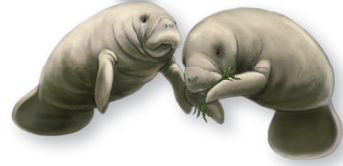


Certificate of Adoption



Manatee GbR is an Official Adoptive Parent of

ANNIE

an imperiled West Indian Manatee

Blue Spring State Park



Photo © Cora Berchem, Save the Manatee Club.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Jimmy Buffett". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Jimmy Buffett
Co-Founder
Save the Manatee® Club



Official Biography: Annie

First Identified: 2005 Mother: Unknown Sex: Female

Annie was rescued as an orphan on August 12, 2005, from the Halifax River near Port Orange, Florida. At the time, she was just a little over four feet long and weighed only 70 pounds. Newborn manatee calves are generally about four feet long and weigh around 65 pounds, so Annie was too young to be on her own. She was taken to SeaWorld Orlando to grow and gain weight, and it was there that she met a new friend named Rocket.

Rocket was also an orphaned calf who was rescued in 2006 at Blue Spring State Park. Annie and Rocket were together in rehabilitation at SeaWorld, and they were released together at Blue Spring on February 11, 2008. On the day she was released, Annie was much bigger than when she was rescued. She was about eight and a half feet in length and weighed 1,055 pounds. Both Annie and Rocket were “tagged” so they could be monitored for successful adjustment to the wild. The tag consists of a belt that fits around the base of the manatee’s tail, and a tether attaches a floating transmitter to the belt. The tag is designed with a “weak link,” so it will break loose if it becomes entangled in vegetation or debris.

Annie is not shy, and she is known for hanging around the people-populated areas of the park. Annie and Rocket did well after they were released, but two days before they were due for a health check, someone cut their tags off. The tags were recovered from a boat in nearby Lake Beresford, but the “kids” or the “twins,” as park staff called them, stopped coming in for visits to Blue Spring. Two and a half weeks went by, and there was still no sign of Annie or Rocket. Then they turned up in the swimming area at the park, and manatee researchers tried to fit them with tags again. Annie was successfully tagged, but Rocket was a tease, presenting his tail and then swimming off. The

adjustment of Annie and Rocket to the wild was a success, and both tags have long since been removed. The two manatees stayed together until they were four years old, even though they should have been going their separate ways much earlier. As Wayne Hartley, the Club’s Manatee Specialist, put it, “Annie loves people, and Rocket loves Annie.”

The year she became a Club adoptee, in 2012, Annie turned seven, and she was very pregnant when she visited the park. Female manatees usually have their first calf at age five or six, so Annie was a bit late. Her calf Arron was born in Blue Spring at the end of June 2012. For two or three weeks, Annie and Arron hung around the park. Volunteers, many from Save the Manatee Club, had to be organized to keep people from disturbing them. When Annie and Arron came back for the winter, they were the center of a small pack of juvenile manatees that wanted to nurse from Annie.

Fast forward to 2014, and Annie came into the spring towards the end of July very pregnant and soon had a female calf. When she came in for the winter, a group of juvenile manatees again gathered around her to nurse. Her calf was observed to be losing weight to the point a capture was organized in early February, and it was found that Annie too was underweight to a dangerous point. They were taken to ZooTampa at Lowry Park and returned to the spring in the latter half of March looking fat and healthy. Annie gave birth to another calf in the summer of 2016, the summer of 2018, the summer of 2021 and in March 2023.

If you happen to visit Blue Spring State Park in the winter, see if you can identify Annie. The spring’s water naturally maintains a year-round temperature of 72°F and is an attractive winter refuge for manatees.



Save the Manatee® Club · savethemanatee.org · 1-800-432-JOIN (5646)

Artwork by Nancy Blauers · Photo © Cora Berchem, Save the Manatee Club