



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2025

### See Media Contacts Below

**NOTE TO MEDIA:** *A media kit (including images and b-roll) of both the manatee departures from the Columbus Zoo and manatee arrivals to the Columbus Zoo [is available here](#). Photo credits are contained in the file name.*

## SIX MANATEES SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED AT TWO OHIO ZOOS FLOWN BACK TO FLORIDA FACILITIES TO PREPARE FOR RETURN TO HOME WATERS

*POWELL, OH* – Six orphaned manatees were flown more than 1,000 miles to their temporary homes in Florida, marking an important milestone in a complex, multi-institution conservation effort more than two years in the making.

In a carefully coordinated transport operation, the manatees were secured in custom-built travel containers and driven to the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, where they were loaded onto a specially scheduled DHL cargo flight to Florida on November 9, 2025. They will now complete the final stages of their rehabilitation before ultimately returning to the native Florida waters where they were first rescued. In this same collaborative effort, six additional manatees in need of continued care traveled from Florida to Ohio on November 12, 2025 to receive secondary rehabilitation at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium and the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden.

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, ZooTampa at Lowry Park, Clearwater Marine Aquarium, The Seas with Nemo & Friends at EPCOT (Walt Disney World Resort), and SeaWorld Orlando have worked together for several years to support the rescue, rehabilitation, and return of manatees through the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP).

“Manatee transfers demonstrate the dedication of the various organizations that comprise the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP) and their unwavering commitment to saving this incredible Florida species,” said Tiffany Burns, Senior Director of Animal Programs at ZooTampa and President of the MRP. “We are grateful to our partners in Ohio for providing essential secondary rehabilitation. It truly takes a village to protect this threatened species. I am

proud of the commitment from everyone involved in ensuring these animals can return to their native waters.”

The six manatees who had recently been receiving care at the Columbus Zoo included three orphaned individuals that had been rehabilitating at the Zoo since October 2024—Clawford (female), Sabal (female), and Cobble (male). Clawford was transferred to SeaWorld Orlando, Sabal was transferred to Clearwater Marine Aquarium, and Cobble was transferred to The Seas With Nemo & Friends.

Three additional manatees—females Vora, Orchid, and Lilypad—had recently been welcomed to the Columbus Zoo from the Cincinnati Zoo to receive care while Cincinnati’s manatee habitat was being renovated. As part of this same transport mission, they also returned to Florida. Vora and Orchid were transferred to Clearwater Marine Aquarium, and Lilypad was transferred to SeaWorld Orlando.

All six manatees arrived safely at their respective partner facilities in Florida and are settling in well.

“Seeing manatees go through each stage of rehabilitation, often against incredible odds, is truly inspiring,” said Brant Gabriel, Curator of Rescue at SeaWorld Orlando. “It’s a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when experts work together for the wellbeing of a species.”

The manatees will ultimately be released in the same regions of Florida where they were originally rescued, ensuring they return to waters that are familiar and appropriate for them.

Throughout the operation, the Columbus Zoo’s Animal Care and Conservation Medicine teams accompanied the manatees to the DHL Express Global Hub in Cincinnati, where the cargo aircraft departed. A Cincinnati Zoo animal care team member and veterinarian then accompanied the manatees during the flight to Florida and remained with them until they were safely transferred to their partner rehabilitation facilities—before returning on the same aircraft with the six manatees traveling back to Ohio.

“Seeing the manatees we’ve cared for return to their natural waters in Florida is the best outcome and the goal we’ve been working toward all year,” said Lindsay Garrett, head keeper of the North America department at the Cincinnati Zoo. “Each release is the result of months of dedication and teamwork. As we prepare for the next group of rescues, we’re ready to provide them with the same commitment and care.”

DHL Express transported the manatees in custom-built, state-of-the art containers, accompanied by a Cincinnati Zoo team member and veterinarian, who monitored the manatees’ condition throughout the flight. The containers were secured on palettes attached to the floor of the plane for stability. The manatees rested on a comfortable, 8-inch-thick bed of foam. They were covered in wool and space blankets to maintain a healthy body temperature and constantly monitored during the flight by care specialists using laser thermometers. To keep their bodies moist, the animals were misted with water under their blankets throughout the flight.

“Transporting these manatees safely back to Florida is more than a logistics mission—it’s an act of care for an endangered species. Every detail is planned with their safety and comfort in mind. We’re proud to support this conservation effort and help these remarkable animals return to their home waters,” said Laurice Bancroft, SVP Network Operations, DHL Express Americas.

Yet, even as these manatees prepare to return to their native waters, the conservation work to save manatees remains ongoing and crucial. In addition to the six manatees transported to Florida, six new young manatees in need of continued rehabilitation also arrived safely from Florida to Ohio on the return flight.

Three of these manatees—Redrock, Rosalyn, and Noface—have now arrived at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium from SeaWorld Orlando. Noface’s name reflects the severe cold stress she survived during her rescue, which caused skin loss around her face—an unfortunate reminder of her past but a testament to her resilience.

Upon their arrival at the Zoo’s Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Center, the trio joined long-term resident and fan favorite, Stubby. Due to Stubby’s extensive injuries from a boat strike, she is considered to be a conditionally non-releasable animal. Her condition is evaluated every five years to determine if she is ready or not to return to Florida, but it is unlikely that she will move out of this category. Stubby has often voluntarily assumed the role of a surrogate mother looking after the other manatees, and Redrock, Rosalyn, and Noface have already begun to bond with her as she shows the new arrivals around the habitat.

The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden also welcomed three new manatees as part of this return transport: males. Slushie, Hundo from ZooTampa, and Alfred from SeaWorld Orlando.

“We are proud to work alongside SeaWorld Orlando, ZooTampa, the Cincinnati Zoo, Clearwater Marine Aquarium, The Seas with Nemo & Friends at EPCOT, DHL, and all of our MRP partners to provide orphaned and injured manatees a second chance,” said Becky Ellsworth, curator of the Columbus Zoo’s Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Center. “Each partner plays a vital role, from caring for individual animals, sharing knowledge, and addressing the challenges manatees face in Florida’s waterways. Together, we’re making a real difference for this species and inspiring guests to take action for manatees and the health of our oceans. We look forward to continuing to grow these partnerships and help ensure a future where manatees thrive.”

The manatees were rescued by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP), a cooperative group of non-profit, private, state, and federal entities who work together to monitor the health and survival of manatees.

As part of the MRP, ZooTampa and SeaWorld Orlando provide critical care, including urgent veterinary treatment, to injured manatees in Florida. The Columbus and Cincinnati zoos are two of only several facilities outside of Florida to care for manatees and serve as second-stage rehabilitation facilities to provide temporary homes, food, and veterinary care for manatees until they are ready to return back to Florida waters.

Including these manatees who recently left Ohio, the Columbus Zoo has returned 42 manatees to Florida, and the Cincinnati Zoo has cared for 35 and released 28 manatees since 1999. To date, ZooTampa has treated more than 600 manatees since 1991, and SeaWorld Orlando has rescued more than 1,000 manatees since launching its rescue program in 1976.

Florida manatees are at risk from natural and human-caused threats, including exposure to the loss of sea grass, red tide, cold stress, disease, boat strikes, crushing by flood gates or locks and entanglement or ingesting of fishing gear.

**Manatees that were transferred back to Florida to complete final stages of rehabilitation:**

<b>Manatee Departure (from Columbus Zoo)</b>	<b>Rescued</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Arrived</b>
Clawford (female)	August 2, 2023 Rescued as an orphaned calf in the Matanzas River in St. Augustine, Fla. Weight: 59 pounds	Weight: 692 pounds	SeaWorld Orlando
Cobble (male)	February 15, 2024 Rescued as an orphaned calf at Kings Bay in Crystal River, Fla. Weight: 156 pounds	Weight: 630 pounds	The Seas with Nemo & Friends at EPCOT
Sabal (female)	September 1, 2023 Rescued as an orphaned calf at Boggy Bayou in Palm Harbor, Fla. Weight: 79 pounds	Weight: 718 pounds	Clearwater Marine Aquarium

<b>Manatee Departures (from Cincinnati Zoo via Columbus Zoo)</b>	<b>Rescued</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Arrived</b>
Vora (female)	October 2, 2023 Rescued as an orphaned calf near Pompano Beach, Fla. Weight: 58 pounds	Weight: 630 pounds	Clearwater Marine Aquarium
Lilypad (female)	December 8, 2023 Rescued as an orphaned calf at Salt Springs in Ocala, Fla.	Weight: 560 pounds	SeaWorld Orlando

	Weight: 97 pounds		
Orchid (female)	March 13, 2024 Rescued as an orphaned calf in Crystal River, Fla. Weight: 165 pounds	Weight: 795 pounds	Clearwater Marine Aquarium

### Manatees sent back to Ohio to continue rehabilitation

Manatee Departures (from SeaWorld)	Rescued	Arrived at Columbus Zoo
Noface (female)	January 9, 2025 Rescued as an orphaned calf with cold stress in the DeSot Canal area in Cocoa Beach, Fla. Weight at rescue: 110 pounds	Recent Weight: 230 pounds
Redrock (female)	May 10, 2024 Rescued as an orphaned calf in the Indian River, Titusville, Fla. Weight at rescue: 49 pounds	Recent Weight: 307 pounds
Rosalyn (female)	December 2, 2024 Rescued as an orphaned calf in the Banana River, Cocoa Beach, Fla. Weight at rescue: 50 pounds	Recent Weight: 231 pounds

Manatee Departures (from ZooTampa)	Rescued	Arrived at Cincinnati Zoo
Slushie (male)	January 6, 2025 Rescued at Berkley Canal-Satellite Beach in Brevard County, Fla. Weight at rescue: 119 pounds	Recent Weight: 270 pounds
Hundo (male)	March 11, 2025 Rescued at Crystal River in Citrus County, Fla. Weight at rescue: 119 pounds	Recent Weight: 290 pounds

Manatee Departure (from SeaWorld Orlando)	Rescued	Arrived at Cincinnati Zoo
Alfred (male)	May 16, 2024 Rescued at Sykes Creek-Merritt Island in Brevard County, Fla. Weight at rescue: 40 pounds	Recent Weight: 315 pounds

###

### **About the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP)**

The Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP) is a group of non-profit, private, state, and federal entities dedicated to advancing manatee conservation through collaborative partnership. MRP partners participate in the rescue, rehabilitation, release, and post-release monitoring of manatees. This network of institutions includes acute care facilities that provide treatment to orphaned, sick, and injured manatees with the hope of one day returning them to the wild. MRP researchers collect invaluable data through manatee monitoring efforts to improve the understanding of manatee biology and health. By partnering cooperatively, MRP members work to promote stewardship and financial support of manatee conservation efforts through public education. For more information, visit us at [manateerescue.org](http://manateerescue.org)

### **About the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium**

Home to more than 600 animal species from around the world, the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium leads by making a positive impact on people, wildlife, and wild places. The Zoo complex is a recreational and education destination that includes the 22-acre Zoombezi Bay water park and 18-hole Safari Golf Club. The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium also manages The Wilds, a 10,000-acre conservation center and safari park located in southeastern Ohio. The Zoo is a wildlife conservation organization with regional, national and global impact, annually supporting conservation and research projects locally and worldwide. For more information, please visit [ColumbusZoo.org](http://ColumbusZoo.org).

**Media Contact:** Jen Fields, [jen.fields@columbuszoo.org](mailto:jen.fields@columbuszoo.org)

### **About Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden**

The world-famous Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden is committed to inspiring visitors to care about wildlife and wild places. It was voted the #1 Best Zoo and the #1 Best Botanical Garden in USA TODAY reader polls and has also received rave reviews from Child Magazine, Parents Magazine, Newsweek, and TripAdvisor. Over 1.8 million people visit the Zoo's award-winning habitats, 400 animal and 3000 plant species annually. The Zoo, an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) for more than 30 years, is internationally known for

its success in the [protection and propagation of endangered animals and plants](#) and engages in [research and conservation projects](#) worldwide. Known as the #GreenestZooInAmerica, the Zoo is doing its part to conserve natural resources that are critical to saving wildlife and its habitats and is committed to greening its daily operations and reducing its impact on the environment with rain gardens, recycled building materials, solar panels and more. The Cincinnati Zoo is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more information, visit us at CincinnatiZoo.org.

**Media Contact:** Michelle Curley, [micelle.curley@cincinnatizoo.org](mailto:micelle.curley@cincinnatizoo.org)

### **About Clearwater Marine Aquarium**

Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working marine rescue center dedicated to inspiring the human spirit through leadership in education, research, rescue, rehabilitation and release. With a mission to preserve the environment and its marine life, CMA is home to rescued dolphins, sea turtles, river otters, stingrays, a nurse shark and more. Through Clearwater Marine Aquarium Research Institute, CMA conducts important global research focused on protecting manatees, North Atlantic right whales and sea turtles. Major motion picture Dolphin Tale (2011) and its sequel Dolphin Tale 2 (2014) features the true stories of rescued resident dolphins Winter and Hope, inspiring millions around the world. The mission and potential to change people's lives differentiates Clearwater Marine Aquarium from any other aquarium in the world. [CMAquarium.org](#).

**Media Contact:** Marsha Strickhouser, [mstrickhouser@cmaquarium.org](mailto:mstrickhouser@cmaquarium.org)

### **About SeaWorld**

SeaWorld is a leading marine life theme park and accredited zoo and aquarium that provides experiences that matter while educating and inspiring guests of all ages to care about marine life. Welcoming millions of guests every year, the parks offer fun and enriching experiences from up-close animal encounters and year-round educational programs to award-winning marine-life-themed rides and attractions, special events, and exciting entertainment. For more than 60 years SeaWorld has advanced the conservation of marine life in and outside its parks through science, education, and exceptional animal care that is Humane Certified by American Humane and accredited by the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. SeaWorld is one of the largest marine animal rescue organizations in the world, helping more than 42,000 animals to date. The SeaWorld Conservation Fund, a non-profit foundation established in 2003, has provided more than \$20 million to nearly 1,400 organizations to advance critical research on every continent. A portion of park proceeds goes toward supporting these longstanding conservation commitments. SeaWorld parks are in Orlando, San Antonio, San Diego, and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). SeaWorld is part of the United Parks & Resorts Inc. (NYSE: PRKS) portfolio of theme park brands. For more information, visit us at SeaWorld.com.

**Media Contact:** [SWO-PR@SeaWorld.com](mailto:SWO-PR@SeaWorld.com)

### **About The Seas with Nemo & Friends at EPCOT**

Disney's Animals, Science and Environment (ASE) is comprised of nearly 1,000 cast members including professionals in the fields of science, conservation, education, nutrition, animal husbandry and animal health. ASE cast members can be found globally including Florida, California, Hawaii and The Bahamas. Most of the ASE team resides at Walt Disney World Resort, delivering the absolute best animal care to more than 300 species and 5,000 animals

across Disney's Animal Kingdom Theme Park, Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge, The Seas with Nemo & Friends at EPCOT and Tri-Circle-D Ranch at Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort. As an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), ASE cast have collaborated with renowned experts to help increase populations of endangered and threatened species.

**Media Contact:** [Lesley.Harris@disney.com](mailto:Lesley.Harris@disney.com)

### **About ZooTampa at Lowry Park**

ZooTampa at Lowry Park is operated by the Lowry Park Zoological Society, an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to excellence in conservation, education, and research. The Zoo, an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) for over 30 years, is recognized as Florida's leading and most attended zoological cultural attraction. ZooTampa and its David A. Straz, Jr. Manatee Critical Care Center, were voted among the "Best Zoos" and "Best Zoo Exhibits" in USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice Travel Awards. The Zoo is also a thirteen-time winner of the Trip Advisor Travelers' Choice Award (2010-2023), ranking it among the top 10% of attractions worldwide. ZooTampa is a nationally recognized leader in the rehabilitation and care of Florida species. ZooTampa is one of only 2 places in the United States that can take in critically injured and sick manatees and one of only two facilities that can care for orphaned calves. Through its ZT Saves conservation initiative, ZooTampa provides support to local and global conservation programs that are positioned at the forefront of species survival. The Zoo is located at 1101 W. Sligh Avenue in Tampa and is open seven days a week (except Thanksgiving and Christmas) from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., with extended hours for select events. For more information, visit [www.zootampa.org](http://www.zootampa.org) or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok and YouTube.

**Media Contact:** Sandra Morrison, [Sandra.Morrison@ZooTampa.org](mailto:Sandra.Morrison@ZooTampa.org)

### **About DHL**

**DHL** – The logistics company for the world

**DHL** is the leading global brand in the logistics industry. Our DHL divisions offer an unrivalled portfolio of logistics services ranging from national and international parcel delivery, e-commerce shipping and fulfillment solutions, international express, road, air and ocean transport to industrial supply chain management. With approximately 400,000 employees in more than 220 countries and territories worldwide, DHL connects people and businesses securely and reliably, enabling global sustainable trade flows. With specialized solutions for growth markets and industries including technology, life sciences and healthcare, engineering, manufacturing & energy, auto-mobility and retail, DHL is decisively positioned as "The logistics company for the world". DHL is part of DHL Group. The Group generated revenues of approximately 84.2 billion euros in 2024. With sustainable business practices and a commitment to society and the environment, the Group makes a positive contribution to the world. DHL Group aims to achieve net-zero emissions logistics by 2050.

**Media Contact:** Robert Mintz, [robert.mintz@dhl.com](mailto:robert.mintz@dhl.com)