

2021 broke the Florida record for manatee deaths in a year in just 6 months

July 12 2021, by David J. Neal



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The death of seagrass caused the death of Florida manatees at a record rate in 2021, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said.

FWC's preliminary count of manatees killed is 841. That's from Jan. 1 through July 2. The previous record for an entire year: 830 in 2013.

Only 673 manatee deaths were counted in 2020 (354) and 2019 (319) combined. In fact, no two calendar years from 2016 through 2020 combined, consecutive or not, even reach 800 deaths.

FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute explained what happened earlier this year.

"Unprecedented manatee mortality due to starvation was documented on the Atlantic coast this past winter and spring," FWRI's summary said. "Most deaths occurred during the colder months when manatees migrated to and through the Indian River Lagoon where the majority of seagrass has died off."

When the weather warmed, that erstwhile cause of manatee deaths, being hit by boats, led in manatee deaths in the Atlantic region and in the Gulf coast. This "underscores the need for previously identified threats such as watercraft-related mortality to continue to be recognized as a concern for the population."

Boats already have killed 63 manatees, which were considered endangered until 2017, this year. That's the same number of Florida [manatee](#) boating deaths recorded in the entirety of 2016, only one less than the entire year of 2018 and well on pace to surpass the 86 recorded in 2019.

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