

WHAT'S NEW ON EVERYTHING EARTH

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

April 2022



Manatee Special Issue

New! 90-Second Meditation

April Photos Celebrate Peace

Video: *Munchie Manatee*

FLORIDA STATE MARINE MAMMAL IN EXTREME PERIL

Once considered magical, and often mistaken for mermaids by ancient mariners, manatees are now starving to death in record numbers. Despite a desperate attempt to feed these “gentle giants” in the wild, over 1,500 manatees - about 20% of Florida’s manatee population- have died in just the past 15 months as their food base disappears from Florida’s intensely polluted waters.

Most of the 2021 necropsies revealed sunken heads, visible ribs and organs atrophied from starvation. According to [Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility](#) Florida has sharply reduced the rate of manatee necropsies. Meanwhile, sewage and fertilizer continue pouring unabated into its waters, spurring lethal toxic algal blooms and suffocating the seagrasses these vegetarian mammals feed on.

Ironically, three days after *National Manatee Appreciation Day* on March 30, a federal judge paused the lawsuit brought by [environmental groups](#)

against Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection for authorizing the release into Tampa bay of 215 millions of gallons of wastewater contaminated with radioactive gypsum—one of the pollutants wiping out seagrasses and thus manatees.

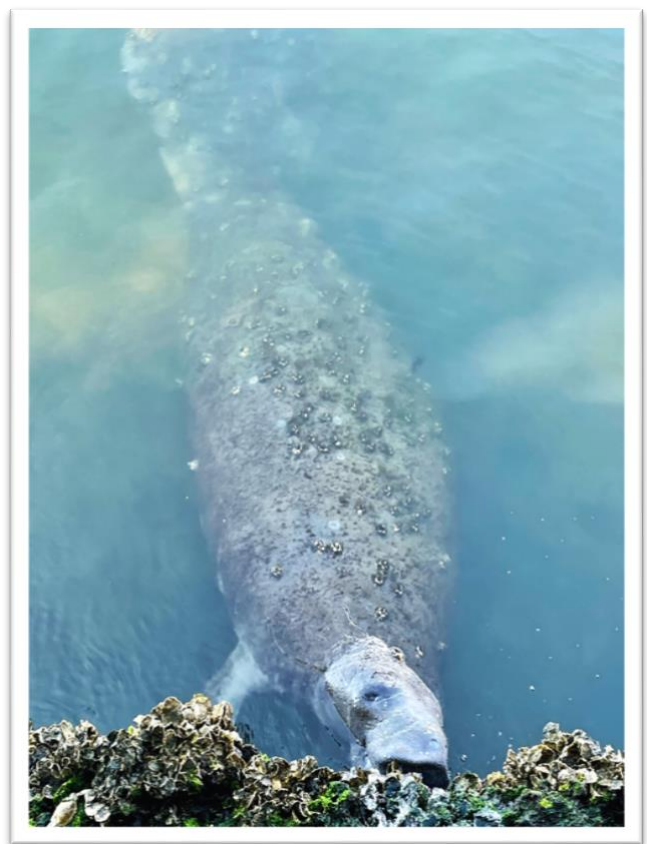
The release last January from Piney Point reservoir came as operators feared a toxic spill would flood homes and businesses. Scientists say that the contamination may have fed a toxic Red Tide bloom that killed hundreds of tons of marine life in the bay and nearby coastal waters.

Fortunately, a [receiver has been appointed](#) to oversee the eventual Piney Point closure. Meanwhile the toxic wastewater is drifting into Sarasota Bay, further polluting communities that are already at a tipping point.

It’s not too late to save manatees but it may be up to non-profits and private companies. Two Florida bills being considered by lawmakers would actually make it easier for developers to destroy seagrass.

The bills ([SB 198](#) and [HB 349](#)) would allow developers to destroy seagrass by buying credits in a mitigation bank which would theoretically establish seagrass habitat elsewhere, an effort that so far has shown poor results.

[Ocean Conservancy](#) is urging Florida lawmakers to oppose the legislation. Please see “3 Minutes to Change the World” below. Plus, learn how to [“Adopt-A-Manatee”](#).



Gentle manatee finds fresh water and meager greens along a Florida pier. Photo@lisabforce

NEW ON EVERYTHING EARTH: *MEDITATION STATION*



The Everything Earth website now includes a [Meditation Station featuring 90-second visual meditations](#). Each one is a short video of pure serenity. I hope you'll mark the spot on the website and visit often.

Namaste, my friends.

VIDEO OF THE MONTH: *SUPERPOWER NOSE HAIRS*

If you've never clicked on a link in an Everything Earth newsletter, you've got to do it this time.

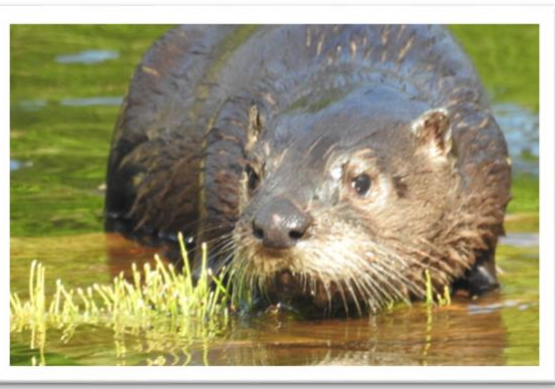
Manatees love fresh water! This one spent 10 minutes drinking freshwater runoff from a bayside park, providing a unique up-close [opportunity to study her extraordinary snout](#) and massive body. Plus, she's just really cute! At the end of the video, note the slashes in her thick skin likely caused by boat strikes, a common cause of manatee mortality.



Those are no ordinary snout hairs! They have superpowers - manatee's whiskers are extremely sensitive. Each single whisker can detect textures with twice the dexterity of an experienced reader of Braille. Manatees have poor eyesight so their whiskers help them find the seagrasses they depend upon.

Watch the video and then **guess what animal manatees are most closely related to** (answer below)

PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS: CELEBRATE PEACE



Many thanks to Linda and Gary Hansen for this close-up of a North American River Otter

North American River Otters are peaceful semiaquatic mammals who once inhabited nearly every major river in the Americas. They have waterproof fur, the densest of any animal. In a frenzy for these valuable pelts, hunters and trappers brought river otters to the brink of extinction during the early 1900's.

While not endangered in the entire U.S., the population and range of river otters has been severely reduced. By 1980 river otters were extinct or rare in 26 states.

Linda Hansen, author and illustrator of the non-fiction children's book, [Otto the Otter: A Big Surprise](#), has been fortunate to have her backyard pond colonized by a family of playful otters.

April's flora contest winner is the **Peace Lily**. Native to Colombia and Venezuela, the Peace Lily is not a true lily but rather a member of the Araceae (*Spathiphyllum* Spp.) family. It is a tropical plant common in Latin American rainforests. In the U.S. it is commonly grown indoors.

Peace lilies are among the best plants for removing pollutants from the air. They break down and neutralize toxic gases like carbon monoxide and formaldehyde. They are said to also promote a restful sleep.

Around the globe, the Peace Lily is looked upon as a sign of tranquility and is often gifted as a symbol of reconciliation. It is also known as a bringer of innocence, purity, healing, hope and rebirth. See April Flowers for more [gorgeous harbingers of Spring](#).



3 MINUTES TO CHANGE THE WORLD

[Save the Manatee Club](#) was founded in 1981 by Bob Graham, former Florida Governor and U.S. Senator, and singer/songwriter Jimmy Buffett. The Club was started with the mission to protect manatees and their habitat. Today, Save the Manatee Club is the world's leading manatee conservation organization. Please consider adding your voice to this organization's efforts [or Adopt Brutus](#), a real-life manatee for just \$25/year. These gentle giants need so little.

Please offer a word of support to Brevard County Republican Rep. [Randy Fine](#) who recognizes that seagrass restoration efforts too often fail for a mitigation bank to be counted on. "Whether it's a 75% failure rate as one speaker said or a 63% failure rate as another speaker said, I don't care if it's a 10% failure rate," Fine stated in a [December Committee meeting](#). "Because there is a 100% chance that initial acre of seagrass is going to have been destroyed."

Also, please contact Rep. [Tyler Sirois](#) who is promoting SB349 to allow developers to destroy seagrass despite evidence that seagrass restoration has widely failed. "Thirty percent of seagrass that is a success is better than no success at all," [states Mr. Sirois](#). Tell Mr. Sirois that we are fighting for scraps here. We cannot afford a 70% failure rate. ***Shame on Florida legislators who are willing to bring their own State Marine Mammal to the brink of extinction.***

FLAVOR BOMB BLISTERED ASPARAGUS & SHRIMP

This is a new take on spring's fresh crop of asparagus. Inspired by salty-crunchy Sichuan dry-fried green beans (gan bian si ji dou), these asparagus are charred and delicious even before you add the flavor bomb of garlic, red pepper flakes, soy sauce and capers.



Ingredients

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 lb. asparagus, tough ends trimmed off and patted completely dry
(to avoid splatter when adding to hot oil)
3 garlic cloves, sliced very thin
1 T. capers, drained, chopped
1 T. soy sauce
1 t. crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
Flaky salt

Optional:

1 lb. raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
Salt, pepper and pinch of sugar

If using shrimp, dry completely and sprinkle with salt, pepper and small pinch of sugar. The sugar helps the shrimp brown and caramelize. Set aside.

Heat oil in a large skillet over high until shimmering. Add asparagus. Do not stir. Sauté until browned on one side, about 3 minutes. Turn asparagus carefully with tongs and brown the other side, about 2 minutes.

Add garlic, capers, soy sauce and red pepper flakes. Cook, tossing occasionally, just until garlic turns golden, about 1 minute. Be careful not to burn the garlic. Remove onto a platter, scraping browned bits onto the asparagus. Sprinkle with salt. Set aside, keep warm under a towel.

Drop shrimp into same hot oiled pan and cook about 1-2 minutes per side. Lay shrimp on top of the asparagus and serve immediately.

Meanwhile check our website [EverythingEarth.net](https://www.everythingearth.net) for weekly blog posts and updates.

Please feel free to [contact us](#) with any questions, requests or to sign us for this monthly newsletter.

Manatees' closest relative? Elephants! The manatee snout is a shrunken version of the elephant's trunk. They use their prehensile lips to grasp and pull food into their mouths similar to the way elephants use their trunks. Also, both species have thick, wrinkled skin, sparse, bristle-like hairs covering their bodies and 3-4 toenails. Both also lack biting teeth, but have plenty of molars or grinding teeth with which to eat their vegetarian diet.