



## The Missing Manatee: A Mystery About Fishing and Family

By Cynthia DeFelice

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**The Missing Manatee: A Mystery About Fishing and Family** By Cynthia DeFelice

### A tribute to Florida, fishing, and family

All Skeet Waters wants is to catch a big, beautiful tarpon on his fly rod - and to keep everything else in his life in Florida the way it's always been. But on his spring break from school, Skeet overhears his mother telling his father to move out permanently. Then, while riding in his boat to escape his parents' troubles, he discovers a manatee that's been shot in the head. Skeet puts aside his search for the manatee and its killer when Dirty Dan the Tarpon Man offers to take him out to catch his first tarpon on a fly. Because of Dan, Skeet begins to unravel the mysteries surrounding the manatee's apparent murder and his parents' dissolving marriage.

Skeet discovers that life is a lot like tarpon fishing, in which you can't look just at the surface of the water - you have to look through it, at what lies beneath.

*The Missing Manatee* is a nominee for the 2006 Edgar Award for Best Juvenile Mystery

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5-7—It's spring vacation, and Skeet Waters, 11, wants to spend his time fishing in his boat just off the coast of his Florida home. Instead, his day begins with him overhearing his mother telling his father to move out for good. Things go from bad to worse when Skeet finds a manatee floating in the water, dead from a gunshot wound. He goes back to shore to get the sheriff, and when they return to the spot, the animal is gone. The boy makes finding the missing body and bringing the killer to justice his mission. Meanwhile, his father's buddy, Dirty Dan, takes Skeet out fishing for tarpon and drinks Jack Daniels all day. When Skeet discovers a gun in a storage bin, he begins to suspect that Dan is the culprit and confronts him. The man confesses that his special-needs son accidentally shot the animal. DeFelice offers a realistic adventure story that is fast paced and full of drama. Skeet faces many difficult problems throughout the book, each with serious consequences, and his first-person narrative rings true. The characters are multifaceted and well developed, and the story should prompt readers to think about cause and effect.—*Alison Grant, West Bloomfield Township Public Library, MI*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 5-8. While cruising in his small boat through the maze of Florida's coastal rivers, young Skeet Waters comes across a dead manatee. Close examination reveals that the manatee was shot through the head. However, when Skeet and a deputy sheriff return to the scene of the crime, they discover that the manatee has disappeared. Skeet is determined to solve the crime, but he takes a break in his efforts to go fly-fishing for tarpon with Dirty Dan, a legendary local guide. Eventually, Skeet discovers that Dirty Dan is responsible for the manatee's death and disappearance. With the help of his funny and free-spirited grandmother, Skeet also learns that administering true justice is not always simple or easy. DeFelice delivers a fast-paced mystery with a strong sense of place. Her lengthy description of the subtleties of tarpon fishing will grab young lovers of outdoor adventures. These elements, along with strong characters and an effective first-person narration, create an exciting whole, sure to hook readers. *Todd Morning*  
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Review

"DeFelice delivers a fast-paced mystery with a strong sense of place. Strong characters and an effective first-person narration...create an exciting whole, sure to hook readers." -- *Booklist*

"DeFelice keenly evokes the feel of a Gulf fishing town...the reader's empathy will be engaged as Skeet discovers that things aren't always what they seem."  
-- *Kirkus Reviews*

"The characters shine. Readers will savor the story." -- *VOYA*

"DeFelice offers a realistic adventure story that is fast paced and full of drama. The characters are multifaceted and well developed, and the story should prompt readers to think about cause and effect." -- *School Library Journal*

"A great mystery." -- *SIGNAL*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Gerald Dews:**

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#### **Kristi Duncan:**

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#### **Larhonda Kennedy:**

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