

Only fragmented populations of the West Indian Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) now exist over the manatee's once vast Caribbean-West Atlantic range. From 1996 to 1998, we led four research expeditions to determine the status of manatees in Tortuguero, Costa Rica. We spent a total of 79 days in the field and interviewed 98 residents including former manatee hunters, river guides, and commercial fishermen. During this period, we spent more than 3500 person-hours conducting boat surveys of manatees between Moin and the Nicaraguan border. We made 29 sightings of manatees, and learned about 61 other sightings through interviews with residents (44 sightings) and reports from the Area de Conservacion Tortuguero (17 sightings). Our data indicates that manatees are threatened by hunting; an increase in boat traffic associated, in part, due to an increase in ecotourism; environmental degradation associated with the clearing of tropical forest for commercial banana plantations, logging and cattle ranging.