

Florida conservationists report record numbers of manatees

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Conservationists making an annual count of Florida's manatees tally a record 6,000

Conservationists making an annual count of Florida's manatees said Monday they have tallied a record 6,000—a number that reflects years of effort to protect the marine mammals.

"The high count this year shows that our long-term conservation efforts

are working," said Richard Corbett, chairman of the state's Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC).

FWC officials said this year's manatee count is about a thousand more than the previous high in 2010.

The director of the FWC's research arm, Gil McRae, said that Florida's environmentalists are particularly heartened by latest evidence that the manatee population is flourishing, despite "large-scale mortality events that resulted in over 800 deaths in 2013."

The [manatee](#), a native marine animal found in all parts of Florida, have been under state protection since 1893, as well as being covered by the federal Endangered Species Act.

During winter months, manatees head for warmer waters. Their spring-time return affords researchers an ideal opportunity to take stock of their health and their numbers.

Officials said oversized animals—which can measure three meters (10 feet) in length and weigh as much as a half-a-ton—are threatened by habitat loss because of urbanization and water contamination, and frequently are hurt or killed in collisions with boats.

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