



# Dauphin Island Sea Lab's MANATEE SIGHTING NETWORK

## Spring 2014 Newsletter



### MSN Responds to Four Winter Manatee Mortalities

This winter MSN recorded a total of four cold-stress related manatee mortalities in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The first mortality was reported on New Year's Eve in Choctawhatchee Bay in the Florida panhandle. Three more mortalities followed in January, recovered in Pascagoula, MS; Gulf Breeze, FL; and Oak Leaf Bayou in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, AL.

MSN also received an unusually high number of late season sighting reports in the northern Gulf, with regular sighting reports through late November and early December. These reports may indicate more manatees spending time in local waters.



MSN staff and volunteers perform a manatee necropsy

### Highlights

- Winter Manatee Mortalities
- Tagged Manatee Update
- Manatee Health Assessments
- Outreach Events
- Passive Acoustic Monitors Deployed

### Tagged Manatee Update

MSN is currently asking for help from the public to locate one of our tagged manatees, nicknamed Aven. The satellite tracking equipment used to monitor Aven's movements stopped transmitting March 13, 2014. Aven spent the winter months in Crystal River, FL along with other tagged manatees Brodie and Wilson. MSN believes that Aven is currently migrating through northern Gulf of Mexico waters. Please report all tagged manatee sightings to MSN immediately.

Over the winter MSN caught up with formerly tagged manatee and current Save the Manatee Club adoptee Zewie. Zewie was spotted in January in Crystal River, FL. MSN also recently received a confirmed sighting of Zewie in Mobile Bay.



Tagged manatee Brodie in Crystal River, FL  
Credit: C. Berchem



Manatee sighting season is NOW

Report all sightings online or by phone

Manatee.disl.org  
1-866-493-5803

Like! Us on Facebook:  
Mobile Manatees Sighting Network

# MSN Team Assists with Manatee Health Assessments

In December 2013, the MSN team traveled to Crystal River, FL to assist researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey Sirenia Project and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) with biannual manatee health assessments.

Assessments of individual manatees wintering in the warm waters of Crystal River help researchers understand the overall health of the manatee population. Each manatee is carefully captured in a large net, and data is collected on the condition of each animal. Manatees are safely returned to the water within one hour.

Many of the manatees who visit the northern Gulf of Mexico call Crystal River home during the colder months of the year. Big Ben, a large male who frequents Alabama waters, was one of the manatees who underwent a health assessment and proved to be in great condition. Big Ben was already spotted again in Alabama this spring!



Left: PhD student Kayla DaCosta collects data; Right: MSN Director Dr. Ruth Carmichael helps capture a manatee

## Help Support MSN

- **Buy a Card for a Cause!**  
Tacky Jack's gift cards available online.
- **Manatee T-shirts** available in child & adult sizes online
- Sign our pre-commitment forms for the **Alabama Manatee License Plate**



**Go Green! Receive our newsletter via email! Contact [manatee@disl.org](mailto:manatee@disl.org).**

## Outreach Events

Thank you to all of our MSN volunteers for another successful spring outreach season! Local outreach is a vital part of our sighting network's mission to educate the public about our research and spread awareness of manatees in Alabama and Mississippi waters. If you are interested in becoming an MSN volunteer, please email [manatee@disl.org](mailto:manatee@disl.org).

## Passive Acoustic Monitors (PAMs)

This spring, MSN re-deployed passive acoustic monitors (PAMs) in Mobile and Baldwin county waterways. PAMs are equipped with underwater sound detection technology. If a manatee with tracking equipment swims past a PAM, the technology will detect the manatees movements. MSN is the first research team to use PAMs to monitor manatee movements.



Passive acoustic monitor (PAM)