



# News from...

# Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

## Manatee Populations Concentrate Inshore During Cold Snaps

The Florida manatee, *Trichechus manatus latirostris*, lives in near-shore marine, estuarine and fresh waters that are shallow, warm and calm. Because the waters throughout the Rookery Bay Reserve provide this essential habitat and food supply, manatees are common especially in winter when their population concentrates in the warmest waters available.



Despite protection under the Endangered Species and Marine Mammal Protection Acts, the manatee population in Florida is at risk. This is partly because human activity in manatee habitat directly correlates with manatee mortality. Collier County generally ranks among the top five counties statewide in manatee deaths resulting from collisions with boats.

The reserve works in many ways to provide federal, state and county officials with science-based information on which to base their conservation efforts. In cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners, the reserve has participated in a long-term monitoring program to identify areas of heavy use by both manatees and boats through aerial surveys. The reserve also facilitates workshops for coastal law enforcement and natural resource managers through the Coastal Training Program to improve interagency coordination of manatee strandings.

### Marine Mammal Stranding Network

As a member of the Florida-Southwest Region Marine Mammal Stranding Network, the reserve provides trained staff and logistic support to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), the agency responsible for rescuing injured or sick manatees. Reserve biologists often serve as first responders who verify the location and status of injured manatees until more help arrives from FWRI headquarters in Port Charlotte.

On January 7, reserve biologists assisted in the recovery of an injured manatee and her calf from the Faka-Union Canal near Port of the Islands. Reserve staff transported the manatees to the Miami Sea Aquarium for treatment and rehabilitation until they can be released back into reserve waters.

### Henderson Creek

When Gulf water temperatures drop below 68 degrees, manatees can become cold-stressed and must seek warmer waters. The Faka-Union Canal and Henderson Creek are examples of waterways that provide a freshwater source that is warmer than the Gulf, which is why these locations frequently serve as manatee aggregation areas. A spring-fed basin at the headwaters of Henderson Creek is the only "No Motor Zone" in Collier County because of its consistent use by manatees as a cold-weather refuge. It is extremely important for boaters to recognize that inland waterways like these see a significant increase in use by manatees during the winter months.



*Kevin and Andrea Parks of Columbus, Ohio snapped this photo last month from the Learning Center's Observation Bridge over Henderson Creek.*

## Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center February 2011 Events

### Mondays & Tuesdays (hourly from 10-2) Cultural History Walks

Meet at Rookery Bay Field Station parking lot on Shell Island Road. Free.

### Wednesdays & Fridays (times vary) Guided Kayak Tours

Explore the estuary! Pre-registration required

### February 2 (12 - 1 p.m.) Lunch-N-Learn

Edison State College professor Tina Ottman will present "Sex in the Sea", providing insight as to why many species of fish bend and blend genders. Lunch provided by Carrabba's and Costco. Cost is \$5, members free. Pre-registration required by calling 239-417-6310 ext. 401.

### Feb. 3 (5:30 to 7 p.m.) Art Exhibition Opening

Photography Annual, presented by Friends of Rookery Bay and the United Arts Council of Collier County. Preeminent Everglades photographer Clyde Butcher serves as juror. Refreshments provided by Costco. FREE

### Feb. 14 (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Valentine's Day

Enjoy two-for-one admission when you bring your "sweetie" to the center. Special daily programs will explain which local animals "couple up" and which ones will be spending the holiday alone.

### February 17 (4:30 to 7 p.m.) Sunset Kayak Tour

Cost is \$50, members \$45. Pre-registration req'd.

### Pre-register for events at [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org)

Winter hours: Monday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Admission: \$5 adults, \$3 kids 6-12, under 6 FREE.  
Daily programs offered at 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.

Rookery Bay Reserve, located in southwest Florida, is recognized as one of the few remaining pristine, mangrove-forested estuaries in the U.S. The Reserve is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). As one of 28 sites within NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System, Rookery Bay serves as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for students and scientists from around the world.

(239) 417-6310 [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org) 300 Tower Rd., Naples, FL 34113 (located off Collier Blvd. 1 mile south of U.S. 41/East Tamiami Trail)