

Manatee 21 Dec, 2005

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Well, I'm on holiday vacation down in Florida. The wife and I got to do something we wanted to do for a long time, we snorkeled with the Manatees in Crystal River. These gentle sea mammals known as sea cows are on the endangered species list with less than 2500 of them still around. In the Crystal River area 1500 or so of these spend the winter in the warm springs (72 degrees year round) that abound in this area of Florida.

Anyway, we saw about a half dozen and most came over to us and wanted to be scratched and petted just like big dogs. We had one that was smaller than a person, but most where anywhere from 10-15 feet long and weighed up to 1200 or more pounds.

The biggest hazard to these gentle herbivores is man. Between speed boats, fishing boats and other forms of propeller driven transport we kill many of these gentle giants each year. What aren't killed directly from collision may die from infection from the serious wounds. One we petted showed a series of parallel scars from being struck by a boat sometime in the past. What Manatees aren't killed by boats are affected by the red-tides caused by warmer water, pollution and algae-blooms some scientists say are being made more deadly because of global warming.

Anyway, we thoroughly enjoyed the snorkeling and the gentle Manatees. Afterward I got to do a cavern dive into the spring cavern near the Manatee reserve. The cavern water was clear and warmer than the outside water. Inside were many interesting items such as fossils and of course, the spring itself. Well, back to vacation!



Susan Petting Manatee 🇺🇸