

SIRENIA

A Book of
Manatees and Dugongs



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Sirenia

A Book of Manatees and Dugongs

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For ZEHNYA

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Sirenia are commonly referred to as “Sea Cows”.

They are an order of aquatic herbivore* mammals.

**That means they only eat plants!*

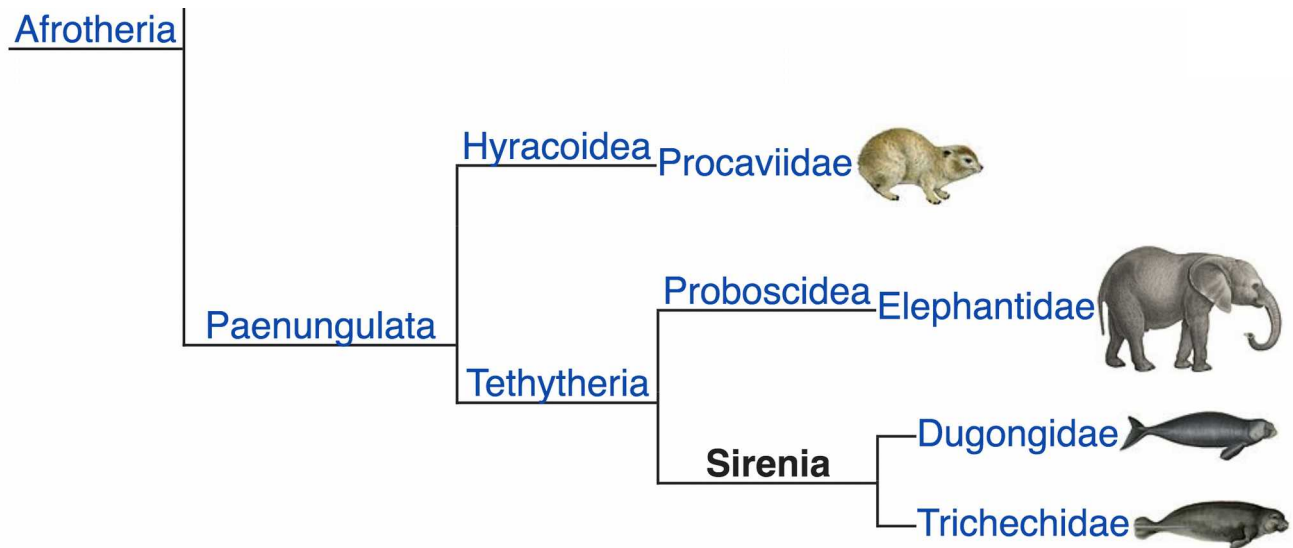


Unlike seals, Sirenia (sea cows) are found in the temperate regions of the world, that is around the equator.

– they like warm water, just like you!

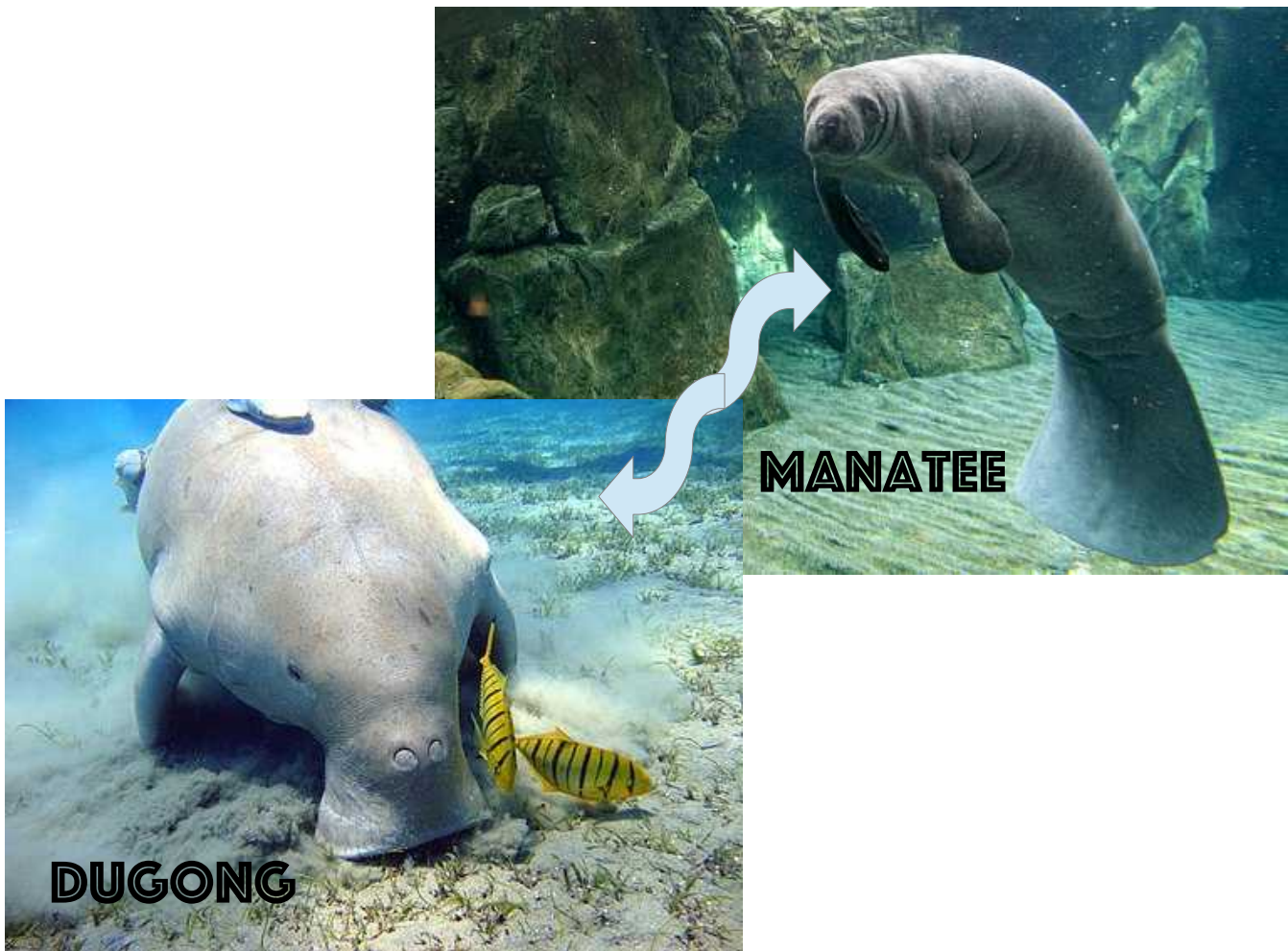


Manatees and dugongs like to live in shallow marshy areas where their food supply is plentiful. Manatees like to live in a combination of salt and fresh water to equalise the salt in their bodies. Dugongs only live in salt water where their food supply is.



The closest relatives to Sirenia (manatees and dugongs) are elephants and the small mammal, Hyrax (or dassie).

The scientific names for dugongs is *Dugongidae*, and for manatees is *Trichechidae*.



What are the main differences between dugongs and manatees?

- ➡ A dugong has a split tale like a dolphin and a long snout and tusks like an elephant;
- ➡ A manatee has a single paddle like tail, a short pudgy snout, and no tusks.



Dugongs' and manatees' life span is almost like an elephant – their close cousins, and similar to humans. They reach mating age on average from 10 to 17 years old and they live to be around 70 years old.



Sirenia communicate for play, mating, and between mother and calves. They emit a range of squeaking sounds similar to whales.



An adult manatee or dugong measures up to
4 metres (or 13 feet) in length
and can weigh up to
700 kilograms (or 1300 pounds).



Like all mammals, Sirenia feed their calves milk, they have two teats under their flippers, another similarity with elephants.

A female typically only gives birth two to three times in a life span – just like us.



Dugongs primarily feed on seagrass and so are restricted primarily to costal waters. Manatees feed on sea grass along with a wide variety of fresh water grasses.

Loss of sea grasses has contributed to the vulnerability of the species.



Manatees are considered friendly animals and in captivity can interact intimately with humans.

Even in the wild manatees can sometimes be friendly with humans especially in areas where they are protected.

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Sirenia are slow graceful creatures who swim on average at a speed of 5 to 8 kilometres (3 to 5 miles) per hour (close to walking speed) but can travel at speeds of up to 30 kilometres (20 miles) per hour for short bursts.



Apart from mothers with calves or males looking for females, Sirenia are mostly solitary animals.

They spend around half their time sleeping submerged, surfacing for air normally at intervals of less than twenty minutes. The remainder of the time is mostly spent grazing in shallow waters .



Poaching of Manatees still occurs, mainly in Africa, where their oil is believed to have healing properties. Other dangers to Sirenia are habitat destruction (lack of food) and accidental death from nets or collision with boats.



The species has been listed as “vulnerable”, by the International Union for Conservation of Nature on their “Red List” in 2018.



The End

Share this book to help create more awareness of
these beautiful, gentle creatures.

Looking for more resources about Manatees and Dugongs?

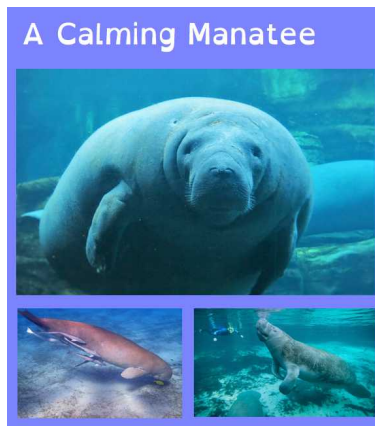
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dugong>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manatee>

<https://www.savethemanatee.org/>

See our other book on Manatees here:

<https://freekidsbooks.org/calming-manatee/>



And see these books about their close relative, seals:

<https://freekidsbooks.org/hello-seal-will-play/>

<https://freekidsbooks.org/white-seal/>

<https://freekidsbooks.org/baby-harp-seal/>

<https://freekidsbooks.org/all-about-seals/>

<https://freekidsbooks.org/zenyas-trip-cape-cross/>

About the Author

Danielle Bruckert

Danielle is a New Zealander living abroad, who now calls Africa home. Her chosen career is as a professional pilot, she has worked in a variety of aviation capacities from instruction to airline flying, and is the author of several aviation text books.

Danielle started writing children's books as a creative outlet from the stress of her 'day job' and as a break from the sometimes monotonous work required for her professional writing. She began with the Mac and Dipper series, aimed at 5-10 year olds, inspired by her two dogs. After having a child of her own, she suddenly found she had a muse, an eager resource for test reading, and, by benefit of her age, an honest critic all in one. It was fun and rewarding to write creative stories which matched her children's learning curve. A series of 'junior' books aimed at 2-5 year old children followed. Her children are older now, but she still loves this genre. "It's that magic age- when dreams run free, magic is still real, and nothing is considered impossible," she says.

Danielle passion for children's literature and the role it plays in improved literacy standards led to the creation of the Free Kids Books website. The website has become a passion of Danielle's and now with over a thousand books from almost as many authors, the site helps hundreds of thousands of children every month.

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