

## Fla.'s Big Chill: Iguanas drop, manatees huddle

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APOLLO BEACH (AP) - Frigid temperatures across Florida drove hundreds of manatees to balmy waters outside a power plant, shocked endangered sea turtles off the coast and even sent cold-blooded iguanas tumbling from trees.

Across the Sunshine State, a cold wave pushing temperatures into the 40s or below left exotic fauna shivering.

More than 200 manatees lolled in 70 degree waters in a canal outside a Tampa Bay area power plant Thursday as crowds gawked on a viewing platform. Along with the sea cows, giant eagle rays and spinner sharks sought refuge in the warm waters.

"This is a spa for them," said Wendy Anastasiou, an environmental specialist for the Tampa Electric Company.

The manatees, many of which congregate near power plant outflows and natural-fed springs in the Tampa Bay area, weren't in immediate danger as they huddled near the Big Bend Power Plant in Apollo Beach.

Anastasiou said it's typical for the vegetarian mammals to seek warmer water when Tampa Bay waters dip below 68 degrees in winter.

During cold spells, the animals congregate in massive numbers, and gawkers "oohed" and "aahed" Thursday as the gentle giants - some weighing 3,000 pounds - occasionally surfaced.

Across Florida, animals coped with temperatures that plunged some 20 degrees below normal.

Iguanas were seen falling out of trees in South Florida as some became immobilized and lost their grip in the cold. Iguanas are not native to Florida; many are pets, or descendants of pets that were released into the wild.

Along Florida's Atlantic Coast, 93 sea turtles were found floating in a lagoon and experts said the cold water shocked their tropically inclined systems. Most were endangered green sea turtles and had to be

sent to research facilities for care.

“We try to collect them and get them to a warm location,” said Roger Pszonowsky, a volunteer with the Sea Turtle Preservation Society in Brevard County.

Freshwater turtles can go into mud and hibernate, he said, but sea turtles don’t have that advantage and suffer from what he called “cold stunning.”

And it wasn’t just wild animals in Florida that needed warmth.

At the Palm Beach Zoo, workers sent 50 parrots and some monkeys indoors. They also set up heat lamps around the park to ward off the chill for other animals.