

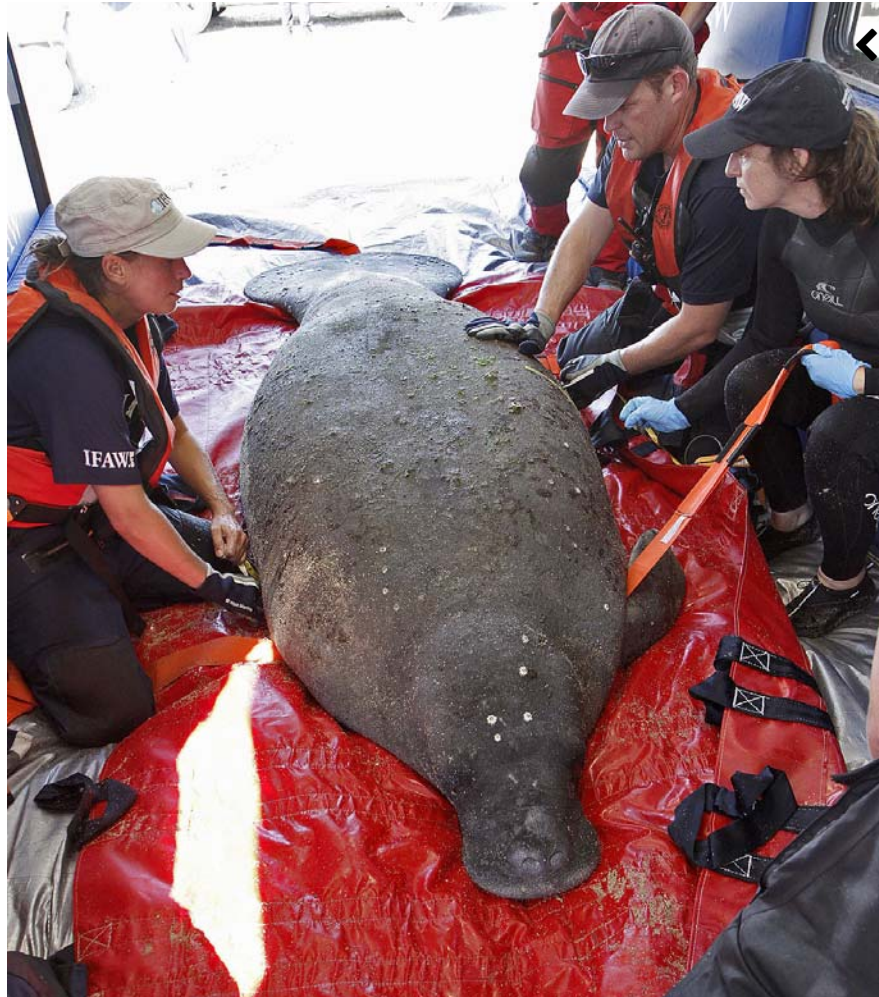
http://www.capenews.net/falmouth/news/roaming-manatee-found-and-rescued-in-east-falmouth/article_246a8bc1-48d1-5019-be5e-93594fd78c5f.html

DEVELOPING

Roaming Manatee Found And Rescued In East Falmouth

By BRITTANY FELDOTT Sep 22, 2016

[Home](#) / [Falmouth](#) / [Falmouth News](#)



GENE M. MARCHAND/ENTERPRISE

A manatee spotted swimming in Eel River West in East Falmouth Thursday afternoon was netted and hauled into a boat by (International Fund for Animal Welfare) employees and volunteers. The animal was then brought to a nearby beach and is being brought to a waiting transport vehicle.

A male manatee was rescued off a sand spit extending from Washburn Island in Eel River Thursday afternoon, September 22.

The manatee was first sighted near Cape Cod waters in mid-August, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare has been on the hunt ever since.

Although “sea cows” can survive in Cape Cod’s summer waters, the area is not a safe habitat for the marine mammals.

“They do come up this time of year, when the water is warm,” said Falmouth Environmental Resource Officer Sarah M. Brooks. She estimated that Falmouth waters still measure at about 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

At night, however, temperatures can quickly drop to about 68 degrees Fahrenheit, a dangerous temperature for manatees.

IFAW was authorized to rescue the manatee by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, which has jurisdiction over the conservation and recovery of manatees.

As temperatures on Cape Cod have cooled, the staff at IFAW strengthened their rescue efforts. “We have been intensely looking for it since at least [last] Friday, maybe earlier last week,” IFAW media producer Kerry A. Branon said.

Until Thursday, the manatee was last seen in Cotuit Bay and IFAW staff had been following leads from civilian sightings in an attempt to track down the about-eight-foot manatee.

At about noon on September 22, however, members of the IFAW stranded animal response team scouting out Eel River West in East Falmouth were the first to sight the wandering manatee, and two rescue boats and a red dinghy were sent to capture the animal. After losing sight of it, staff relocated the manatee downriver, about 70 feet offshore from a sand spit off Washburn Island, at about 1:30 PM.

A scoop net was used to haul the manatee, which was estimated to weigh between 1,000 and 1,500 pounds, to shore. A team of about a dozen handlers in red life vests were at the ready to bring the manatee to shore before transferring him onto the boat deck.

Surrounding the rescue team was a small crowd of curious beachgoers who had happened to be lounging on the sand spit at the time of discovery. A couple in a dinghy also made their way across the water to get a firsthand view of the marine traveler.

“Won’t have to watch the 10 o’clock news tonight!” said one onlooker.

The harbor master’s boat shipped out from Falmouth Harbor at about 1 PM to clear the

<http://www.capenews.net/falmouth/news/roaming-manatee-found-and-rescued-in-east-falmouth/articl...>
waters for the rescue.

Although he has assisted in plenty of animal rescues over the years, Falmouth Harbor Master Gregg P. Fraser said Thursday was a unique experience in his career. “Twenty-three years, and never a manatee! Lots of dolphins, but never this.”

Manatees usually swim along at about five miles an hour. Although they are not land creatures, the mammals can survive for several hours out of water—a benefit when transporting rescued manatees.

After loading the animal, IFAW staff backed the rescue boat onto shore and prepared to transfer him onto what looked like a large gurney with rubber tires.

Moving the bulky creature required 14 people; extra hands were needed at the boat ramp, so many so that the IFAW media producer was called over and asked to record the respiratory frequency of the manatee.

The manatee was then successfully wheeled into the back of a rescue trailer, outfitted with medical equipment to measure the manatee’s heart rate and draw blood samples. IFAW had two specialized manatee veterinarians on-site to monitor his health, keeping a particular eye on his temperature.

The last time a manatee was rescued near Cape Cod was in 2008. The manatee, which was pulled to shore in Dennis, was reported to be in poor health and died while in transport to a rehabilitation center in Florida.

Communications assistant Megan Landis said IFAW staff had adjusted their transportation strategy to better care for the manatee this year, organizing a pit stop at the Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut for temporary rehabilitation before flying the manatee to Florida.

The future of the manatee looks bright, according to IFAW staff Thursday afternoon.

As the IFAW team prepared to depart for Connecticut, staff reported that the manatee’s breathing frequency was normal at about one breath every 45 seconds. Ms. Landis said that his normal respiratory pattern indicated that he was not panicking during the transition.

As IFAW staff conducted their health assessment and stabilized the manatee, bystanders excitedly watched from the back of the rescue trailer.

Keelin E. Fraser, daughter of Mr. Fraser, peered into the trailer with enthusiasm. “It’s so big! It’s so cool! It’s so awesome!” she exclaimed upon first look.

All told, transportation of the manatee from Eel River to the rescue trailer took under an hour.

“I think it couldn’t have gone any better,” Ms. Branon said, smiling.

As of Thursday afternoon, September 22, the rescued manatee was en route to Mystic Aquarium. He will be rehabilitated for a few days before being flown to another rehabilitation center in Florida, which has yet to be selected.

Ultimately, plans are to release the manatee into the warmer waters of Florida, a natural habitat for the gentle creatures.

Marine animals that are rehabilitated are often released with tracking devices, Ms. Branon said, but it is not yet known whether IFAW will keep tabs on this manatee.

Correction September 23, 2016: The last time a manatee was rescued near Cape Cod was in 2008.

MORE INFORMATION



It's A Girl! Rescued Manatee Misidentified As Male

Rescued Manatee Found To Be Pregnant

Falmouth Manatee Flown To SeaWorld