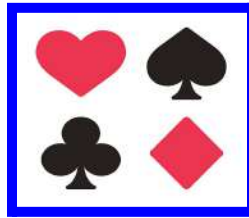


CHATTANOOGA BRIDGE CENTER

January 2026

News and Tidbits

A Publication of ACBL Unit 206



Editor: Mary Robertson

A Message From Richard Splanger

Our President...

Thanks again to everyone for a successful year! We increased membership by over 10%. Our financial position is strong. Especially thankful for how so many of you support the club above and beyond just playing the game. Speaking of added help, a reminder that our February 19-21 Sectional Tournament is just around the corner and WE NEED YOUR HELP! We have several positions to fill, especially the Food Coordinator and I will be requesting your help to volunteer in several other areas for the tournament as well over the next month.

Another key area where we need your support is with new players. We have several areas of opportunity. First, Dan leads the Monday night group with a lesson at 6:30 followed by a short game from 7-9. Feel free to

come to those games to help play and mentor these new people along. Second, we will be restarting Bridge Tips, led by Margie and Janie, starting Saturday, January 3, from 10-12 each Saturday morning. Mentors are always welcome!! We will also be restarting the Mentor/mentee games in January. For more experienced players, Joe Viola will be restarting his "Fireside Chats" the second Tuesday of each month at 10:30 and John Felker will be leading classes on Losing Trick Count and Law of Total Tricks starting Wednesday, January 14, at 10:45. So, plenty of opportunities to advance your skills - no matter your level of play!!

Again - thanks to a successful year and your support of the club!

Richard

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND OTHER CLUB NEWS MYRA RENEAU, CLUB MANAGER

Hi everyone - Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful Bridge year in 2025 and many more plans for Bridge in 2026. I again just want to take a moment to reflect on what a great club we have. All of this is because of you, the players. In the new year there will be the usual tournaments, parties, special games, and chances for gold, silver and red points.

I hope you have made a New Year's resolution to play more Bridge or better your game. There are many more lesson opportunities coming this year so I hope you take advantage.

Wishing you a stellar and hopeful new year.
Myra

HATS OFF TO JOHN HUBBARD

Hats off to John Hubbard for taking on several new responsibilities the past year! The club cannot survive without volunteers and John has really jumped in the past year. John joined the Board in 2025 and has helped us be more diligent and deliberate in how we manage the club and its records. John quickly jumped in to assist in our snack efforts during the weekly games, ensuring everything is set up for our Wednesday games as well as being the link from the snack team to the Board. Finally, John has been instrumental in advancing our use and familiarity with Facebook Pages as well as initiating Facebook Groups. Thanks to John for all he does for the club!!

CBC CALENDAR UPDATES & REMINDERS

Look for email updates from Margie Moses

For the most current events calendar, follow this link to our club's website calendar for more information: CBC Calendar

[Calendar of Events](#)

Are you ready for the
Chattanooga Open Sectional
Thursday-Saturday, Feb 19-21, 2026

St. John United Methodist Church
3921 Murray Hills Dr, Chattanooga, TN 37416

Tournament Chair:
Richard Spangler (805) 231-8917
raspangler58@gmail.com

Partnership Chair:
Anne Donnovin (423) 605-2996
aadonnovin@bellsouth.net/

Host hotel: Variety of hotels within 15 minutes of venue.

Hospitality: complimentary snacks and drinks every day.

Sandwiches Thursday and Friday for \$5.

Complimentary lunch Saturday.

Pairs games: \$12 TEAM GAME: \$100 per team

Thursday, Feb 19

9:30 a.m. / 2:00 p.m. Open Pairs, single sessions

9:30 a.m. / 2:00 p.m. 499er Pairs, single sessions

Friday, Feb 20

9:30 a.m. / 2:00 p.m. Open Pairs, single sessions

9:30 a.m. / 2:00 p.m. 499er Pairs, single sessions

Saturday, Feb 21

9:30 a.m... Swiss Teams, counts as 2 sessions

Strats for pairs games: 3000+/3000/1000 (open games);

500/300/100 (499er games) - stratification for all games based on attendance and pair/team

Volunteers are needed!

JANUARY CLUB EVENTS

Novice Game

Mondays-6:30-9PM

Enjoy a short lesson at 6:30, followed by a game at 7 and ending at 9 PM. More experienced players are encouraged to come play with Novices. A Novice (newer player) can have zero masterpoints, but simply wants to learn more about playing duplicate bridge. \$5 per player.

Chat With Joe

Tuesday, January 13 at 10:30 AM

Do you have a question about a particular hand? How is your defense? Here is a great chance to seek feedback from an advanced player. Just bring yourself and your questions.

Bridge Tips

Saturdays at 10 AM

Lessons begin promptly at 10 a.m. Cost: \$5. The topic varies from week to week. Led by Margie Moses and Janie Hunt

Intermediate Bridge Lessons

Beginning Wednesday, January 14

Wednesday, 10:45-11:30 AM

\$5 per class, or \$20 for entire series

John Felker will lead these sessions diving into Losing Trick Count (LTC) and Law of Total Tricks (LOTT) methodologies.

Grand National Qualifier

Sunday, January 18-Team Game

Lunch at 12:30-Game at 1

Winners may qualify to play up

Mentor Mentee

Mentor/Mentee is back on the fourth Friday in January. Be sure to sign up and let Bruce know if you can play.

My Adventure at the San Francisco NABC Super Senior Pairs By Joe Viola

The ACBL holds three “national” tournaments each year: Spring, Summer, and Fall. (These are actually North American Bridge Championships, since the ACBL is a multinational organization including the USA, Canada, and Mexico.) The Fall NABC usually begins on Thanksgiving Day and continues for 11 days ending on a

Sunday. There are various types of events: NABC Platinum events (which include many of the best bridge players in the world), 10K events (for players with 0-10,000 masterpoints), regionally rated events (both stratiflighted pairs games and bracketed team games), and games limited to players with a small number of masterpoints.

One of my friends and regular partners from California is Om Chokriwala. He and I have a partnership that goes back at least 10 years. We often play online to keep our game sharp. When an NABC is approaching, Om is one of the first people that I talk with to see if we can find an event or two that we would like to play in. We enjoy playing in the toughest events against the best players. This year we decided to play in two events: the 2-day Super Senior Pairs and the 3-day Blue Ribbon Pairs.

The Super Senior Pairs is limited to ACBL members that are at least 75 years old. We have played in this event twice before. In 2019, we finished 2nd. You can see our smiling faces in the Jan 2020 *ACBL Bulletin*. At that time the age requirement was only 70 years old, but they raised it to 75, so when the NABCs resumed after Covid, Om and I found that we were too young to play. By 2024 we had matured enough that they allowed us back in. In Las Vegas, we had a good first day. We were in 8th place beginning the second day, but we did not play well and did not finish in the overalls.

I was looking forward to our return to San Francisco, and I'm sure that Om was also. Like most pair events, this was scored by matchpoints, so overtricks are important and there are very few deals that don't matter. Our basic strategy is to minimize our mistakes and take advantage of our opponents' errors.

At the end of the first session, we were in 2nd place overall behind two of our friends from southern California with a 62.80% game. The

most important goal on the first day is to qualify for the second day. They cut the field after the second session (usually by 50%, but this time they only cut it from 78 pairs to 52 pairs. It's always nice to have a good first session so that you have a cushion and don't feel under pressure to have a big game in the second session. We had a 54.34% game in the second session. This was enough to move us into first place and get us mentioned on the front page of the Daily Bulletin.

On the second day we had two good sessions (56.69% and 54.38%). Those scores were good enough to keep us in first place after both sessions. After the last deal that we played, one of the photographers approached and told us that we had won, and that he needed to take our picture. The next day our picture appeared on the first page of the Daily Bulletin. That picture will also appear in the *ACBL Bulletin* when they publish the results of this tournament.

When playing matchpoints, it is important to BE GREEDY! If you are making your contract, look for an overtrick. If you have one overtrick, try to find a second overtrick.

I have an example from the 3rd session (board #16).

Partner

♠ K
♥ Q984
♦ AKQ
♣ T8652

Joe

♠ AJ42
♥ J7
♦ T
♣ AKQJ93

Partner opened 1♣, RHO overcalled 1♠, and I bid 2♠ (which shows 10+ pts in support of ♣, and no interest in ♥).

Partner bid 3♣ (which shows a minimum and no ♠ stopper), and I signed off at 3NT. Since partner had low hcp in ♣ and few hcp in ♠, I knew that he would have some hcp in the red suits.

LHO led the ♠T. When I looked at dummy, I saw that I had 11 tricks (6♣, 3♦, 2♠), but I remembered to be greedy.

RHO had overcalled without many hcp and a poor suit, so there was a good chance that he had both the A and K of ♥ and the ♠Q. If dummy had a 2nd ♠, I could have finessed against the Q, but he only had the singleton K. I pictured the position after cashing the first 10 tricks (1♠, 3♦, 6♣) being careful to cash my winners in dummy before returning to my hand to cash the ♣. My last 3 cards are ♠AJ and ♥J. My RHO must keep ♠Qx (or else I would play the A dropping the Q), so he must throw the ♦J and ♥K. Now I led my ♥ to his A, and he had to lead away from the ♠Q to give me my 11th and 12th tricks.

This is called a “strip squeeze”. It’s a form of endplay. If you make it a habit to try to picture your opponents’ hands, you may be able to find similar plays.

Thank you for sharing in my joy. It was great to receive congratulatory text messages right after the victory was posted online, and your reactions (and a cake) when I returned were very much appreciated.

I’m looking forward to 2026. I hope to have a lot of enjoyment and some success at the bridge table. I hope that Om and I can defend our title at the NABC in San Diego.

INTERMEDIATE BRIDGE LEVEL CLASSES

By John Felker

“I HATE this game!!” I have heard this said many, many times—in Jest of course. It is usually said when a player is facing a bidding dilemma—the opponents have interfered and you don’t know what is the best bid at this moment. Does this sound like YOU?

Hello Intermediate players and LBIAD graduates who are expanding their horizons by taking the Saturday and/or similar classes. What do you think is the hardest part of playing Duplicate Matchpoint Bridge? If you answered bidding to the right level in a competitive auction [those pesky opponents keep interfering with you and your partner’s planned bids], then I agree because it’s hard to figure how high you should bid, or whether to pass or even double.

Well, we have a new set of classes that will help you decide how high to bid- in either contested or non-contested auctions. Beginning Wednesday, January 14, 2026, John Felker will be teaching methods to help you better evaluate your hand- based on your partner and opponents’ bidding. Classes will last about 45 minutes beginning at 10:45 each Wednesday thereafter.

John will be using techniques from the Losing Trick Count [LTC] and the Law of Total Tricks [LOTT] methodologies to help you better evaluate your and partner’s hands to bid to the best level. After learning about these two methodologies, you will also learn bidding systems that will help you further refine your bidding skills. Does this mean you will always get the bid right? NO, of course not—bidding is not an exact science—but you will have tools to make the right decision more often.

These techniques can be used whether you bid using 2/1 or Standard American.

A general outline of the planned Course is: first 2 weeks will cover LTC with examples, followed by 2-3 weeks of LOTT. There will then be a follow-up week or 2 weeks of discussion and examples of systems/conventions that can be used to bid to the best level. These discussions will be based on what conventions participants want to further learn about or discuss using LOTT.

Cost will be \$5 per lesson or an initial fee of \$20 to cover all lessons with all fees going to the Bridge Center. Players can also choose to attend some lessons where they are interested in specific aspects of the Course but not others.

If you think these lessons can help you, then make sure your partner[s] also attend as bidding is not a one way street.



One Small Thing

By Bruce Antman

Danger Hands

As declarer, sometimes you can see one opponent who will cause major problems if she gets the lead. That's the "danger hand", and her partner is the "safe hand". Say you're South in 3NT, the lead is a small club, and you see

N: ♠K43 ♥KJ76 ♦432 ♣Q76

S: ♠AQ65 ♥AT92 ♦K8 ♣AK4

29 high-card points, but only 8 fast tricks. If they had led a diamond or a heart, you'd have the ninth (at least). You can play for the drop in spades, but the odds are bad. Finessing the hearts gives you a ninth trick even if it loses – but if East, the danger hand, gets the lead, you may also lose 4 or 5 diamonds before you can take them. Fortunately, you have a two-way finesse. To guarantee your contract, take the first trick in your hand, lead the ♥2 to the king, and play the ♥J. If East covers, play the ace and all your hearts are good. If not, play low. If the jack holds, it's your ninth trick. If West plays the queen, your 10 is the 9th trick, and they have to lead to you.

There are many variations, some simple and others not. Try this one:

N: ♠843 ♥K76 ♦A3 ♣KJT65

S: ♠A65 ♥AJT92 ♦98 ♣A94

Say you're playing South in 4♥ after West opened 2♠ and led the ♠K. You see three spades in dummy and three in your hand, so East has a singleton. If West gets in, he can take the ♠QJ (or QT), so he's the danger hand. East is safe, unless West has an outside ace and East can find it. (That's unlikely, since with ♠KQJxxx and an outside ace, most players would open 1♠.) Lead the heart jack at trick 2, and finesse the clubs the same way later, and the contract is almost guaranteed. Finesse the hearts the other way, and if West has the queen, you're down before you get the lead back.

Try one more:

N: ♠842 ♥Q76 ♦K32 ♣A973

S: ♠K65 ♥AJT9 ♦QT5 ♣QJT

You're in 1NT as South, the opponents did not say anything, and the lead is the ♦4 to the 2, 7, 10. Do you play on hearts or clubs? Think about it a minute. East is dangerous, since she could lead a spade through your king. (Picture East with ♠QJT7.) West can't do anything terrible. You should finesse in hearts and not clubs. If it works, you're in free; if not, you're still a heavy favorite to make the contract.

As the last example points out, "safe" is a relative word – you'll rarely have a 100% option. Even in the second example above, a 5-0 break in clubs or hearts could be fatal. "Danger" is also relative; sometimes you're protecting against certain defeat, but other times the "danger" turns out to be an illusion. That's bridge for you! Still, avoiding dangerous plays is winning strategy in the long run.

NEWSLETTER CHAT WITH JOE-INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED BRIDGE TIPS

SURROUNDING PLAY

JOE VIOLA

One of the joys of bridge (at least for me) is finding interesting plays as declarer or defender. When I get an unusual play right, I am walking on air for a month or more, and when I miss an opportunity, I remember it for a long, long time.

A "surrounding play" is a well-known play that I first saw in an Eddie Kantar book of defensive problems. The basic layout of the cards is (as shown in the deal below):

RHO: Txx
You: AJ9
LHO: Qxx
Partner: Kxx

You are on lead.

If you lead the A, declarer will play small from both hands. Then when you lead the 9, declarer will play small letting it ride to RHO's T. This forces partner to play the K making the Q high.

If you lead the 9, declarer lets it ride to the T. Again, this forces the K from partner, and the Q is protected behind the A.

But if you play the J, declarer is trapped. If he plays the Q, partner wins the K and returns the suit trapping RHO's T under your A9. If declarer plays small, the J wins the trick and your side gets two more tricks with the A and K.

This is called a "surrounding play" because you have surrounded RHO's T with the J9.

Recently, I was playing with friends and an opportunity arose. I was East.

North

♠ A64

♥ 5

♦ KQJT72

♣ T65

East

♠ J9

♥ A873

♦ 864

♣ AJ94

The bidding was:

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Partner led the ♥K.

I missed a chance to set the contract. If declarer has the ♦A (which is very likely), I need to get 4 tricks quickly.

East opened the bidding, so he should have at least 11 hcp. Since his hand is balanced (he rebid 2NT), he probably has more than 10 hcp. Partner has the ♥KQ, he cannot have the ♦A unless declarer has the ♣KQ. If declarer has the ♣KQ, your side is only getting one ♣ trick.

Your best hope of defeating this contract is if partner has the ♣K and declarer has at least ♣Qxx. Overtake partner's ♥K with your ♥A and lead back the ♣J. Declarer cannot keep you from getting 3 ♣ tricks for down 1. Don't gloat. That is impolite. But when you are lying in bed, you will be inwardly smiling because you know that you had made a play that would make a champion proud.



A Little Humor:

Duplicate Bridge: Where everyone plays the same hand and still blames the partner.

In duplicate you do not lose because of bad cards, you lose because someone played them better.

2026 CBC Board of Directors

President:	Richard Spangler
1st VP:	Bruce Antman
2nd VP:	Janie Hunt
Secretary:	Mary Robertson
	Marian Creighton
	John Prescott
	John Hubbard
	Sharon Lewis
	Joe Schatz

Supported by our Club Treasurer: Myra Tatum
Club Manager: Myra Reneau

Our Club Has A Facebook Group -- ChattDuplicateBridge

by John Hubbard, Group Administrator (Bruce Antman is co-Administrator)

This is a discussion group on Facebook for all Chattanooga Bridge Club members and all members of its affiliated clubs. You ask to join. Then one of the two Administrators processes Approvals.. Now you can see the posts made by group members and make your own posts and comments to posts. Its purpose is for the members to discuss any bridge related subject.

Select your Facebook app. Search for the Group by its name --
ChattDuplicateBridge. You will go to this page.

Find the blue Join button under the Bridge Center picture and tap it to ask to join. (John is a member and so this picture shows the blue Invite button.)

Following is the About information for this Group.

This Group will get better and better as more members join and start interesting discussions.

Use this group to ask for a last minute partner, to share an interesting hand, to find out who is going to a tournament, maybe seek to share a ride to the tournament. Even seek help with a project or activity you do for the club's welfare. You can write prose and add pictures to your post, just like in your own Facebook page.

Join and enjoy!

[Chattanooga Bridge Club](#) -click on this link to see our Facebook page

LOOKING FOR A BRIDGE GAME?

'Nooga East Bridge Club

Every Monday at 12:30 p.m. there's a bridge game at Christ United Methodist Church located at 8645 East Brainerd Road across from Hurricane Creek Shopping Center. Players are asked to arrive no later than 12:15 p.m. so the game can begin promptly. For those of you in Cleveland or North Georgia, this is just a hop, skip and a jump away. We are a very welcoming, fun group and are always looking for new players of all levels. Are you interested? Just email noogabridgeeast@gmail.com to make a reservation. Need help finding a partner or have a question? You can text or call Sue Riddle at 423.509.3583 or Sharon Lewis at 423.240.5360.

The Fairyland Duplicate Bridge Club

The Fairyland Bridge group plays every Thursday at our Club. This group often combines celebrating special occasions along with a delicious lunch and great cards. Stay tuned to upcoming game announcements to make sure you don't miss the fun. Players should be registered before 10:15 to allow play to begin at 10:30. Lunch is provided between 12-12:30, afterward the game resumes. Reservations are appreciated, please reach out to Susie Crouch at 423.443.6889. Don't miss out on their fun holiday gatherings.



Friday Face-to-Face Mentor/Mentee

After a two month break, the very popular Mentor Mentee game is back. Be sure to sign up so Bruce knows who is playing. Questions? Text or call Bruce Antman at 423.290.8207.

Partnership Coordinate

If you need a partner, our Partnership Coordinator can help. Contact Anne

Donnovin at 423.605.2996.

Arnie's Angle - For Those Who Wish To Learn More About The World In General By Arnie Meagher

The Manatee - - My Story

Hello! My name is Oval as I leave an oval ripple in my wake as I swim. I have a very interesting story to share with you as it begins on land, not in the sea. We manatees belong to the order Sirenia, which includes both manatees and dugongs, (which are also marine mammals that inhabit the warm coastal waters of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, feed on seagrasses, and are similar to the American manatee). My evolutionary journey encompasses millions of years and involves significant biological adaptations, revealed through fossil records, genetic analysis, and comparative anatomy, which tell the story of my evolution from a land animal to an animal living in aquatic environments.

A key aspect of this evolution is the gradual transition from terrestrial ancestors. Early sirenians lived on land before evolving into fully aquatic forms. This transformation involved physical changes such as limb adaptations, body shape alterations, and sensory modifications suitable for underwater life. We Manatees are characterized by our robust bodies, paddle-like flippers, and flat tails, which make us well-suited for life in water. Also notable is our herbivorous diet, primarily feeding on seagrasses, algae, and other aquatic vegetation. It is important to understand that we have become fully adapted to marine life, having lost our terrestrial characteristics over time. Sirenia is recognized as a unique group, distinguished from other marine mammals like cetaceans, which include whales and dolphins. The relationship of Sirenia with other marine mammals is illustrative of broader evolutionary trends. While we manatees and dugongs are distinct in our adaptations, we share common ancestry with other groups such as cetaceans. Both Sirenia and cetaceans are believed to have originated from a common land-dwelling ancestor millions of years ago. Our early ancestors inhabited warm climates and were able to graze on coastal vegetation, which set the stage for future adaptations. The development of limbs and physical structures responded to their surroundings, facilitating movement in water while retaining certain adaptations for land. The shift towards a more aquatic lifestyle began with gradual changes in diet, habitat, and physiology.

Notable features of our adaptation process include:

- A shift in body shape where elongated forms provided better propulsion through the water.
- The gradual loss of hind limbs, which eventually transformed into flippers, allowing for efficient movement.
- Changes in the skull structure to accommodate a more streamlined physique, aiding in better oxygen consumption during dives.

As these *early adaptations* took shape, it laid the groundwork for modern manatees. The shift from limbs to flippers represents a significant adaptation in our evolutionary path. Early manatees possessed visible digits similar to those of their terrestrial ancestors. Over time, these limbs adapted to better suit an aquatic lifestyle. The evolution of flippers has provided numerous benefits:

- **Streamlined Movement:** Flippers facilitate efficient swimming, allowing us to navigate various aquatic environments with ease.
- **Increased Propulsion:** The shape and size of flippers provide powerful thrust, essential for moving through water.
- **Enhanced Maneuverability:** Flippers enable precise movements, particularly in habitats with vegetation where agility is necessary.

Research shows that the modification of limb structure was not merely anatomical. It involved biochemical changes that supported better muscle dynamics under water pressure. The bone structure also reflects adaptations crucial for buoyancy control. Thus, the transition from limbs to flippers highlights the complex interplay between physical environment and evolutionary pressures.

Body shape and size have played prominent roles in our evolution. Our robust, cylindrical bodies optimize buoyancy and help maintain stability while feeding or resting in water. We manatees also exhibit unique sensory adaptations that facilitate our survival in aquatic environments. Key adaptations include:

- **Echolocation:** While not classically known for echolocation, we utilize sound to navigate through murky waters and locate food.
- **Tactile Sensitivity:** Sensitive whiskers on our snouts allow us to detect subtle changes in our surroundings, aiding in foraging.
- **Color Vision:** Studies suggest that we possess some degree of color vision, which can optimize our ability to identify food sources amidst aquatic vegetation.

These sensory adaptations reflect the remarkable changes that have occurred in us over millions of years to better interact with our new environment.

We manatees primarily rely on seagrass, which is vulnerable to temperature fluctuations and increasing ocean acidification. Seagrass growth can be inhibited by increased water temperatures leading to decline in food availability. When factors like pollution and rising temperatures combine, it can result in substantial habitat loss. In earlier epochs, as we transitioned to aquatic life, we faced threats from marine predators like sharks and crocodiles. This led to various adaptations in our physiology and behavior.

These evolutionary adaptations highlight the significant role of predator dynamics in shaping the manatee lineage. The selection pressures from both natural and human-induced predators continue to impact our conservation status, resulting in an ongoing evolutionary response. The ecological pressures from both climate and predation is key in formulating effective conservation strategies. Overall, the impact of environmental changes is profound, influencing our survival, behavior, and evolution. The interplay between habitat changes and predator-related challenges underscores the necessity for ongoing research and proactive conservation efforts.

Our Habitats:

- The West Indian manatee is found in the warm coastal waters of the Caribbean and the southeastern United States. Our range extends from Florida to the Bahamas and down to the northern parts of South America.
- The Amazonian manatee is confined to the freshwater rivers and lakes of the Amazon Basin. Our distribution is limited to this unique habitat, which makes us particularly vulnerable to habitat destruction.
- The African manatee inhabits coastal marine and freshwater habitats throughout West Africa. Our populations face significant threats from human activity and habitat loss.

- **Our Enemies and Threats to our Existence:**

Our primary enemies are whales, sharks and crocodiles but humans cause the most impactful threats to our existence, which include:

- **Habitat Loss:** Coastal development, pollution, and human activity lead to degraded habitats for us. Watercraft collisions also pose a direct danger.
- **Climate Change:** Rising sea levels and changing water temperatures can impact our habitats. Warmer temperatures affect our food sources and migration patterns.
- **Pollution:** Nutrient run-off and chemical pollutants contribute to harmful algal blooms, endangering our health by contaminating our food and reducing water quality.
- **Boat Strikes:** We are slow-moving animals and are frequently injured or killed by speeding boats. Some areas have implemented speed limits to curb this issue.

Our Reproduction: Manatees reproduce through a mating process. Sexual maturity is reached at about three years for females and nine years for males. During the breeding season, males compete for a female's attention with elaborate courtship behaviors. The gestation period for manatees is about 13 months. Usually, a single calf is born after this period. But twins can happen very rarely. Healthy female manatees usually have a calf every two to five years. But, environmental factors can change this, affecting their reproductive success. Mother manatees feed their calves for one to two years. This creates a strong bond during this time. Manatees can breed any time, but they often do so in social groups during their mating herds. This is usually during the breeding season.

- **Conservation Efforts and Strategies:** Several initiatives are underway to aid in the conservation of manatees. Effective approaches include:
- **Legislation:** Laws such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act have played a significant role in safeguarding manatees from hunting and harassment.
- **Protected Areas:** Establishing manatee sanctuaries helps provide critical habitats where they can feed, breed, and rest without disturbance from human activities.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educating the public about the importance of manatees fosters a culture of conservation and encourages responsible

behavior, particularly around waterways.

- **Research and Monitoring:** Ongoing scientific studies track manatee populations and health. This data is crucial for developing effective conservation strategies.

To ensure the future of manatees, collaboration between governments, researchers, and local communities is essential.

In summary, to effectively conserve manatees, it is necessary to address multiple threats through coordinated efforts. Protecting our habitats and promoting awareness can significantly contribute to a sustainable future for us manatees.

Interesting Facts About US:

- 1) The Sirenia are thought to have evolved from four-legged land mammals more than 60 million years ago, with the closest living relatives being the Proboscidea (elephants) and Hyracoidea (hyraxes).
- 2) We are large animals, with the biggest adults measuring as long as 13 feet and weighing as much as 3,000 pounds. Despite this heft, we have extremely small brains, with the largest attaining only the size of a small grapefruit.
- 3) We can remain submerged for up to 20 minutes. With each breath we replenish about 90 percent of the air in our lungs. (Humans, by contrast, replenish only about 10 percent.)
- 4) Touching a manatee is illegal in the United States. The ban's aim is to protect us vulnerable marine mammals from harm and stress caused by human interaction. The Florida manatee, a subspecies of the West Indian manatee, is safeguarded under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act, which prohibit any act of harassment, hunting, capture, or killing of listed animals. "Harassment" includes actions that disturb or alter natural behaviors, such as touching, which can disrupt feeding, mating, and migration patterns.
- 5) We use the whisker-like bristles on either side of our mouths as living cutlery to grasp and take in food. We can also control our lips independently of one another and use them pre-hensile, like giraffes. Contrary to what might be expected, these two features make us remarkably dainty diners.
- 6) Our unusual sensory system helps us find food, but it never evolved to deal with our biggest modern threat- boats. When we ascend to the surface to get air about every five minutes, we often collide with boats, which results in about 75 deaths yearly. Speed restrictions that the state imposes on certain waterways will hopefully limit this death toll.

Thank you for reading my story. I hope it gave you a better understanding of our lives in coastal waters. Please share my story with your friends.

Yours truly, Oval

