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*Dolphin Research Center is a not-for-profit corporation specializing in education and research. DRC is a tax-exempt organization, and as such, all donations, monetary or otherwise, are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.*

## Record Manatee Count!

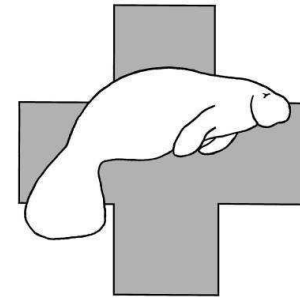
Warm temperatures and clear, sunny days between some of the coldest weather of the year assisted FWC biologists and partners in counting an all-time high number of manatees during this year's statewide aerial survey.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reported a preliminary count of 6,063 manatees statewide. During the February count, a team of 20 observers from 11 organizations counted 3,333 manatees on Florida's east coast and 2,730 on the west coast of the state. This year's survey count exceeded the previous high count for 2010 by almost 1,000 animals.

"Manatees used warm-water sites and other winter habitat areas to cope with a strong cold front that recently moved through the region," said FWC biologist Holly Edwards. "In many of the regions surveyed, warm, sunny weather caused manatees to rest at the water's surface, which facilitated our efforts to count them in these areas. Calm waters and high visibility also contributed to the high count."

Aerial surveys are conducted annually, weather permitting, to provide researchers with a count of manatees visible in Florida waters at the time of the survey. Because researchers have no way to estimate the number of manatees that were not visible during these surveys, scientists consider these results a minimum count of the statewide population. While this year's results do not mean that the manatee population grew by nearly 1,000 animals in a single year, they do tell researchers there are at least 6,000 manatees in Florida waters. For more information, visit [MyFWC.com/Research](http://MyFWC.com/Research), click "Research," then "Florida Manatee."

*(Information courtesy of FWC.)*



# The Gray Cross

A Quarterly Publication of DOLPHIN RESEARCH CENTER

Volume 18, Number 1

2015

## Manatee Teamwork

In late February, Dolphin Research Center's Medical Director Pat Clough was contacted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Dr. Tom Reinert about a manatee in Marathon that might have some sort of line wrapped around its peduncle. (The peduncle is the narrow part of the lower body just before the tail paddle.) The FWC had received a call and photographs from Keys' resident Alex Oathout who had spotted the animal and was concerned about its condition. The pictures showed a definite indentation across the animal's peduncle and Alex was concerned that there might be line entangled around the animal. Although no trailing line was evident, something might have been embedded and the FWC wanted a closer look.

Something about the photographs seemed familiar to Pat. Before launching an on-site visit, she first searched through the books she maintains of previous assessments and records. In March 2008, someone at a Marathon RV park had reported a manatee with



*The indentation across this manatee's peduncle concerned Alex Oathout, so she alerted the FWC. (Photo supplied by Alex Oathout)*

*Cont'd Page Two*

## Manatee Conversation Starters



*"Let's give them something to talk about!"  
(Photo by Susan Sorensen)*

There are hundreds of marine mammals in the world. Many people know about dolphins, orcas, polar bears, otters, sea lions, but manatees remain more mysterious despite being incredibly unique creatures. Perhaps it's because they live in relatively few places in the world. Here are five fun facts you can share with your friends and family members about the animals that were once mistaken for mermaids.

### **You know their most common relative very well.**

Do you know an animal with two tusks, a trunk and big dumbo ears? If you guessed elephants, you're right! In fact, the two have many similar characteristics. The most unique one has to do with their teeth. Both elephants and manatees have molars which move toward the front of the mouth (like a conveyor belt), fall out, and are restored by those at the rear.

### **Sea grass and algae are on the menu.**

Manatees feast on sea grass and freshwater plants to meet all of their nutritional and hydration needs. Due to the low amount of calories in vegetation, manatees will often spend eight hours a day eating. How much food is that? About 10% of their body weight. A 1,000 pound manatee eats 100 pounds

*Cont'd Page Three*

## THANK YOU!

The Florida Keys are beautiful, but the salt water and hot sun are tough on equipment.

### Wish List Items Needed

- Snorkel Masks— \$33.00 each
- Snorkels— \$18.00 each
- VHF hand held radios—\$130.00 each  
(Must be submersible/floatable/chargeable)
- Net Bucket - \$1500.00

If you work for or own a company that makes or sells any of these items, perhaps you can consider an in-kind donation.

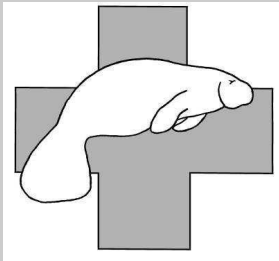
Animal rescue requires specialized equipment to not only increase our chances for success, but also to help us operate with the utmost safety for the team as well as the manatees.

We could not do these rescue missions without your generous assistance.

You may donate money for these specific items, or make a general donation to the Dolphin Research Center Manatee Rescue Team.

For more information, contact the Membership Department at 305-289-1121, ext. 229, or email [drc-mbr@dolphins.org](mailto:drc-mbr@dolphins.org)!





## THE GRAY CROSS

Dolphin Research Center is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to a better understanding of marine mammals and the environment we share. DRC is home to a colony of dolphins and sea lions where we conduct innovative research and offer many interactive, educational programs. Beyond our lagoons, we are the only private organization in the Florida Keys licensed to respond to manatees in distress. We are actively involved in our community providing outreach presentations on a variety of conservation subjects.

The Gray Cross evolved from our work with stranded marine mammals. DRC's critical care program is world renowned. Our experience with dolphins, whales and sea lions is used to help the endangered Florida Manatee. DRC has also participated in rescue and release of endangered sea turtles.

As a not-for-profit organization, contributions to DRC are welcomed and tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. For more information, visit our website at [www.dolphins.org](http://www.dolphins.org), call (305) 289-1121 extension 229 or send an email to [drc-mbr@dolphins.org](mailto:drc-mbr@dolphins.org).

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possible entanglement around the peduncle. Ted Due, from DRC's Manatee Rescue Team, went out to see the animal and took photographs.

Pat pulled out the seven year old, pre-digital, photographs and compared them side by side to the recent pictures. While the new photos showed a notch in the tail that hadn't been present in 2008, the peduncle line was similar. "In both cases, the line on the manatee's peduncle was widest on the animal's right and it did a little jog in the middle," Pat explained.

Since the DRC team had a good "live" look at the manatee in 2008, she knew back then that the line was a feature of that animal's skin and that no entanglement had occurred.

She sent her photos to Tom who agreed with her identification. He in turn shared them with Dr. Maya Rodriguez of Miami Seaquarium as well as Cathy Beck of United States Geological Services (USGS) – Sirenia Project. The USGS maintains a database of manatee photos for identification purposes. They concurred that the recent animal seemed to be a match to the one that was assessed in 2008.



When Pat Clough saw the photo that Alex Oathout provided, it reminded her of this animal that we assessed seven years ago. (Photo by Ted Due)

"If the animal is called in again, we will certainly re-assess, but if it is, indeed, the same animal, no present day entanglement is likely and no further action will be necessary," Pat said.

We all love the "happy endings", when an animal isn't injured or distressed. This story has additional "feel good" moments. It illustrates a great team approach to manatee welfare. This process began, as often happens, with a concerned person observing a manatee that could have been in trouble and taking steps to get help. After that, professionals from four different organizations consulted on the situation to determine what a single animal might need.

All of us involved in Dolphin Research Center's Manatee Rescue Team, which includes you, our supporters, are proud to be part of the ongoing effort to help this precious, endangered species.

If you see an injured, distressed, or dead manatee or other marine mammal, please call the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline: 888-404-3922 or \*FWC from your mobile device.

- Mary Stella

Cont'd from Page One

of food a DAY!

### Warm water is the best!

Warm water is a must for these guys. With low metabolic rates and minimal fat protection from cold water, manatees stick to water that is 68 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer. They may look fat and insulated, but the large body of the manatee is mostly made up of their stomach and intestines! In colder months, they find their way to warmer areas, like the Florida Keys, natural springs, or water outputs from power plants.

### They break records!

The largest manatee on record is named Brutus. He topped out at about 1,875 pounds the last time he was weighed. Now working off our second fun fact, how much would you estimate Brutus eats a day?!

### Their future rests in our hands.

With only around 6,000 Florida manatees left in the United States, their endangered status is noteworthy. Their cousin, the stellar sea cow, (the largest member of the order Sirenia) was driven to extinction at the hands of humans in the late 1800s. Many of the dangers manatees face are caused by humans. In other words, our behavior and actions could have dire consequences to the species.

### References:

"Are Manatees and Elephants Related?" *Beach Chair Scientist*. 29 Oct. 2012. Web. 8 Dec. 2014. <<http://beachchairscientist.com/2012/10/29/are-manatees-and-elephants-related/>>.



Every manatee is precious, like this adorable calf (Photo by Susan Sorensen)!

Frost, Emily. "14 Fun Facts About Manatees." *Smithsonian*. 31 Mar. 2014. Web. 8 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/14-fun-facts-about-manatees-180950308/?no-ist>>.

"Meet Brutus the Manatee." *Meet Brutus the Manatee*. Save the Manatees. Web. 8 Dec. 2014. <[http://www.savethemanatee.org/Manatee\\_Feature/brutus\\_12.html](http://www.savethemanatee.org/Manatee_Feature/brutus_12.html)>

-Vanessa Collins



**Yes!** I would like to make a contribution to Dolphin Research Center's Manatee Rescue Team and their efforts to save an endangered species.

\$10     \$15     \$25     \$35     \$50    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donations can be mailed to DRC, 58901 Overseas Hwy, Grassy Key, FL 33050, made online at [www.dolphins.org](http://www.dolphins.org) or faxed to (305) 743-7627. Thank you!

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For more information about the Gray Cross and Dolphin Research Center, call 305-289-1121 extension 229.

SC# NSC1503

