

An Introduction to Manatees **Answers**

Read about manatees, then answer a few prompts.

Manatees are also known as sea cows. They are mammals that live under the water. They rise to the surface to breathe oxygen. They live in shallow water, usually less than 7 feet deep. They eat plants, such as grass and algae.



There are three different species of manatees. One species called the West African manatee lives in Africa. A second species, called the Amazonian manatee, lives in South America. The West Indian manatee lives mostly in the Caribbean and the coast of the Gulf of Mexico but may move north during the spring and summer.

It is hard for scientists to know how many West Indian manatees there are. They estimate between 2,000 to 5,000. The West Indian manatee has been listed as an endangered species. This means that the population is so low that the West Indian manatee may become extinct. Many die because of accidents with ships or other human causes, such as pollution. Federal and state laws protect the manatee. Scientists are working to find ways to help the manatee survive.

Questions

1. How many species of manatees are there?

Three

2. Where does the West Indian manatee mostly live?

The Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

3. What does "endangered species" mean?

The population is low and may become extinct.

4. What do manatees eat?

Plants, such as grass and algae.

Manatee Facts

The manatee's closest relative in the animal world is the elephant and hyrax.

- Manatees average over 9 feet in length and weigh between 800 to 1200 pounds.
- Manatees may live 60 years or more.

