

Lourie, Peter. *The Manatee Scientists: Saving Vulnerable Species.* photos by author, et al. 80p. (Scientists in the Field Series). further reading. glossary. index. Web sites. CIP. Houghton Harcourt. 2011. Tr \$18.99. ISBN 978-0-547-15254-7. LC 2010009739.

Gr 5-8—Lourie’s readable text follows the efforts of research scientists in Brazil, West Africa, and Florida as they attempt to determine the habits, habitats, and behaviors of three large sirenians, two of whom live in very remote and often primitive areas. The fieldwork on West African and Amazonian manatees is complicated by the very murky water in which they live (Floridian manatees get pellucid aquamarine waters but more propeller slashes) and is further complicated by the fact they are hunted for food to supplement inadequate diets in isolated areas. The African studies are compounded by a variety of national political issues and some social unrest. Lourie’s lucid reportage is accompanied by clear color photos of the scientists at work in drowned rain forests, crystalline springs, muddy rivers blocked by dams, in the lab, and from the air. Quotes are imbedded as well, with Lucy Keith remarking patiently, “You have to really like challenges to do research in Africa,” and Fernando Rosas in Brazil explaining why local people love manatee meat. “They eat fish for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, so any change in this diet is welcome.” This is a living, breathing window into the watery world of manatee studies, with eager scientists pursuing the preservation of stressed sirenian populations with determination and grit.

—Patricia Manning, formerly at Eastchester Public Library, NY