

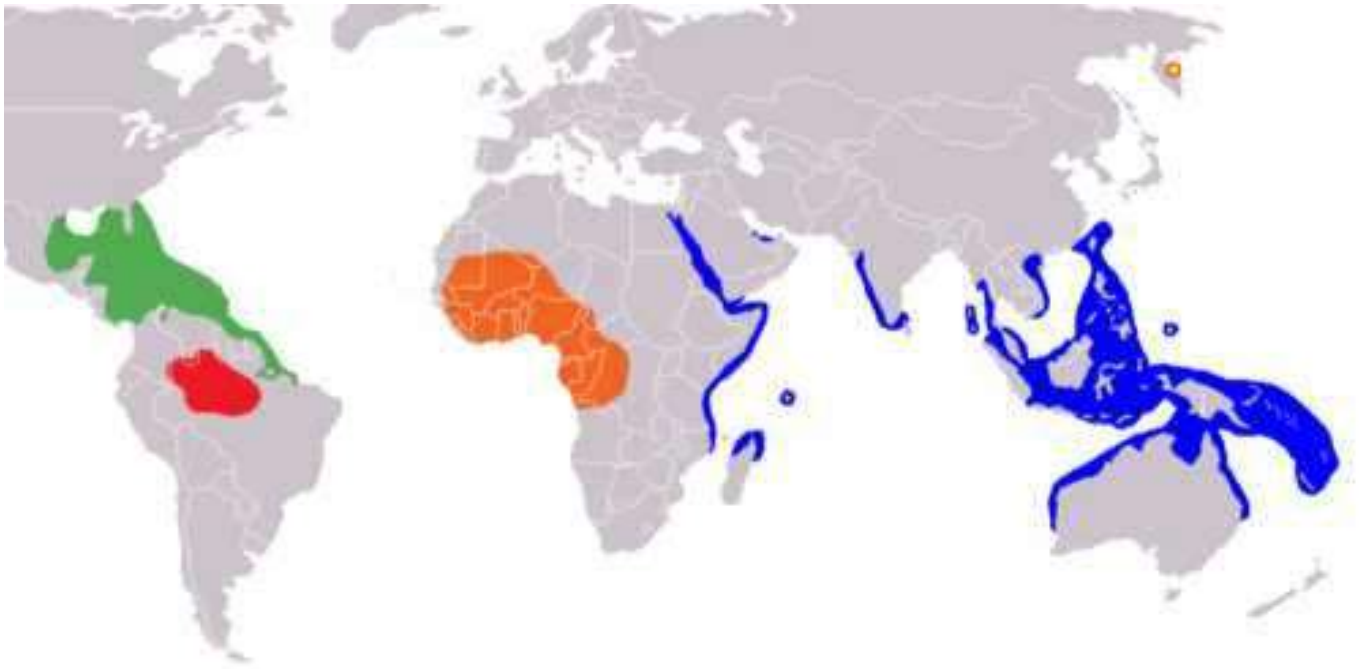
Manatees  
and  
Dugongs  
Sirenia's Book



Sirenia are commonly referred to as “Sea Cows”.

They are an order of aquatic herbivore\* mammals.

*\*That means they only eat plants!*



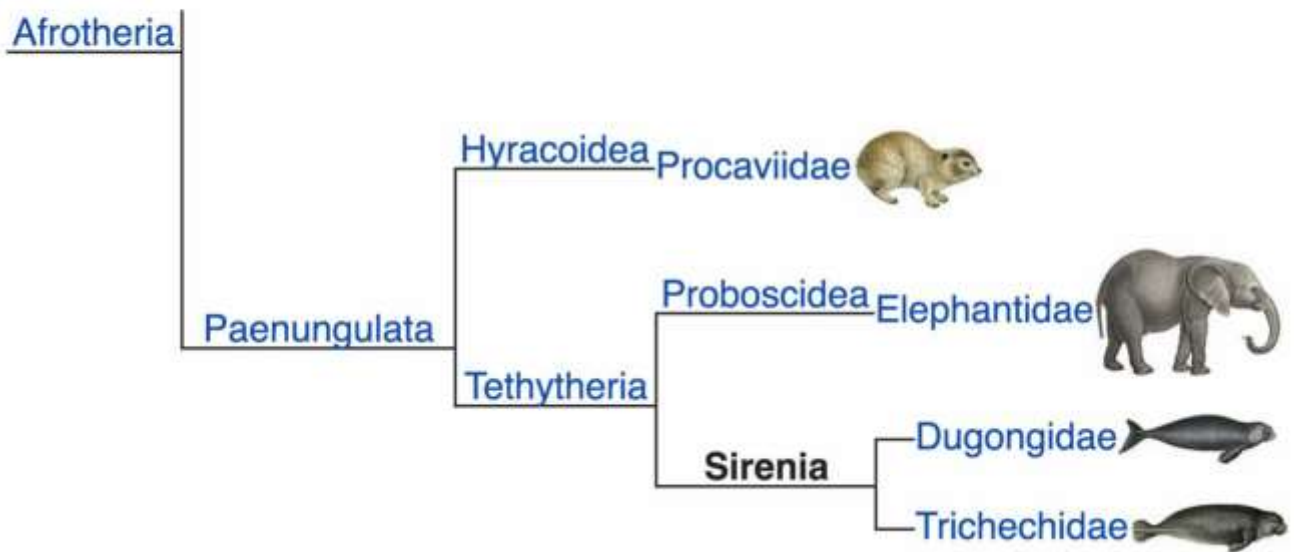
Unlike seals, Sirenia (sea cows) are found in the temperate regions of the world, that is around the equator.

– they like warm water, Just like you!



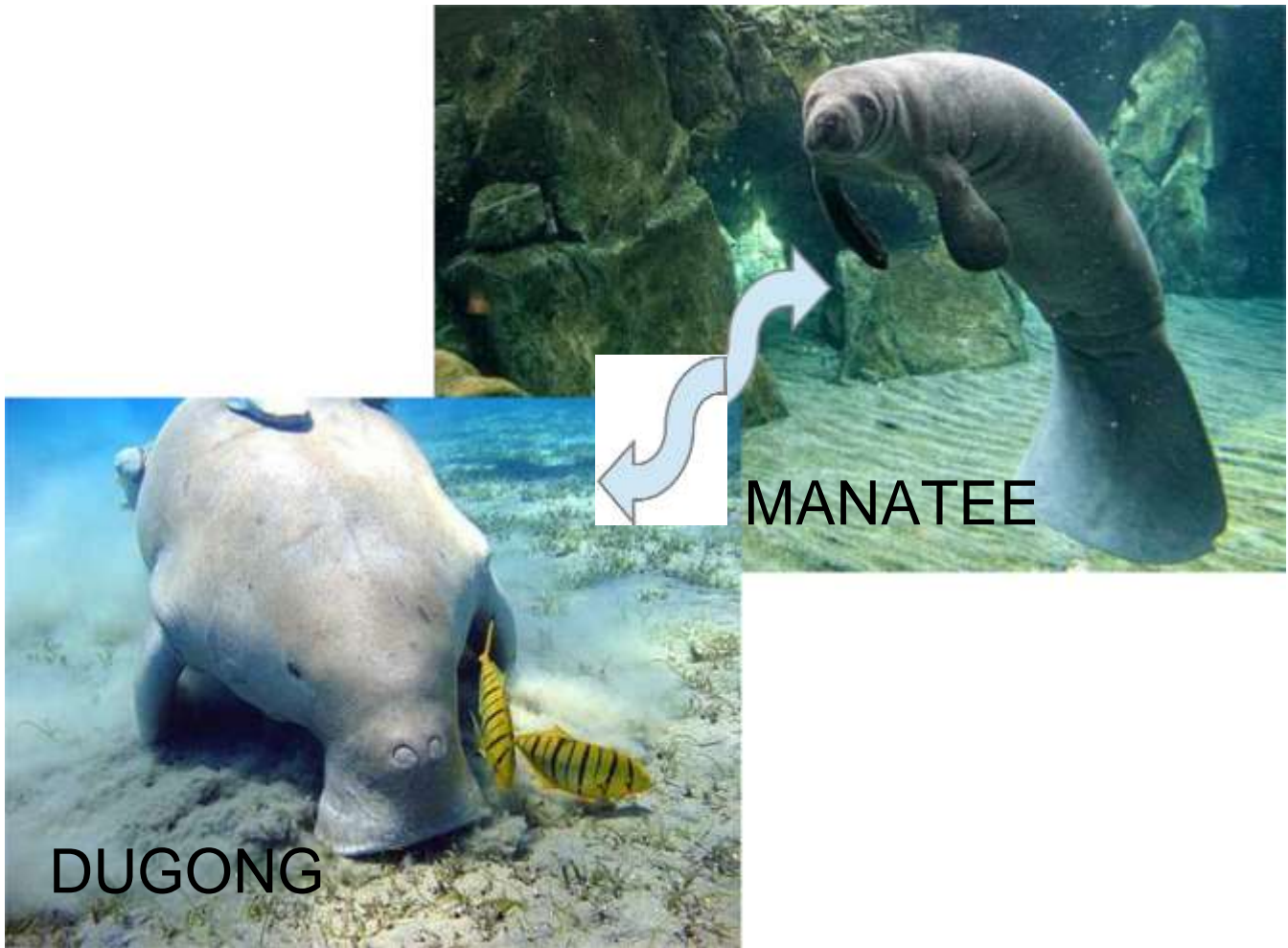
Manatees and dugongs like to live in shallow marshy areas where their food supply is plentiful. Manatees like to live in a combination of salt and fresh water to equalise the salt in their bodies.

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).



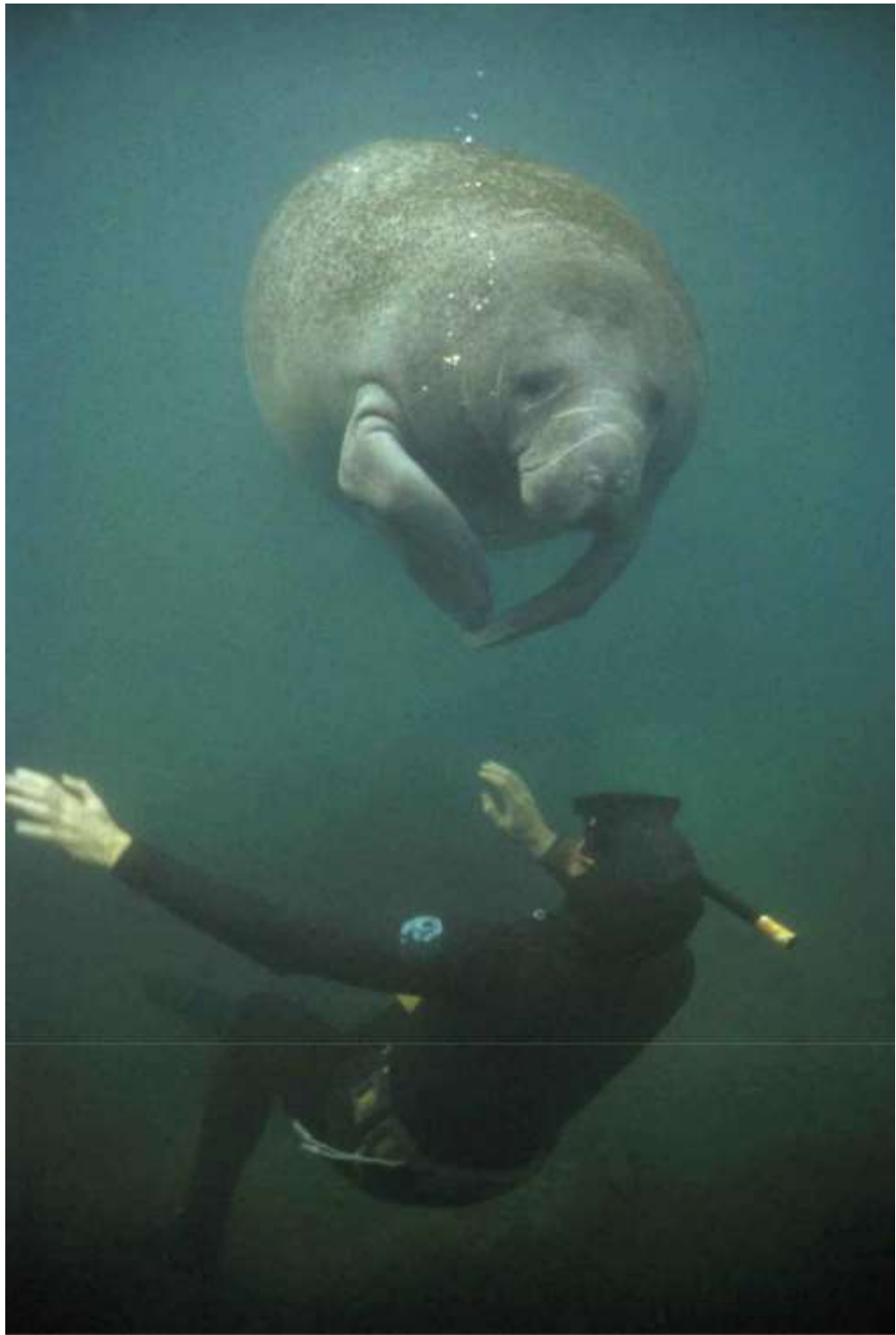
Like all mammals, Sirenia feed their calves milk, they have two teats under their flippers, another similarity with elephants.

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



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.





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.