

Animals We Love:

MANATEES

Recommended for primary school children

Let's learn more about manatees:

1

Manatees are aquatic mammals. They breathe through lungs like we do. They surface from the water every 3 to 5 minutes to breathe although they can hold their breath underwater for 20 minutes, keeping their nostrils closed. After giving birth underwater, mother manatee must help its calf reach the water surface for its first breath.



2

Manatees are also called sea cows because of their eating habit. They spend 6 to 8 hours a day grazing on aquatic plants. They can munch up to 100kg of food daily.



Manatees open their nose flaps to breathe.

3

Manatees are related to elephants. The nails on their flippers look like elephants' toenails. When their molar teeth wear out, new teeth push forward from the back of the mouth, similar to the way elephants replace their molar teeth. Manatees grow their teeth all their life.

4

Manatees fart a lot and they even have fart-storage pouches - all because farting is important to keep them buoyant in water.

5

Eva is our largest manatee. She weighs about 1,200 kg and is 3.5 m long. She is mother to eight offspring and a grandmother of two.



Use the See-Think-Wonder Thinking Routine* to start a conversation with your child

*Adapted from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education



SEE

- How many manatees can you spot?
- This exhibit mimics the Amazon Flooded Forest during the wet season. What else can you see?
- Take turns to imitate something in the photograph and have the other person guess what it is.

THINK

- How do you think this 'flooded forest' might look like during the dry season?
- How does the shape of the manatee's tail and flippers help it swim?

WONDER

- I wonder why manatees were mistaken for mermaids.

Activity Time!

Flooded Forest Shoebox



1 or more players

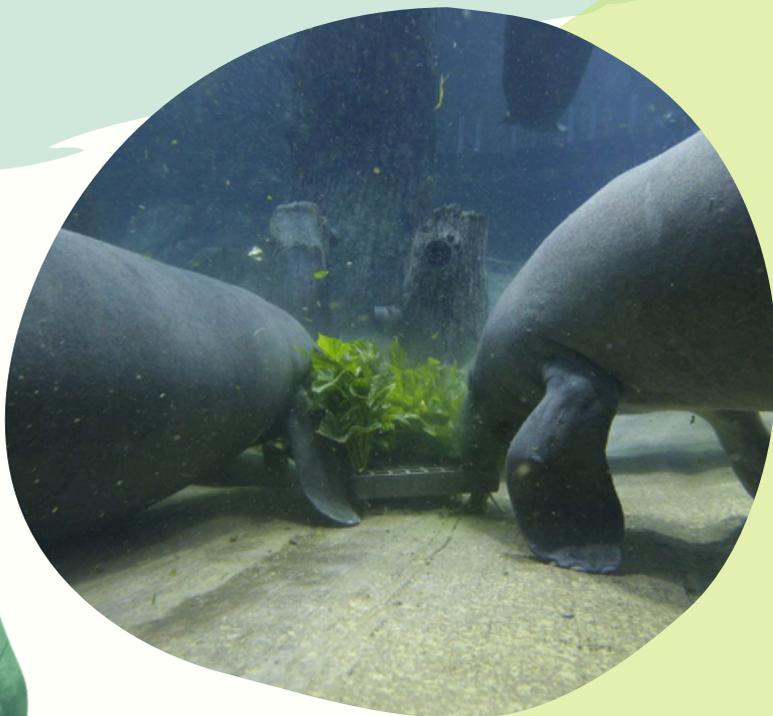


Shoebox, recyclables, scissors, and markers

STEP 1: Watch this [video](#).

STEP 2: Use recyclable materials to create a shoebox diorama of the manatee and its habitat in the video.

STEP 3: Visit [River Wonders web page on Amazon Flooded Forest](#) to find out what other animals live alongside the manatee. Create the animals you would like to add to your diorama.



It's Feeding Time



At least 1 adult and 1 child



Water container & waterproof objects around the house

STEP 1: In the wild, manatees feed at different water levels. At River Wonders, in addition to feeding our manatees at the water surface, the aquarists sink heavy racks filled with vegetables to the bottom to encourage the animals to forage on the 'river bed' as they would in the wild. Watch the [video](#) to find out more.

STEP 2: Using waterproof objects found around the house, design a device for manatees to feed at the water surface.

STEP 3: Test it out using a deep basin of water.