

# MANATEE FACT SHEET

**NAME:** West Indian (Antillean) Manatee

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Sirenia
Family:	Trichechidae
Genus:	Trichechus
Species:	manatus
Subspecies:	manatus

**DESCRIPTION:** Large, seal-like body that tapers to a spatulate tail. Two forelimbs with three or four nails on each. Thick wrinkled skin, with stiff whiskers on upper lip.

**COLOUR:** Gray or gray-brown.

**SIZE:** Typically 9 feet long, weighing 1000 pounds. Can grow as large as 13 feet, weighing more than 3000 pounds.

**BEHAVIOUR:** Completely harmless and defenseless. They are often shy and reclusive.

**VISION:** Depth perception may be limited. Manatees can differentiate colours.

**HEARING:** Can hear very well despite the absence of external ear lobes.

**COMMUNICATION:** Emit sounds that are within human auditory range. They make squeaks and squeals when frightened, playing, or communicating, particularly between mother and calf.

**BREATHING:** Nostrils on upper surface of snout close tightly like valves when submerged. Surfaces to breathe every few minutes when active about every 15 minutes when resting.

**RANGE/HABITAT:** Primarily in the Caribbean, the Atlantic coast of Mexico, and northern countries of South America. They can be found in shallow, slow-moving rivers, estuaries, saltwater bays, canals, and coastal areas, particularly where seagrass beds flourish. They can live in fresh or salt water.

**REPRODUCTION:** Normally one calf every 2 to 5 years. Twins are not uncommon.

**POPULATION:** Probably less than 900 are found in Belize, the largest known population.