

# MANATEE DOs & DON'ts ;

The West Indian manatee is an endangered species and is protected by law.

Manatees are important in many ways: (i) they are part of Belize's rich biological diversity; (ii) the Antillean manatee population in Belize is the greatest for any country in its range; (iii) they are an indicator for species ecosystem health; (iv) they are a part of our cultural heritage; and (v) they provide diverse opportunity for tourism.

## WHEN NEAR MANATEES:

- Don't touch manatees, only look.
- Don't chase a manatee while in the water nor in a boat.
- Don't separate a mother and her calf.

## WHEN BOATING:

- Abide by posted speed zone signs in manatee areas.
- Look out for manatees in manatee areas: listen for it surfacing to breathe; notice the animal's back, snout, tail or flipper break the water's surface; also notice swirls in water from them diving.
- Try to stay in deep water channels. This will prevent running over them.
- For tour operators: Slow boat to idle speed when 100 yards from manatee site. Drift or pole into position once within 75-100 feet of site.

***Please don't throw trash where manatees splash!!!!***

## **Please Help Save the Manatee!**

For more information, or to report manatee deaths or injury, please contact:

**Manatee Researcher\***  
**Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute**  
8 St. Mark Street  
Belize City, Belize  
Phone: (501)2230719/2235739/2232616  
Fax: (501)2235738  
Email: [czmbze@btl.net](mailto:czmbze@btl.net)  
Web site: [coastalzonebelize.org](http://coastalzonebelize.org)  
\* [Also call to report manatee sightings at 0-800-MANATEE].

Belize Audubon Society  
12 Fort Street  
Belize City, Belize  
Phone: (501)2234533  
Email: [base@btl.net](mailto:base@btl.net)

Forest Department  
Belmopan, Belize  
Phone: (501)8223629

Fisheries Department  
Princess Margaret Drive  
Belize City, Belize  
Phone: (501)2244552/2232623  
Email: [species@btl.net](mailto:species@btl.net)



# MANATEES IN BELIZE

## *Guidelines for Protection*

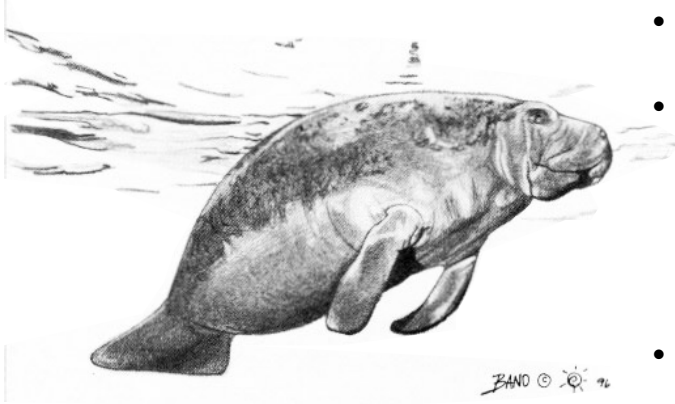


*Photo by Leszek Karczmarski*

**DO YOUR PART TO PROTECT BELIZE'S  
HERITAGE, ENVIRONMENT, AND FUTURE!!**

# MANATEE FACTS

## WEST INDIAN MANATEE IN BELIZE



- **SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Trichechus manatus manatus*  
Antillean manatee
- **DESCRIPTION:**
  - Large, grey or grey-brown marine mammal.
  - Has two flippers on both sides of its body, and round, paddle-like tail.
  - Can be 1-4 meters (3-12 ft) long and weigh 1000 lbs.
- **HABITAT:**
  - They live in both salt and fresh water, especially where seagrass beds are plentiful. They like shallow, slow moving rivers, estuaries, saltwater bays, canals, and coastal areas.

## Primary manatee areas in Belize

Although Belize has the largest population of the Antillean manatee (a subspecies of the West Indian manatee) in the Caribbean, it is still small and considered threatened. There are probably less than 900 manatees countrywide. Help to increase that number by boating carefully in these areas:

- **BELIZE CITY COAST and CAYS:**

Swallow Cay, Moho Cay, Port-O-Stuck, Drowned Cays, Hicks Cay, Bluefield Range, Rider Cay, Turneffe Atoll.

- **SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN LAGOON**

- **PLACENTIA LAGOON**

- **CHETUMAL BAY**

- **PORT HONDURAS AREA**

- **INDIAN HILL LAGOON**

- **RIVERS:**

Deep River, Belize River, Monkey River, Rio Hondo, Mullins River.



## Protection by law

The manatee is protected in Belize under the **Wildlife Protection Act, No. 4 of 1981**. Jurisdiction is under the Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources.

Under this Act, **no person shall hunt, meaning “to kill, molest by any methods and includes attempting to kill, take or molest by any method” any manatee.**

Anyone who hunts a manatee will be fined **\$500.00** on a first offence, and **\$1000.00** and/or imprisonment for 6 months, for previously convicted wildlife offenders.

**CALL THE COASTAL ZONE  
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY  
AND INSTITUTE  
@ 0-800-MANATEE (0-800-  
6262833) TO REPORT  
MANATEE INJURIES,  
DEATHS, OR SIGHTINGS.**

*Drawings by Gilvano Swasey*