

Record 6,250 manatees spotted in Florida waters

February 25 2016



Manatee are seen in a zoo in Beauval, France

The number of manatees in the waters around Florida have reached a new peak of at least 6,250, conservationists said Thursday, a record reflecting years of efforts to protect the marine mammals.

The count is up slightly from the 6,063 spotted last year, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said in a statement, citing results

from surveys conducted by 11 organizations.

Last month, the US Fish and Wildlife Service proposed downgrading the manatee's status from endangered, a designation given to species on the brink of extinction, to threatened.

Manatees, which are also known as [sea cows](#), have been on the endangered list for more than 40 years due to threats posed by urbanization, water contamination and collisions with boats.

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

The survey is conducted by air and the count represents the minimum number of manatees in the area.

The Florida [manatees](#) are part of the estimated

13,000 that also includes those living in the Caribbean and along the coasts of Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil.

Manatees live in [shallow waters](#) and must come to the surface to breathe about every 15 minutes. The herbivores can reach four meters (13 feet) long, weigh up to 600 kilos (1,300 pounds) and live about 40 years.

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