



Jonathan Bird's Blue World

Episode 9 • Swimming with Sea Cows • Study Guide

Manatees are the only marine mammals that eat only plants, which has earned them the title of “sea cow” but these cute and friendly animals are in trouble. Manatees like to hang out in warm rivers and springs in Florida during the cool winter months, which puts them in the same place as people with power boats. Manatees are being struck and killed by boats at an unprecedented rate and losing their habitat to development. Jonathan journeys to Florida to investigate the situation, both underwater and above.

Objectives

1. Introduces viewers to the West Indian Manatee and its basic biology.
2. Explains the threats to the West Indian Manatee.
3. Shows some of the ways in which manatees are being helped in Florida.

Questions for before watching the program

1. What are some attributes of cows? Make a list.
2. Manatees are mammals. What does that mean about their biology?
3. What is the manatee's closest relative?
4. Are manatees dangerous to swimmers?

Discussion for after watching the program

1. Why do manatees go into fresh water rivers and springs in the winter in Florida?
2. Why are manatees in danger when they go into rivers?
3. Which attributes of cows are similar to those of manatees? Is “sea cow” an accurate nick name for manatees?
4. How do mother and calf manatee communicate?
5. How does Sea World get manatees in and out of the water so their veterinarians can help them?
6. What do manatees eat? How do sea walls affect their food? If there were no sea walls, how would the river be different?