

Lesson 10  
READ THIS STORY #2, Basic

## Manatee

Have you ever seen a manatee? Manatees swim in Florida's warm seawater. They have a face like a walrus, a body like a sausage, and a broad tail like a beaver. Manatees have muscular bodies that can grow to twelve feet long. Some people think they look tired because manatees often yawn. Most of the time they just eat and sleep. They eat in a vertical position, using their two front flippers to hold their food. Afterwards, they drift in the lagoon or swim under a pier and snooze.

Manatees are sometimes called sea cows, but scientists believe that they are related to the elephant. They have three or four fingernails on their flippers and have teeth that are similar to those of an elephant. A manatee is able to replace his worn-out teeth with new ones that move forward from the back of its mouth. Like elephants, manatees bear only one baby at a time every three to five years.

Manatees have no natural enemies. Their only defense against man is to swim away. Years ago, Indians and sailors hunted them for food because manatee meat tasted like veal and was slow to spoil. Manatee bones were used to treat diseases.

We no longer hunt manatees, but their numbers continue to decrease. When manatees rise to the surface to breathe, they have been injured by boat propellers. Measures have been taken to protect their breeding and grazing grounds because we don't want these giants to become extinct.