

Orange River/Caloosahatchee Tops Manatee Survey

Manatees need freshwater as well and depend upon tapegrass in the upper estuary to survive the winter months. On Friday, December 10, 2010, the Fort Myers Police Marine Unit reported the results of a manatee count that registered the highest congregation of manatees in the state at the Florida Power & Light (FPL) power plant outfall in the Orange River, a tributary of the Caloosahatchee. 706 adults and 46 calves were counted in Lee County for a total of 752 individuals. A few individuals were spotted in the Caloosahatchee moving either up or down river. The lack of tapegrass in the upper estuary causes manatees to travel up to 20 miles downstream to find food. Statewide where calves could be counted they totaled approximately 6% of the total numbers.

Other areas surveyed include:

Canaveral Plant site: +300

Hobe Sound: 59 adults + 5 calves = 64

Riviera: 328 adults + 17 calves = 345

Port Everglades: 153 adults + 11 calves = 164

Inland Lauderdale: 81 adults + 6 calves = 87

