



# Marvelous Manatees Species Information

There are four living species of sirenians: the West Indian manatee, the West African manatee, the Amazonian manatee, and the dugong. The Steller's sea cow was hunted to extinction in 1768, less than 30 years after its discovery.

All marine mammals are protected in United States waters under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. In addition, the West Indian manatee is protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. All species of sirenians are classified as threatened, endangered, or extinct.

## West Indian manatee

*Trichechus manatus*

size: 3.1 m (10 ft.) 545 kg (1,200 lb.)  
maximum size—  
4 m (13 ft.),  
1,590 kg (3,500 lb.)

distribution: southeastern North America (Virginia to Louisiana), the Caribbean, and the southern coast of Texas to the coast of Brazil. Shallow coastal waters, estuaries, and rivers. May live in marine, brackish, or freshwater environments.

diet: submerged, emergent, floating, and shoreline vegetation. In Florida, diet consists of sea grasses, mangrove leaves, water hyacinth, and hydrilla. Consumes 4% to 9% of body weight (15-50 kg, 32-108 lb.) in vegetation daily.

predators: natural predators may include sharks, alligators, or crocodiles. Human-related threats include boat-related accidents, flood gates, navigation locks, poaching, entan-



## West African manatee

*Trichechus senegalensis*

size: 3.1 m (10 ft.) 545 kg (1,200 lb.)  
maximum size-4 m (13 ft.), 1,590 kg (3,500 lb.)

distribution: Senegal to



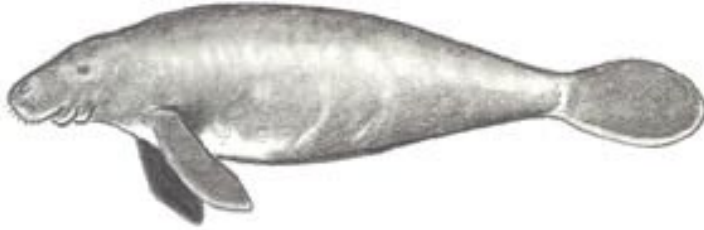
Angola, Africa. Shallow coastal waters, estuaries, and rivers. May live in marine, brackish, or freshwater environments.

- diet: submerged, emergent, floating, and shoreline vegetation. Main diet consists of a variety of aquatic plants and mangrove leaves.
- predators: natural predators may include crocodiles and sharks. Drought, subsistence harvest, and hydroelectric dams have large impacts on population.
- population: unknown, however thought to be decreasing in certain areas

### **Amazonian manatee**

*Trichechus inunguis*

- size: 2.4 m (8 ft.)  
363 kg (800 lb.)  
maximum size-2.8 m (9.2 ft.), 500 kg (1,100 lb.)

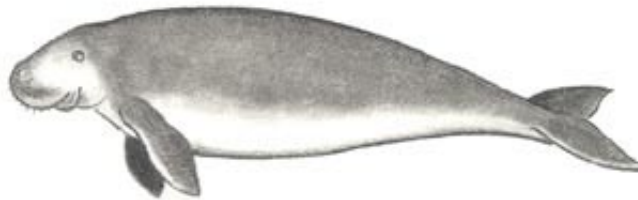


- distribution: Amazon River drainage basin. Floodplain lakes, rivers, and channels. Restricted to freshwater environments.
- diet: surface feeder, browses on floating grasses and bank vegetation. Apparently fasts during the dry season (November and December) due to lack of vegetation.
- predators: predators include jaguars, caimans, sharks, and humans. Drought may cause starvation and dehydration.
- population: unknown, however populations in Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia have almost been eliminated.

### **dugong**

*Dugong dugon*

- size: 2.7 m (9 ft.)  
272 kg (600 lb.)  
maximum size-3.3 meters (10.8 ft.),  
420 kg (925 lb.)



- distribution: southwestern Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, Red Sea, east coast of Africa to Mozambique. Coastal shallows. Found in brackish and marine environments but rarely in fresh water.
- diet: inshore, bottom feeder. Dugongs generally feed at night. Main diet consists of a wide variety of tropical and subtropical seagrasses.
- predators: few predators, but may fall prey to sharks and crocodiles. Human-related threats include entanglement in fishing nets, poaching, subsistence fishing, and habitat destruction.
- population: 50,000-100,000, mostly in Australia
- status: endangered