

The Great Manatee Rescue

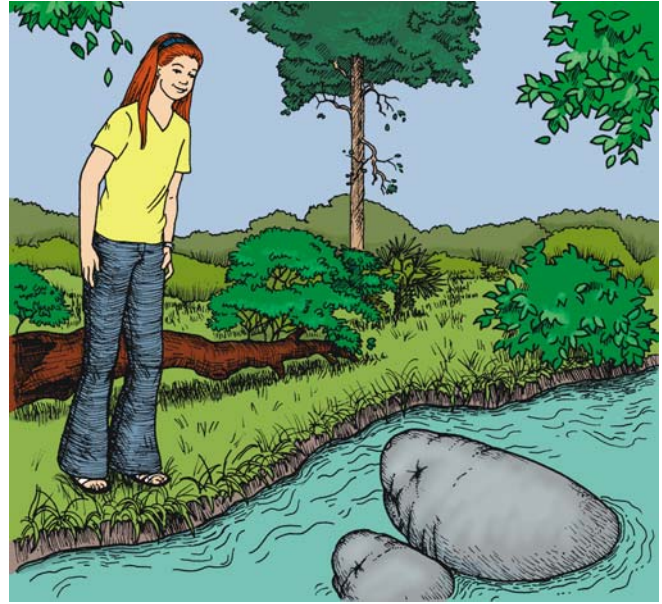
A Quality Serials Story

By Mary Maden

Illustrated By

Copyright 2003 by Mary Maden.

All rights reserved.



Our story so far...

Ali and her family moved to Florida after Ali's dad gets a promotion at his work. Ali has a tough time making friends and adjusting to her new school. She is sitting by a canal crying when, suddenly, she sees some very strange creatures in the water! What could these unusual creatures be?

Chapter Two: The Secret Place

Ali stared at the two sweet animals. What could these animals be? Ali racked her brain for an answer. Suddenly, she remembered something she had heard in school. Her teacher, Mrs. Fields, had told them that they would be doing a unit on aquatic mammals soon. She remembered her teacher mentioning something about a special kind of animal—an animal that lives in Florida. It was called a mana... a mana... something. Finally Ali remembered the unfamiliar word—it was “manatee!”

“That’s it!” Ali realized. Ali spoke softly to the two animals. “You must be manatees!”

Then Ali spotted a sign in the water across the canal. It said “Slow Speed Manatee Zone.” Now Ali was sure that the animals were manatees.

Ali continued to watch the gentle manatees. She was having a great time! Everything they did was interesting. Ali had always loved to watch the animals at home. They had had a large yard and there had been lots of birds, rabbits and squirrels—even an occasional deer. But nothing like these manatees!

Every three or four minutes, the mother manatee and her baby would come to the surface to take a breath. The mother manatee made a gentle whooshing sound when she came to the surface. Ali could see the manatees as they swam in the canal. The baby stayed right next to its mother. Mother and baby glided gracefully through the water. They twisted and turned as if playing follow the leader. The baby followed the mother, doing exactly what she did. It was so cute!

The mother manatee happily munched the vegetation that was in the canal. She stuffed the grasses in her mouth with her flippers. Ali moved slightly to get a better view and the manatee turned her whole body in Ali's direction. It was as if she were looking at Ali. Ali noticed that the mother manatee couldn't seem to move her head, but moved her

whole body instead. Ali chuckled to herself quietly. “Manatees are so ugly, that they are adorable!” she commented softly.

Ali noticed how affectionate the mother manatee was with her baby. Manatees were obviously very good mothers! The mother hugged her little baby with her flippers. The mother manatee made a squeaking sound. The baby responded with a higher-pitched chirping sound. Ali realized that the manatees were talking to each other! Then the caring mother nuzzled her calf. The calf snuggled up to its mother. Then little manatee pushed its snout under its mother’s flipper. It was nursing! The baby manatee was getting a very nourishing meal of rich milk.

Ali was so fascinated by these gentle animals, that she forgot how terrible she was feeling. She forgot all about not having any friends in school. She even began to think her new home wasn’t so bad after all. It was exciting to have such creatures living in your backyard!

Ali also realized that she had been feeling pretty lonely. Something about watching these wonderful creatures, gave her a peaceful feeling. Ali didn’t feel so lonely as she watched the pair of manatees. Their presence seemed to soothe and comfort her. It was hard to be stressed around such slow and gentle creatures.

Ali felt privileged to get a glimpse of the manatees amazing world. She also felt like she had finally found some friends! Ali was so excited. She couldn’t wait to find out more about the manatees. She wanted to know all about them. What they ate. Where they lived. How large they got. How far they swam. Just everything! Ali wanted to do as much research as she could on her newfound friends. She hoped to understand as much as possible about these fantastic creatures.

Before she knew it, the sun started to sink low in the sky. Everything became flushed with beautiful reds and golds as the sun began to set. Ali hadn’t really noticed how pretty the sunsets in her new state were before. Quietly, she sat and watched the sun go down. Ali thought that her manatee friends seemed to enjoy the sunset too.

“Oh boy!” Ali cried, remembering the time. “I’ve got to go. I’ll be late for supper. Mom will be mad!”

Ali called out to the manatees. “Listen, I’ll be back tomorrow after school. See you then... okay?”

Ali waved goodbye to the manatees. She hurried home, smiling to herself the whole way. She decided that she wouldn’t tell anyone about the canal and the manatees living there. It would be a special place to for her to go. There, at the canal’s edge, Ali could be in another world—far away from her problems and cares. Ali had found a secret place all her own. And she had found some very unusual new friends to share it with!

Next Time...

Chapter Three: Manatee News