

A kind creature

1. ACOBIA-DWA zoo is a non governmental volunteer organization in Iquitos that is basically focused on two main objectives: to rescue and rehabilitate orphaned manatees for eventual release back into the open water (a) _____ to educate the local communities about the need to protect these animals and the environment in general.



2. The *Trichechus inunguis* is one of four manatee species in the world that can only be found in rivers, lakes, tributaries and flooded plains in the Amazon basin. They are completely herbivorous and (b) _____ they are mammals, they must surface to breathe air.

3. (c) _____ Amazon jungle is very rich and manatees were once an abundant species, experts now say "manatees are swimming dangerously close to extinction in Peru." The decline of the manatee population, started when Spanish developed a taste for manatee meat and this continued through the early XX century when they were (d) _____ commercially hunted for their hides which are very tough and flexible and used to make products such as water hoses and machine belts.

4. Hunting manatees, also called sea cows, has been banned, (e) _____, it is believed illegal hunting by indigenous groups of the Amazon is keeping population low. They are still hunted for their meat (f) _____ to be sold as pets. Unfortunately, the only thing that protects them is their intimidating size (g) _____ their lack of natural defenses like claws or sharp teeth.

5. The rescue center has been working for a few years now in partnership with the Dallas World Aquarium. It has rescued several manatee orphans but (h) _____ their fragile nature and strict diet, it is very difficult to care for these orphans, and not all of them survive. In the rescue center babies are fed with a special formula to provide them the nutrition they need (for the first two years) and vets specialized in marine mammals give them the best medical care available. Vets and volunteers are also dedicated to cure manatees that have been wounded by machetes, harpoons, or propellers of the peque-peque canoes.

6. (i) _____ there isn't much point in rescuing orphan calves if local communities aren't aware of the vital role that manatees have in the ecosystem: these gentle creatures clear the waters by eating plants in the Amazon, allowing fish, frogs and insects to dive below the surface. (j) _____ ACOBIA-DWA-zoo has an extensive education program that is mostly aimed at kids and teenagers. They are more accessible in schools and more willing to listen and learn than adults. But not only do children visit the rescue center, but people from the project also travel to different villages throughout the Amazon River region (k) _____ raise awareness about the importance of manatees in the ecosystem and endangered wildlife.

7. The ACOBIA-DWA zoo in Iquitos welcomes visitors for free. On your visit you will have the opportunity to learn more about these wonderful creatures and, if you are lucky, you might even get the chance to pet the tough, slippery skin and rub the snouts of this kind species!

Before reading

- What is a non governmental organization? What do they do?
- Have you ever worked as a volunteer? Would you like to? If yes, in which area?


1. Read the text again and answer the following questions:

- What is the main purpose of the text?
- Where can you find a text like this?

2. Read the text again and complete it with the linking words in the box.

that is why - because - although - however - due to
and - in order to - because of - also - but - or

3. Mark the sentences T (True) or F (False)

- The Trichechus inunguis can only be found in Peru. _____
- The ACOBIA-DWA zoo is supported by other institutions. _____
- The ACOBIA-DWA zoo is relatively new. _____
- Manatee skin was used for commercial products. _____
- The illegal trade of manatees still exists. _____
- Manatees are predators. _____
- Baby manatees remain with their mother for two years. _____
- Several manatees die due to accidents. _____
- The rescue center only aims its environmental education program at youngsters. _____

4. Read the text and find words of phrases to match the definitions below.

- covered with water (Paragraph 2)
- a person's liking for particular things (Paragraph 3)
- when something is not available (Paragraph 4)
- artificial milk which can be given to babies instead of milk from their mother (Paragraph 5)
- a device which causes a ship to move, consisting of two or more blades which turn round at high speed (Paragraph 5)
- young of various large mammals (Paragraph 6)
- knowledge that something exists, or understanding of a situation (Paragraph 6)
- touch them gently and kindly with your hands (Paragraph 7)
- wet, smooth or oily so that it slides easily or causes something to slide (Paragraph 7)

5. Discuss

- Do you think it is true that children and young people are more willing to listen and learn about wildlife and environmental problems? Why or why not?