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### Suriname

Little information exists on current **manatee status** and **distribution**. Manatees reportedly occurred in most of the coastal plain rivers of Suriname (Figure 3), usually not farther than 60 km inland (Bertram and Bertram, 1973; Husson, 1978). Duplaix and Reichart (1978) reported the greatest concentrations in Nanni Creek and the Coesewijne, Tibiti, and Cottica Rivers. However, they believed that manatees were easier to observe in these smaller creeks and rivers than in broader rivers such as the Corantijn, lower Saramacca, and Commewijne. Manatees have also been observed or reported in the Maratakka, Nickerie, Wayambo, Coppename, and Suriname Rivers (Husson, 1978; Duplaix and Reichart, 1978). In 1966 and 1971, Dekker (1978) visited tidal areas of the Commewijne, Cottica, and Cassiwijne Rivers, and upstream, freshwater areas of the Coesewijne River and Nanni Creek. He recommended the Coesewijne River and Nanni Swamp as nature reserves for the **manatee** in Suriname.

Mangrove forests provided **manatee** habitat in the flat coastal regions and river estuaries of Suriname (Duplaix and Reichart, 1978). Husson (1978) stated that manatees had never been found in the open ocean off the coast of Suriname. Swamp forests behind the mangroves were also inhabited by manatees, which grazed on stands of *Montrichardia arborescens* along the banks at high tide (Duplaix and Reichart, 1978). Dekker (1974, 1978) believed that manatees in Suriname favored fresh water because of their preference for "Mokko mokko" (*Montrichardia*), although many other plant species were also eaten. They could be heard grazing on bank plants, sometimes for hours at a time (Dekker, 1978). Savannah swamps, or floating savannahs, were found in upper river reaches, and were characterized by *Cyperus* and *Montrichardia*. Husson (1978) also noted *Montrichardia* as a **manatee** food in Suriname, as well as *Machaerium lunatum*, *Caladium arborescens*, and *Panicum*. In contrast to Bertram and Bertram's (1973) findings in Guyana, Duplaix and Reichart (1978) reported that manatees were not found in the floating savannahs, but in the small creeks transecting them. Seasonal flooding undoubtedly made vegetation in the floating savannahs accessible to manatees. Rapids in the upstream portions of Suriname's rivers prevented manatees from traveling farther upriver (Duplaix and Reichart, 1978).

Duplaix and Reichart (1978) interviewed 89 residents, primarily Amerindians, and found that although some people believed the **manatee** had become more common in recent years because it was no longer hunted, former hunters described the **manatee** as having disappeared from its usual haunts over the past 30 years. Manatees are still poached for food or for the alleged medicinal powers of the ear bones (Department of Nature Conservation, 1993).

Manatees receive some protection under Suriname's Nature Protection and Game Ordinances. Suriname ratified the CITES convention in 1981. Although no reserve has been created specifically for manatees, they were found in the estuary and mangrove swamps of the Coppename River Nature Reserve, covering 10,000 ha (Duplaix and Reichart, 1978). None of the manatees observed bore propeller scars, but commercial river traffic was heavy and the increasing use of outboard motors by fishermen and hunters was anticipated to eventually become a problem (Duplaix and Reichart, 1978). Some incidental taking in nets was also likely to occur. Duplaix and Reichart (1978) suggested that more vigorous enforcement of existing conservation laws and protection of areas with the highest **manatee** density, such as Nanni Creek, the upper Coesewijne River, and the Perica River, were needed to improve the **status** of the **manatee** in Suriname.