

# Dugong

*(Dugong dugon)*



Dugongs are large, greyish-brown marine mammals with a streamlined, torpedo-like body, a whale-like tail, and paddle-shaped flippers. They are the only herbivorous marine mammal, primarily feeding on 30-40 kg's of seagrass daily. Dugongs are often called "sea cows" due to their grazing habits. They have a distinctive downward-facing snout, large, bristly upper lip, small eyes, and small ears.

These gentle giants grow up to 3m in length, weigh up to 420kg and live for up to 70 years. Males grow two incisors (tusks) during puberty. Female tusks grow but usually do not stick out until later in life. The number of growth rings in a tusk can tell us a dugong's age. Their cheek teeth also move forward as they age.

Dugongs live in warm, shallow, coastal waters with seagrass meadows, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. The dugong's skull is unique, with a large sharply downward-curved upper jaw.

