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Five Rehabilitated Manatees Return to Florida Waters After Several Years of Rehabilitation

The Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership, in collaboration with SeaWorld Orlando and six other zoological and manatee care organizations, achieved a successful release

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ORLANDO, Fla. (Feb. 8, 2024): Yesterday, the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP), a cooperative group of non-profit, private, state, and federal entities who work together to rescue, rehabilitate, release, and monitor sick and injured manatees— successfully released five orphaned manatees to Blue Spring State Park in Florida after a years’ long journey of rehabilitation by multiple members of the partnership.

The manatees were originally rescued by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and MRP Partners between 2020 and 2021. SeaWorld Orlando, The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Brevard Zoo, Georgia Aquarium, Clearwater Marine Aquarium Research Institute, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Save the Manatee Club, partnered closely for several years to provide treatment to fully rehabilitate these orphaned calves. In a complex release operation that took all day to complete, the sea cows are now safely home in Florida waters.

“Over the past several years, we have been called upon to rescue an increasing number of injured, sick, and orphaned manatees,” said Virginia Edmonds, President of the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership. “We are grateful to our partners for stepping up to the plate to not only rescue animals in need, but to commit countless hours to the collective rehabilitation of these animals, which enabled the releases today. But our work doesn’t stop here.

Every animal returned today will be fitted with a GPS tracking device that will allow researchers the ability to monitor their movements and ensure their acclimation to their natural habitat for the next year. These releases come at a critical time for the species as Florida manatees are at high risk from natural and human-caused threats.

“We pride ourselves on our nearly 50-year legacy to the rescue, rehabilitation, and return of manatees to save these beloved Florida icons who play a critical role in our ecosystem,” said Dr. Joseph Gaspard, Vice President of Zoological Operations at SeaWorld Orlando & Vice Chairman of the MRP. “While we are thrilled to lead this effort, it would not be made possible without close collaboration with our partners in the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership. This was truly a team effort among the zoological community to ensure the best care was provided to return these manatees back to their natural habitat.”

Manatees that were transferred back to Florida waters

Manatee	Rescued	Today
Squirrel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitated at SeaWorld Orlando, Miami Seaquarium and Columbus Zoo and Aquarium Transported by Ideal Lease 	May 2020 in Tavernier, Fla. Weight when found: 66 pounds Weight when moved to Columbus Zoo: 116 pounds	Weight: 960 pounds
Lizzie <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitated at SeaWorld Orlando and Columbus Zoo and Aquarium Transported by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 	July 2020 in Palm Coast, Fla. Weight: 63 pounds	Weight: 855 pounds
MaryKate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitated at SeaWorld Orlando and Columbus Zoo and Aquarium Transported by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission 	Found swimming alone in January 2021 in Blue Spring State Park, Fla. Weight: 107 pounds	Weight: 815 pounds
Clank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitated at SeaWorld Orlando and Georgia Aquarium Transported by SeaWorld 	December 2021 in Port St. John, Fla. Weight: 128 pounds	Weight: 725 pounds
TinkTink <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitated at SeaWorld Orlando and Georgia Aquarium Transported by SeaWorld 	December 2021 in Blue Spring State Park, Fla. Weight: 124 pounds	Weight: 840 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 or on social media: [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Instagram](#).

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Media Contacts:

Carli Segelson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service carli_segelson@fws.gov

Kelly Richmond, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Kelly.Richmond@MyFWC.com

Jeannette Conrado, SeaWorld of Orlando mediarelations@seaworld.com

Cora Berchem, Save the Manatee Club cberchem@savethemanatee.org

Jessica Wood, Georgia Aquarium jwood@georgiaaquarium.org

Nicolle Gómez Racey nicolle.racey@columbuszoo.org

Marsha Strickhouser, Clearwater Marine Aquarium mstrickhouser@cmaquarium.org