

Manatees on the Move

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to show four or more West Indian manatee habitats on a map and describe and/or illustrate yearly movements of manatees along the Florida coastline. He or she will be able to describe the top three threats to manatees and create an educational campaign to target the causes of the threats.

National Geography Standards: 1, 6, 14

MATERIALS

- Copies of Florida map (provided)
- Overhead transparency of Manatee Range
- Access to library resources or the Internet
- Color markers or pencils
- Photo of manatee on overhead transparency or in book
- Paper, photos, software for slide shows (as needed for reports)
- Non-fiction book about manatees

BACKGROUND

There are three species of manatees: *Trichechus senegalensis*, the West African manatee; *Trichechus inunguis*, the Amazonian manatee; and *Trichechus manatus*, the West Indian manatee. The West Indian manatee species is divided into two subspecies: The Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus latirostris*) and the Antillean manatee (*Trichechus manatus manatus*). The Florida manatee is one of the most endangered marine mammals in the United States. In this activity, students will focus on the Florida manatee.

ACTION

1. First, find out what students already know about manatees. Ask students, What is a manatee? Where do manatees live? Write the answers on the chalkboard, white board, or overhead and continue the discussion with these questions: Are manatees endangered? If so, why? What are some of the threats to manatees? Do you know of or do you think that there are campaigns or conservation measures to help manatees?

At this point, depending on students' knowledge about manatees, you may assign them some library reading materials or refer them to one of the Web sites listed under Online Sources where they can discover more about manatees. To prep for this background reading, ask the class what they would like to know about manatees, and assign questions to student groups.

2. Divide the class into groups of two to five students and distribute copies of Florida Map (page 18). Using the Manatee Range (page 17) on an overhead as an example, have students shade their maps to indicate manatee distribution along the Florida coast.
3. Have each student group choose an area on the map of Florida to "explore." Using the Internet or library resources, ask students to research their specific area. Helpful questions to answer might be: How many manatees die in this area? Are measures in place to

help stop injuries? If so, what are the measures and are they working? This information is available from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Web site (see Online Sources).

4. Next, have student groups brainstorm from one to three new ideas for decreasing or preventing manatee deaths. How would students advertise these new conservation measures? Would it be easy or difficult to convince local residents to follow (or buy) the solution? To illustrate the new conservation measures, students can use slide shows, video, posters, or brochures.
5. Finally, have student groups present their ideas to classmates. Take the activity to the next level by contacting the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and seeing if they are interested in implementing the idea! In addition, select the best ideas and present them to community groups. As an extension to this activity, you can ask your area's Fish and Wildlife Commission representative to visit your class and talk about his or her job.
6. Do students think the issues, problems, and solutions they have studied about the Florida manatee might be helpful to related species in other areas of the world (e.g., the manatee in West Africa and South America; the dugong in East Africa and the South Pacific)?

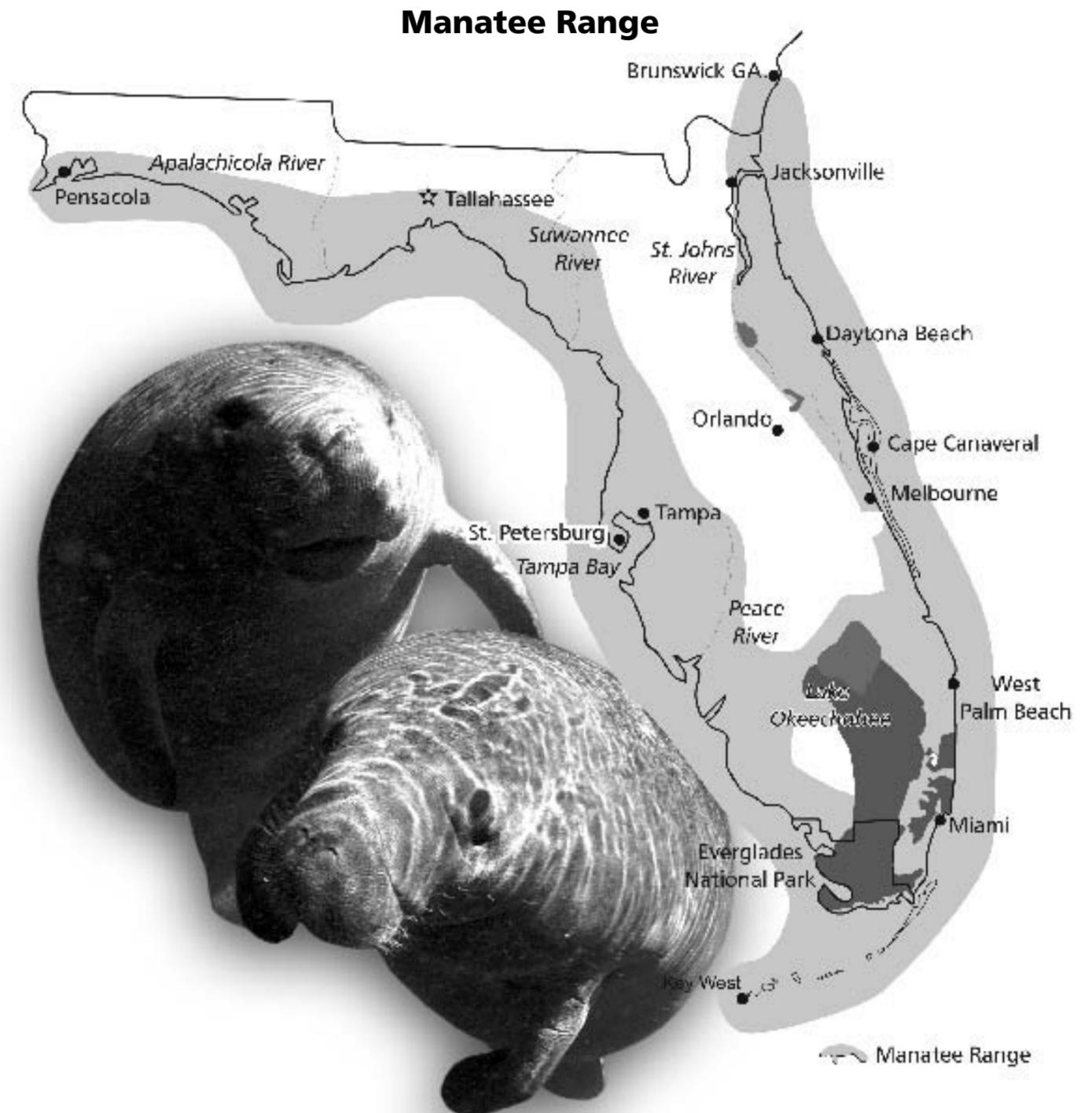
Online Sources

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
www.floridaconservation.org/psm/manatee/manatee.htm
www.myfwc.com/manatee/

Parker Manatee Aquarium, South Florida Museum
www.southfloridamuseum.org/aquarium.asp

Save the Manatee Club
www.savethemanatee.org/

SeaWorld/Busch Gardens ANIMALS
www.swbg-animals.org



Florida Map



World Map

