



## Manatee Identification Student Handout



What kind of skills would you need to be a manatee researcher? There are many kinds of activities scientists use when studying animals in their natural habitats, like observation, measurement, data recording and organization. But for many kinds of animals, researchers need to learn how to identify individual animals. Scientists who study manatees need to know how to identify individuals in order to record data about each animal's health, movements, reproduction and activities.

In this activity, you will use a practice activity developed by Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida. New researchers on their team use a card matching activity to learn to compare photographs of manatees to a diagram that records the pattern of scars and injuries seen on manatees that have already been identified and named. The skills you will develop in this activity are the same ones the Mote manatee researchers use every day!

### **Materials:**

Set of Manatee ID Cards

### **Procedure:**

In the Manatee ID Card set, you will find two different types of cards: photographs and diagrams.

The diagrams are an outline of a manatee on which a researcher has drawn marks to show the pattern of scars and injuries that make some manatees very distinct in their appearance. The figure at the right shows a key for the types of marks you might see on this diagram.



*Manatee researchers in Crystal River carry this Manatee ID binder to help them identify animals.*

### **KEY TO MANATEE IDENTIFICATION DRAWINGS**

Flipper drawn to show damage or to show relation of a scar to the flipper

#### **SCARS**

White

Visible but healed grey (sometimes deep)

Cut

Section missing from tail

Name \_\_\_\_\_

PHOEBE

Many of the scars on a manatee are white. Over time, they turn gray and fade away. Sometimes a scar may be a thin line, but they can also be large marks. Manatees may also have a piece of the tail or a flipper missing.

These diagrams are shared with other researchers, and updated whenever they see a known individual manatee. Over time, the observations taken when the animal is seen can tell researchers where they go, when they have babies, and sometimes how a manatee died.

Try to match the photos in your card set with the diagrams. When you think you have made the correct matches, ask your teacher to check your answers! If you've made some mistakes, try again! Then answer the questions on the next page.



## Reflection Questions



After you complete the matching game, discuss the following questions. Your teacher may ask you to write your answers in a journal or a lab report.

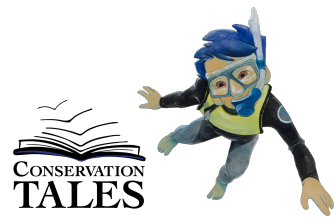
1. Were there any photos that were difficult to match with their correct diagram? Why were these photos more difficult?
2. Were you able to see the entire body of each manatee in the photos? How did this affect your ability to match the photos and diagrams?
3. How would this task be different if a manatee has NEW injuries since the last time they were photographed?
4. Most of the photos in this activity were easier than most photos to identify! Can you think of factors that would make it even hard to get a clear picture of a manatee? How often do think those factors happen in a manatee's habitat?
5. What other animals do you think could be identified by their appearance? Describe how you could compare animals or photographs of animals to practice this same skill with a different species.

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## Gear Up to Develop Higher Thinking

You wrote a reflection about other animals that could be identified by their appearance. Pick one of those species and create some diagrams like the manatee cards for that species. Design a way to record markings, colors and other traits you can observe. You can take photos to help make the diagrams, or find photos of animals from the Internet.

Write about the species you chose, and types of features you put on the diagram.



Names: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Manatee ID Cards  
Identification Record Sheet**

When you have matched the cards in your set, record the names of the manatees with the numbers of the photographs.

<u>Photograph Number</u>	<u>Manatee Name</u>
1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____
5	_____
6	_____
7	_____
8	_____
9	_____
10	_____
11	_____
12	_____