

Manatees On The Net



Objective

Students will use the Internet to determine the population status of the Florida manatee. They will use the information to debate the extinction or recovery of the manatee.

Materials

- pencils or pens per student
- Access to Internet or other research materials

Action

1. Begin a class discussion with the question “Will the Florida manatee become extinct within your lifetime?” Discuss what facts or statistics would be needed to confirm or deny the question. Write the responses on the board or on an overhead.
2. Divide class into two groups. Each group should appoint three to four “team representatives” with good speaking skills, four to five “information experts” with access to the internet, and five or more “scribes” with good writing skills. Assign one group to support a “yes” answer and the other group to defend a “no” position. Refer to the responses on the board or overhead for ways to create a winning argument. Set a date and time for the debate.
3. Assign a suitable amount of time for research depending on your class schedule. The “information experts” collect information by searching the Internet. Possible key words include manatee, Florida manatee, and manatee populations.
4. All members of the group review the information gathered and decide what they will use. “Scribes” compose possible arguments and/or rebuttal strategies.
5. On the appointed debate day, “team representatives” debate the question giving their opinions. “Information experts” and “scribes” are available for backup information and support.
6. After the debate, discuss the following: Could the question be answered? What factors (i.e. natural catastrophes) that impact animal conservation are unpredictable? What measures could be taken to slow down or stop the decline of the manatee population?