

# Manatee Time Line

What are some Important Dates or Notable Information about Manatees in Florida?

1492 – 1785

1903 – 1965

1976 – 1985

1996 - 2005

1824 – 1893

1966 – 1975

1986 – 1995

2006 - Present

## References

**A**s far back as 10,000 to 20,000 years ago, aboriginal man first migrated to various areas of the Florida peninsula. Their refuse heaps, or middens, reveal that manatees were hunted for food, well before Europeans discovered America. Archeological sites where manatee bones have been found are located along rivers and springs known to have supported manatee herds during the winter.

**1436** – Johannes Gutenberg built the first printing press. His contribution to the religious and scientific fields opened new avenues of discovery for many Europeans when books were printed and widely distributed. The important skills of reading, writing, mathematics and critical thinking developed as more and more people were able to learn information about new lands, descriptive journeys, new ideas and discoveries. Early explorers like Christopher Columbus took advantage of this growing knowledge and further developed their beliefs by studying the maritime stories, maps and literature of the time.

**1492** – While visiting the dwellings of people on the islands discovered in the New World, Columbus noted in his journals that “they must have cows or other cattle” because he saw skulls which were like those of cows.



**1493** – Voyages of Columbus – “...when the Admiral went to the Rio del Oro, he saw three mermaids, which rose well out of the sea; but they are not so beautiful as they are painted, though to some extent they have the form of a human face. The Admiral says that he had seen some\*, at other times, in Guinea, on the coast of the Manequeta.” (\*more than likely, the mermaids (sirens) he saw were West African manatees along the coast of Africa, from Sierra Leone to the Congo.)

**1502-1504** – Christopher Columbus took his teen-age son Ferdinand with him on his last (4<sup>th</sup>) voyage to the New World. Ferdinand noted in his journals that the mermaids/sirens might “not be fishes but real calves...inside they have nothing like a fish.” He also commented that they fed only on grass and that their meat looked and tasted like veal.

**1594** – The French used the term *lamentin*, which, according to Captain C. M. Scannon alluded to the sea cow's lamentations upon seeing its calf killed.

**1632** – In the "History of Animals and Trees of Marnhao" by Friar Cristovao de Lisboa (as cited by S.L. Peterson in her 1974 thesis), the manatee is described as a "sea cow."

**1700s** – Manatees were classified by the Roman Catholic Church as a fish and could be consumed on days of religious abstinence.

**1726** – Captain Uring (captain's log) reports large herd of manatees in Campeche Bay.

**1741** – Steller's sea cow (*Hydrodamalis gigas*) discovered in the Artic waters of the Bering Strait.

**1764** – British Colonial Records – "His Majesty...(proposed) that an Instruction should be given to the Governor of the Province of East Florida to restrain him from granting to any person whatsoever, without His Majesty's particular Orders and directions, those parts of the Coast of the said Province frequented by the Animals called the Manati or Sea Cow, where they have their Echouries (estuaries) or Landing Places." The edict was largely ignored by settlers and Indians who continued to capture the manatees for food and other uses.

**1768** – Steller's sea cow hunted to extinction.

**1773-1778** – William Bartram, a naturalist who studied Florida's flora and fauna, gives one of the earliest descriptions of a Florida manatee after a visit to what is now Manatee Springs State Park.

**1785** – Account of a dead manatee that washed ashore on the Shetland Islands.

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