



## MANATEE TALES VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Hi everyone, I'm Taylor Rabe. I work with wolves in the American West and serve as the education and engagement facilitator with Conservation Nation. Today, we're diving into the world of one of the ocean's most gentle giants, the manatee. In this lesson, manatee tales, you'll be inspiring conservationists like Fatima Ramis, who works with these amazing animals every day. You're going to learn that the manatee is a species that faces big challenges but also brings people together to create real solutions.

This conservation story goes far beyond just one animal. As you watch, you'll explore how human activity can affect marine ecosystems, how different people and communities approach conservation in their own ways, and how making good decisions depends on listening to many points of view.

This lesson will help you think like a scientist, a problem solver, and even a storyteller. That means you'll be using key science and engineering practices, like analyzing cause and effect, interpreting data, and understanding how systems work together. And you'll think about one of the most important scientific ideas of all, how our choices matter for the planet we all share.

Whether you're passionate about wildlife, curious about real -world science, or just love a good story, you're in the right place, let's dive in.

Hello, Conservation Nation Academy, my name is Fatima Ramis. I have a special place in my heart for these animals right here. Manatees.

The first time I saw a manatee, I was in the Florida Keys on a boat. I remember the boat captain saying we were slowing down because we were in a manatee zone. I looked over the boat and into the water and eventually saw what looked like two large rocks in the water, except as we passed by them, they came up for air. I remember thinking they looked like two water puppies because their snouts reminded me of my dog.



I love manatees so much that I have spent the last two years working on a project to help protect them. In this project, I worked in Dominican Republic to help with manatee conservation.

Here are five facts you should know about manatees.

Manatees are mammals just like us. That means they have backbones and hair, and they feed their young with milk. But unlike us, they are marine mammals, which means they live their entire lives in the water.

Even though they live in the water, they need to breathe air just like us. In fact, they have to come up for air every few minutes. When a manatee comes up for air, they make a very distinct sound.

Manatee babies, called calves, can spend up to two years with their mom before they are ready to fend for themselves. During this time, they learn where to go and where to feed from their moms.

Manatees also practice something called sight fidelity. This means that even though they travel around a lot to find food, they like to come back to the same hangout spots.

And last but not least, Manatees love the vegetarian lifestyle and mostly eat plants like these seagrasses. In fact, one manatee eats about 32 pounds of plants a day. That's like you eating 128 quarter pounders every single day.

Now that you know these five facts, I have a few questions for you.

You probably know that an animal's habitat is its natural home, or the environment where it has all of the conditions it needs to survive and reproduce. If you were a manatee, which of these habitats do you think you would prefer?

Deep water or shallow water?



If you said shallow water, you're right. Manatees prefer shallow, slow -moving waters of rivers, estuaries, saltwater bays, canals, and coastal areas.

What about saltwater or freshwater?

Well, as I just said, manatees live in both freshwater and saltwater environments, but they actually prefer freshwater.

Did you know that all mammals require freshwater?

That's another thing we have in common with manatees. They both need to drink fresh water.

You might call the Dominican Republic a manatee heaven.

This is a place called Estero Hondo in Puerto Plata. This is in the northwest region of the Dominican Republic, and it has the ideal habitat for manatees. It has mangroves, shallows, slow moving water, and lots of yummy sea grasses. People and manatees have been sharing this space for a very long time.

The West Indian manatee is one of the three species of manatees. There's also the Amazonian manatees and the West African manatees.

The one I study is the West Indian manatee. That one lives throughout Florida and about 19 countries that overlap with the Caribbean Sea, like the Dominican Republic.

The West Indian manatee that stays around Florida region and along the coast of northeast of the United States, those are called Florida manatees and those in the Caribbean Sea are called Antillean manatees. The word Antillean is another name for the Caribbean.

Because manatees and people prefer the same types of habitats it has become very important to protect these habitats to make sure that both people and manatees can enjoy them in the future.

Today, unfortunately, the number of manatees in the Caribbean is decreasing. Remember how manatees prefer shallow waters? Well, those are exactly the areas where there is



more extraction of water for human use, like drinking water, agriculture, and construction. This reduces livable habitat for manatees. Also, with more motorized boats on the water, manatees are more likely to be injured by boat propellers.

In the Dominican Republic, in this region of Estero Hondo, it is a critical habitat for manatees because it's the only one of the locations on the island of La Española where manatees are seen breeding and resting throughout the year. Because of this, and because there are many other species that make this region so diverse and special, this area is legally protected as a marine mammal sanctuary. This means that human use of the area is limited to research and education activities, making it a safe space for manatees to rest, to eat, and to take care of their young.

There are lots of different people who share spaces with manatees in Estero Hondo. These are fishers, farmers, cattle ranchers, environmental guides, rangers. Protecting manatees means working with all of these different groups of people to understand their needs and to help them understand how protecting manatees is in their best interest, too.

For my conservation project, I spent time with these individuals to understand their perspectives and the challenges they face in protecting their natural spaces, supporting both their communities and the manatees, and creating opportunities to continue sharing this amazing land and seascape.

This guide was created because community members were interested in developing a tool to engage with their own community about how to protect their natural spaces and help people feel excited about the diversity of wildlife that lives in their own backyard like manatees.

This book was made through a co-creation process, which means that members of the community, artists, experts, and myself took part in creating the content. And we hope this book will be used in schools, as well as to help tourist operators engaging responsibly with tourists. And lastly, to help rangers talk about the value of the area.

And now you're going to play a game that will give you a little insight into what





I learned from talking with all of these people. Your teacher will explain the rest.  
Have fun!

I hope that activity showed you a few things that I have learned in my conservation work.

First, we all make choices every day that have consequences and affect our world in ways we may not understand.

Second, when there are so many people living and working in or near a protected area for wildlife and natural spaces, those choices can make a big impact on the people's ability to continue meeting their needs, like having jobs and homes and families.

And for manatees to continue living in these spaces with access to secure shelter, water, and food.

You might be wondering what you can do to help manatees.

Thinking about ways that we can prevent pollution and keeping our freshwater streams clean is something that will help us and animals like manatees.  
You may consider working with your family to stop using pesticides or fertilizers on your lawns or gardens.

Did you know that when it rains, these contaminants can become runoff and make their way into bodies of water important to manatees and other marine life, not to mention our own drinking water.

You can also prevent litter from making its way to the ocean. Research shows that people under 30 are more likely to litter, and that is sad for manatees and other marine life because all of that trash that you throw on the ground can eventually make its way to the ocean and harm them in so many ways. You can tell your family and friends not to litter, and even better, you can pick up litter before it makes its way to our waterways.

