulations and manatee speed zone laws and administration of the manatee management plan. The Fish and Wildlife Research Institute conducts research to monitor and study manatees, performs rescues of distressed manatees, provides statistics for manatee mortality and studies the ecology of the manatee. The Division of Law Enforcement patrols the waterways where manatees exist and enforces speed zone laws.



Manatee rescue

How are manatee conservation activities funded?

Vehicle owners who voluntarily pay extra for the Florida “Save the Manatee” specialty license plates provide support for Florida’s manatee conservation efforts. Money collected from the specialty license plates are deposited into the Save the Manatee Trust Fund (s. 320-08058(1)(b), Florida Statutes). Vessel registration fees and manatee decal sales, along with various other donations, are deposited in the trust fund and also provide the funding used for research and management activities.

If I live out of state, how can I contribute to manatee conservation efforts?

Manatee decals are available for a \$5 donation at all Florida county tax offices or may be ordered online from MyFWC.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS.

Manatee program and research information:

FWC Imperiled Species Management Section
850-922-4330
MyFWC.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS (click on “manatee”)

FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
727-896-8626
MyFWC.com/Research

To report a dead or distressed manatee, call:

**FWC Wildlife Alert Hotline
1-888-404-FWCC (3922)**

For in-state mobile phones, users may call **#FWC** or ***FWC**

For on-water emergencies, use **Radio VHF Channel 16**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Imperiled Species Management Section
620 South Meridian Street, 6-A
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600



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Where are Florida’s manatees?



© Susan Lowe, Ellie Schiller
Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park

And other interesting facts about Florida’s state marine mammal



Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com



Manatees are unique aquatic mammals that live in Florida’s waterways.

Terri Callison, FWC

The Florida manatee breathes air, just like other mammals. It has a large, tube-shaped body, a flat, round, paddle-shaped tail, two relatively short front flippers, and a whiskered face. The average adult manatee is about 10 feet long and weighs approximately 1,200 pounds. Manatees can live more than 60 years; however, of the manatees that reach adulthood, only about half are expected to survive into their early 20s.

What do manatees eat?

Often referred to as “sea cows” because of their grazing habits, manatees eat seagrasses and many other species of floating or submerged aquatic plants. A manatee consumes plant material equal up to about 9 percent of its body weight per day. It can spend six to eight hours a day feeding. Much

– are native to Florida.
Florida manatees – Florida’s state marine mammal Antillean manatee (*Trichechus manatus manatus*). The West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) species consists of two subspecies: the Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus latirostris*) and the

What are manatees?

of the manatee forage habitat provides habitat for many other species, so protection of these habitats benefits not only manatees but many other species as well.

Why shouldn’t people give food or water to manatees?

Under state and federal law, it is illegal to attract manatees to an area by offering food. Besides, manatees lured to unsafe areas may be in greater danger of being struck by vessels in these areas. Manatee harassment is defined in 68C-22.002 Florida Administrative Code as, “any intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of causing an injury to a manatee by annoying its to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include breeding, feeding or sheltering. The intentional provision of any type of food to manatees not in captivity shall be considered harassment under this definition, unless authorized by a valid federal or state permit.”

How can I do my part to ensure a healthy future for Florida’s manatees?

- Give a proper lookout when boating or renting any watercraft vessels in Florida – look for manatees in front of or near your vessel.
- Watch manatees from a distance.
- Slow down and obey posted signs on the waterways.
- Participate in coastal cleanup events,
- Recycle monofilament fishing line (Do not discard fishing line in Florida’s waterways!).
- Attend boating safety classes or take online courses from MyFWC.com,



Place used fishing line in recycling bins found near marinas, boat ramps and bait shops. To find bins near you, go to www.fishinglinerecycling.org.

- Educate others about manatees,
- Send a donation to the FWC “Save the Manatee Trust Fund.”
- If you plan to move to Florida or are already a resident, show your support for manatee conservation by purchasing a “Save the Manatee” specialty license plate for your vehicle or a manatee decal for your vehicle or vessel (available at Florida tax collector offices or online).

Where are Florida’s manatees?

The Florida manatee is found mainly in Florida; however, its summer ranges may extend along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. On rare occasions, manatees may be sighted as far north as Massachusetts and as far west as Texas. Manatees live in many aquatic habitats, both fresh and salt water; preferring rivers, estuaries, bays and canals found throughout Florida. These aquatic mammals cannot endure water temperatures below 68 degrees for extended periods. Florida’s natural springs and warm-water discharge canals near power plants provide necessary refuges for manatees during the colder months.

The rest of the year, manatees inhabit many different areas in Florida’s waterways. Some manatees are displayed at oceanaria/rehabilitation facilities after recovering from injuries or sickness’ and prior to release back into the wild. During rehabilitation, these animals share space with manatees that are year round residents at these facilities.

What’s the best way to observe the Florida manatee?

To help protect Florida’s wildlife, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) encourages you to watch wildlife from a distance and to use binoculars or zoom lenses to extend your view. When you get too close to wild animals, problems may arise. When the animal uses energy to escape human disturbances, it has less energy to use when searching for food, migrating or surviving during cold periods.

Enjoy Florida manatees in the wild (call ahead for current manatee viewing information):

Blue Spring State Park
386-775-3663
Orange City
The park schedules manatee programs throughout the day. Entrance fee required.

Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge
352-563-2088
Crystal River
Boats are required in order to see manatees near the manatee sanctuaries.

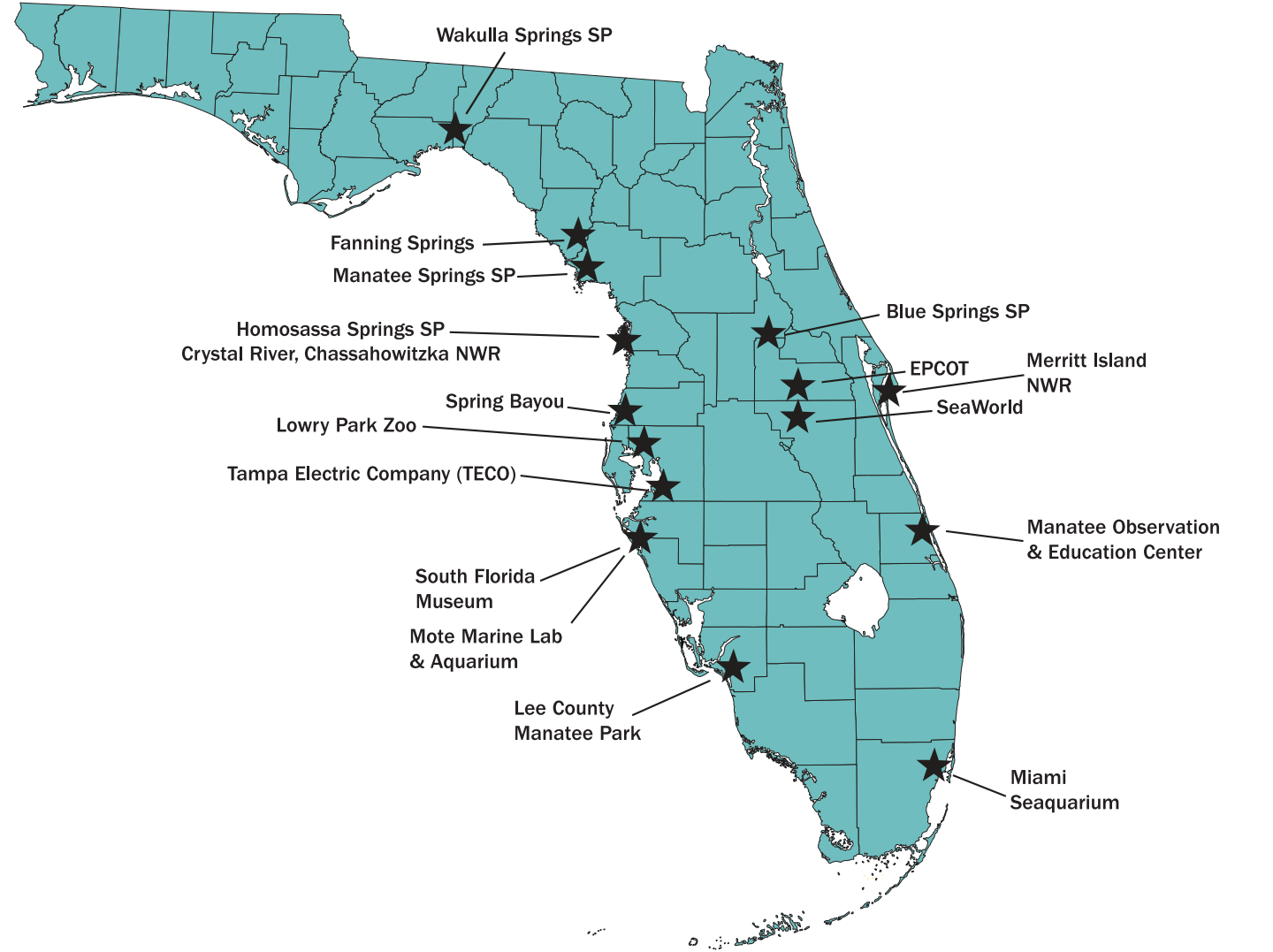
Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park
850-926-0700
Wakulla Springs
Manatees may be seen at the spring headwaters, spring run or in the Wakulla River. Entrance and boat tour fees required.

Fanning Springs State Recreation and Conservation Area
904-488-3701
Fanning Springs
Manatees occasionally are present in Fanning Springs. Entrance fee required.

Manatee Springs State Park
352-493-6072
Chiefland
Manatees may be seen in the spring run. Park entrance fee required.



Many manatees have scars from boat propellers. Researchers use the scar patterns to identify some of these animals for life history studies.



Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
321-861-0667
Merritt Island
Manatees may be viewed from the platform on the Haulover Canal.

Moore’s Creek – Manatee Education Center
772-466-1600, ext. 3333
Fort Pierce
Manatee Education Center is open year round. Occasional manatee sightings occur in winter.

Orange River and FPL Discharge Canal
State Road 80
Fort Myers
The Lee County Manatee Park has a parking fee and gates close at 5 p.m.

Spring Bayou/Craig Park
Beekman Lane
Tarpon Springs
A small community park with a freshwater spring welcomes manatees from November through May.

Tampa Bay -Tampa Electric Company (TECO)
813-228-4289
Apollo Beach
TECO provides a visitor center, overlook and walkway so that visitors can see the manatees in the discharge canal. Docents are available.

Manatees at rehabilitation/ educational facilities:

Disney’s Epcot Center
407-824-4321
Orlando
Manatees are found at the Living Seas exhibit. Entrance fee required.

Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park
352-628-5343
Homosassa
Park staff or volunteers present educational programs each day. Wild manatees are now able to visit the headwaters of Homosassa Spring during the winter months. Enclosed underwater viewing area (see cover photo). Park entrance fee required for viewing.

Lowry Park Zoo
813-932-0245
Tampa
The Lowry Park Zoo has a manatee exhibit area. Entrance fee required.

Miami Seaquarium
305-361-5705
Miami
The Miami Seaquarium has staff available to answer questions at viewing area. Entrance fee required.



Aerial survey teams fly over warm water sites to count the manatees that gather in these areas.

Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium
941-388-2451
Sarasota
Mote Marine Lab has manatees and other aquatic wildlife at their research facility. Entrance fee required.

SeaWorld of Florida
407-363-2613
Orlando
SeaWorld has a theme park manatee program with staff available at the viewing area. Entrance fee required.

South Florida Museum/Parker Manatee Aquarium
941-746-4131
Bradenton
Parker Manatee Aquarium is the home of Snooty, the oldest manatee living in captivity in Florida. Entrance fee required.