



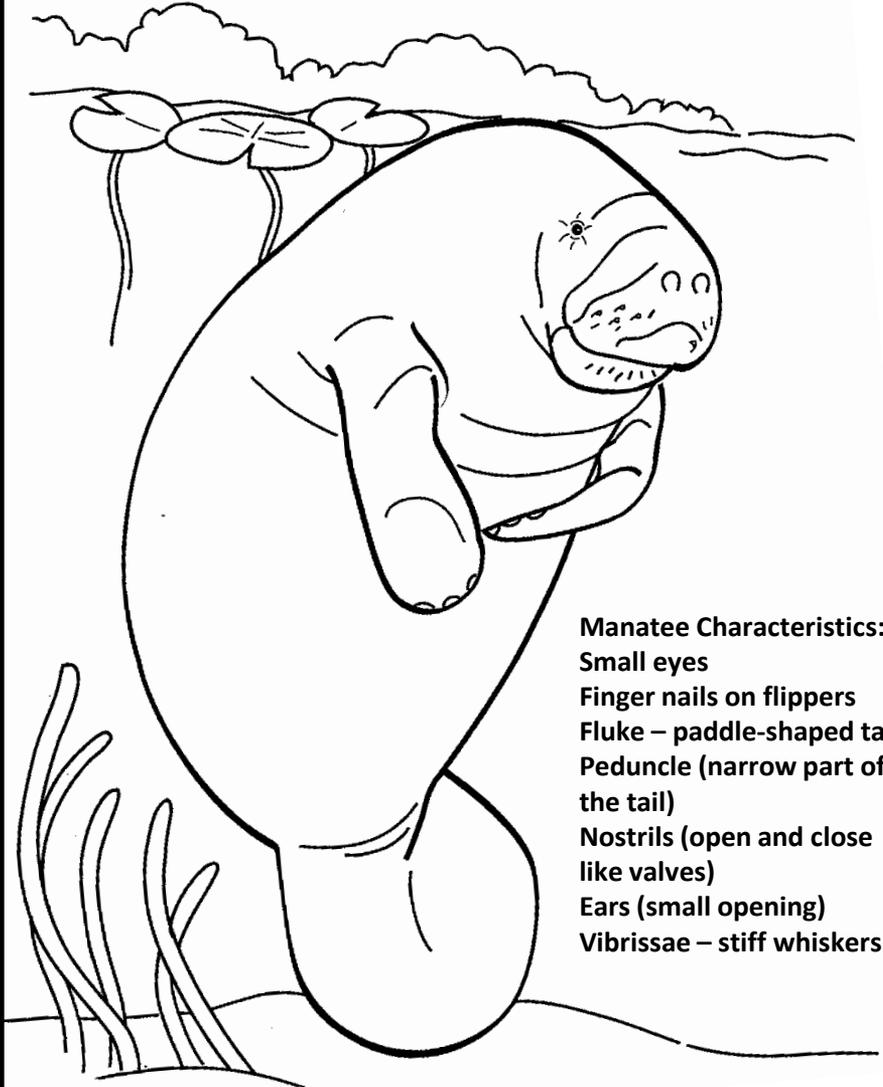
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



Manatees are large, gray aquatic animals with thick, finely-wrinkled skin. From the blunt whiskered snout, a manatee's body is torpedo-shaped and then tapers to a flat, paddle-shaped tail. Two forelimb flippers, with up to four "finger" nails, are located near the head. Like all mammals, manatees have hair on their bodies. Although the hair is very sparse, it exists in short strands from a manatee's head all the way down to its tail. Manatees do not have external ear lobes, eyelids or eyelashes. A thin membrane protects the manatees' eyes when underwater. Stiff bristles around its mouth help manatees hold food while eating.



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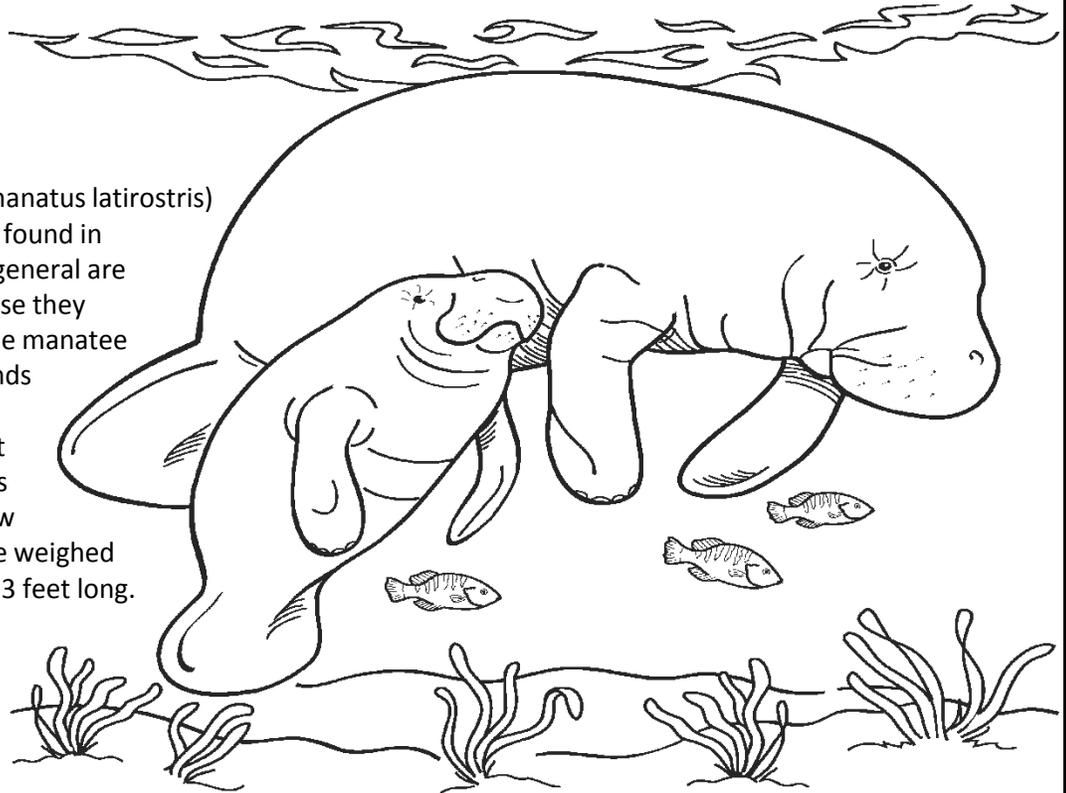


- Manatee Characteristics:**
- Small eyes
 - Finger nails on flippers
 - Fluke – paddle-shaped tail
 - Peduncle (narrow part of the tail)
 - Nostrils (open and close like valves)
 - Ears (small opening)
 - Vibrissae – stiff whiskers



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The Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus latirostris*) is an endangered aquatic mammal found in Florida's waterways. Manatees in general are sometimes called sea cows, because they consume aquatic plants. The female manatee is better known as the cow and tends to be larger than male manatees (bulls). Although the average adult manatee is 10 feet long and weighs about 1,200 pounds, they can grow much larger. The heaviest manatee weighed was 3,600 pounds and measured 13 feet long. A newborn or young manatee is called a calf and weighs 60-80 pounds, is 4 to 4 1/2 feet in length at birth, and grows quickly during its first two years.

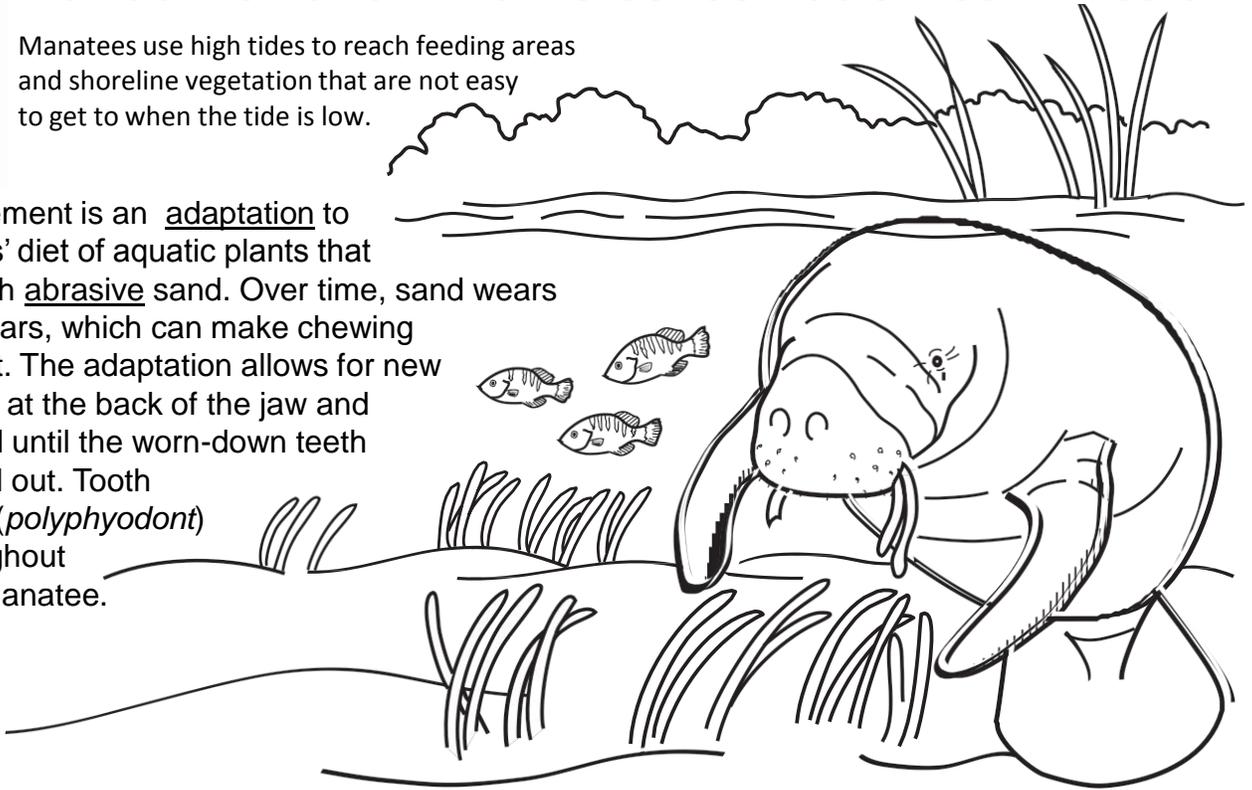




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Manatees use high tides to reach feeding areas and shoreline vegetation that are not easy to get to when the tide is low.

Tooth replacement is an adaptation to the manatees' diet of aquatic plants that are mixed with abrasive sand. Over time, sand wears down the molars, which can make chewing plants difficult. The adaptation allows for new teeth to erupt at the back of the jaw and move forward until the worn-down teeth eventually fall out. Tooth replacement (*polyphyodont*) occurs throughout the life of a manatee.



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