

# Third Grade Manatee Curriculum—Lesson 17: Exploring the Manatee's Habitat<sup>1</sup>

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For more lessons in the *Third Grade Manatee Curriculum* series, go to [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic\\_series\\_third\\_grade\\_manatee\\_workbook](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_series_third_grade_manatee_workbook).

## Description

This was designed as a field study at Blue Spring State Park in order to allow students to see manatees in their winter environment. The activity could be modified for other sites where manatees can be seen. The trip should be conducted during the winter in order to maximize the chances of seeing manatees (because manatees travel to the springs as warm water refuges in winter months). Students will observe and record manatee and fish behaviors.

For those unable to visit a location where manatees are present, you could do a virtual field trip (in winter months) using the live manatee cams available online at <https://www.savethemanatee.org/manatees/manatee-webcams/>. This will probably not show the fish (although some may be seen if the underwater camera is active), but may allow for viewing of manatee behaviors, scars, etc.

## Standards Addressed

*Florida*—SC.3.N.1.1; SC.3.N.1.3; SC.3.N.1.6

*Common Core*—CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.7

## Strategy

A sample schedule for a field trip to Blue Spring State Park is provided below. For this trip, each bus had 2–3 classes of students. Over four days, we brought 18 classes of third grade students from two schools to the park. We coordinated with the park to have one of their volunteers available to show students a video and talk to them about manatees. We also arranged for free admission to the park (each of the vehicles needed to have a copy of a letter on letterhead explaining about the education program that they would be doing in the park). We had our own volunteers assigned as leaders for each class. Each leader had a clipboard with data sheets on it, and worked with the students to complete the data sheets as they explored the park. We made some laminated fliers with images of the different fish species they would observe and attached these to railings at some of the observation points.

1. This document is VM220, one of a series of the Veterinary Medicine—Large Animal Clinical Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date July 2015. Revised October 2018 and September 2021. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.
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The authors would like to thank the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for their financial support of this project.

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## **Bus #1—Timeline for Blue Spring State Park Field Trip**

11:15—Buses arrive. Lead students to programs room. Students can use bathrooms next to that building.

11:30—Students watch video, led by park staff.

12:10—Divide students by classes (teacher). One volunteer takes each class. One class goes to spring run, two down to dock. After a couple of minutes, a second class heads to the spring boil, then a couple of minutes later, the third class. After the spring boil, lead the classes (staggered) back towards the picnic area, making observations of manatees and fish along the way. (Fill out the data sheet.) Stop briefly at each of the observation decks. Be back at the picnic area by about 12:45–12:50.

12:50–1:15—Students eat lunch, under supervision of their teachers.

1:15–1:30—Students use bathrooms and load up on buses.

## **Bus #2—Timeline for Blue Spring State Park Field Trip**

11:15—Buses arrive. Students can use bathrooms next to playground.

11:30—Divide students by classes (teacher). One volunteer takes each class. Stagger classes by a couple of minutes and lead them along the walkway, stopping briefly at each observation deck and making observations of manatees and fish along the way. (Fill out the data sheet.) If time permits, go all the way to the spring boil. Line up classes outside the programs room.

12:10—Students watch video, led by park staff. At conclusion of program, lead students back to picnic area.

12:50–1:15—Students eat lunch, under supervision of their teachers.

1:15–1:30—Students use bathrooms and load up on buses.

BLUE SPRING STATE PARK

Observations data sheet

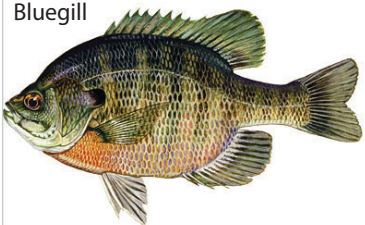




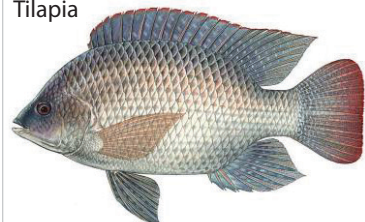
Teacher's name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The water depth by the observation dock is \_\_\_\_\_
2. The water that comes out of the spring is \_\_\_\_\_ °F
3. We saw (how many?) \_\_\_\_\_ manatees today.
4. We saw (how many?) \_\_\_\_\_ manatees that had scars on their bodies.

HOW MANY MANATEES WERE DOING EACH BEHAVIOR?							
Resting	Swimming	Breathing	Eating	Nursing	Rolling	Scratching	Other (specify)

5. We saw many different types of animals at the park today (in addition to fish and manatees). These animals included:
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Fish Observations

Type of fish*	Did you see this fish?		How many did you see?	What were the fish doing?
	Yes	No		
Bluegill 				
Largemouth Bass 				
Gar 				
Sailfin catfish 				
Tarpon 				
Tilapia 				
Other (specify)				

Credits: Fish images from [www.myfwc.com](http://www.myfwc.com)