

# Florida Friendly Boating



## Be friendly to wildlife

- **Never feed wild animals.** It is illegal, unhealthy, and trains wildlife to seek out boats, increasing the risk of injury. Avoid dumping leftover bait overboard.
- **Reduce disturbance.** Stay quiet and be aware of accidentally separating manatee mother and calf pairs, disrupting mating herds, or blocking a manatee's path if it moves towards you.
- **Avoid injuries.** It is illegal to chase, hold, ride, jump on, or hit manatees or other wildlife. Never try to "fish" or attempt to catch birds, dolphins, manatees or sea turtles.
- **Avoid high manatee use areas.** Manatees can suffer from cold stress in the wintertime. If disturbed or chased out of warm water areas, it may cause death, illness or affect their ability to reproduce.

## Look out below

Collisions with boats can cause injury and death among manatees, sea turtles and dolphins.

**Manatees** are an endangered species native to Florida, and are designated as the State's official marine mammal. They live in fresh, brackish and salt water areas, and eat aquatic vegetation such as seagrass. Because they must surface to breathe, many of these slow-moving creatures are injured or killed by boats each year.

### How to recognize a manatee's presence:

- Look for a swirl on the water's surface
- Look for a tail or nose (usually the only parts of the manatee's body that break the surface of the water)
- Listen for their breath



Five species of **sea turtles** are found in Florida waters; all are either endangered or threatened. Sea turtles rest at or just below the surface of the water and must raise their heads out of the water to breathe.

### How to recognize a sea turtle's presence:

- Look for a sea turtle's head or top portion of shell at the surface of the water.



## What boaters can do

- **Wear polarized sunglasses.** Polarized lenses reduce reflected glare from the water and make it easier to see people, wildlife or objects underneath the surface.
- **Know the zones.** Abide by the speed regulations as posted. Idle speed no wake - minimum speed needed to maintain steerage. Slow speed minimum wake - fully off plane and settled in the water.
- **Use marked channels.** Greater water depth protects you, seagrass and wildlife.
- **Post a lookout.** Designate a person to watch for wildlife, other boaters, swimmers, or obstructions when the vessel is underway.
- **Save a life.** Properly discard or recycle fishing line and plastics, and use circle or non-stainless steel hooks to prevent wildlife injury or death due to ingestion or entanglement.

## Wear a life jacket



**Wildlife Alert:**  
**1-888-404-FWCC (3922)**  
**cell \*FWC or #FWC**

Report sick, dead, or injured manatees or sea turtles, and any wildlife or boating law violations.

For more information go to [MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com)