PRESS RELEASE

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**Florida manatees gain ‘lift’ from Shuttlelift SCD09 industrial crane at ZooTampa**

* *Florida zoo acquires a Shuttlelift carrydeck crane exclusively for supporting its manatee rehab program, transferring animals between transport trucks and pools as well as providing an efficient daily weighing solution.*
* *The intuitive ease of use of this highly maneuverable crane is greatly appreciated by the zoo staff.*
* *The new crane replaces a vintage Shuttlelift 3330E that provided exceptional support for over 20 years, helping hundreds of manatees receive treatment at the facility.*

To support its successful manatee care and rehabilitation program, ZooTampa has purchased a new Shuttlelift SCD09 carrydeck crane, replacing an older Shuttlelift crane that served the program’s staff for over 20 years.

These increasingly threatened, gentle sea mammals have endured habitat loss, dangers such as cold stress and red tide poisoning, and many are hit by boats navigating Florida waters, sometimes leading to animal fatalities.

ZooTampa’s David A. Straz, Jr. Manatee Critical Care Center has looked after more than 500 seriously injured, sick, or orphaned manatees, returning more than 280 of them back to the wild. For the past 20-plus years, its trusty but aging 8.5 USt Shuttlelift 3330E was used to carefully handle the stretchers containing these vulnerable creatures whenever they needed medical care and rehabilitation.

On average, ZooTampa admits 30-35 manatees into its hospital each year, although this figure is unfortunately increasing. And with its staff being on call 24/7 to receive stricken animals, its new 9 USt Shuttlelift SCD09 is of vital importance in ensuring timely treatment, explained Lisa Dijenno, animal care supervisor at the zoo.

“Without the crane, we wouldn’t be able to get the manatees out from the transport truck into their pool when they first arrive, or from there into the medical school. Sometimes they can weigh around 2,000 lbs when they come in, and the pools are elevated above the ground, so we obviously can’t lift them by hand. Then, when they’re ready for release, we need the crane to get them from the pool into the transport truck.”

The SCD09 also provides crucial services on a daily basis, added Molly Lippincott, curator of Florida and manatees at ZooTampa. “We need to weigh the animals pretty regularly to monitor whether they’re gaining enough weight — they should eat about 16% of their body weight daily. On average, manatees weigh about 1,500 lbs, and can move pretty quickly when they want, so it’s important that we do what’s best for both them and us. We would not be able to function as a hospital without this crane.”

With 13 manatees currently in different stages of rehabilitation at the facility, the Shuttlelift’s Rated Capacity Limiter (RCL) provides an extremely useful function, conveniently displaying the calculated load on its full-color, graphical display. Although the center recently rescued a “tiny” 43 lbs newborn calf, some of its largest past patients have weighed upwards of 2,500 lbs, making their handling and transport the utmost priority.

**Manatee handling**

Given the small number of crane operators who switch to a career in zookeeping, several of the ZooTampa staff have recently received training and NCCCO certification in operation from nearby resources.

“We learned a lot on the job with the 3330E over the years, practicing without animals to begin with, but Sims Crane, our local Shuttlelift dealer, has made sure that we know everything about properly operating the crane,” Dijenno, said.

“But a lot of what we do isn’t really something that can be taught,” added Lippincott. “So, we’ve spent a lot of time working with each other to figure out the best way to handle a manatee, to ensure its optimum well-being. Having a wild animal on the front of a crane can be dangerous, so we usually meet as a team beforehand to discuss how we’re going to move them adequately — and what our backup plan will be if it goes wrong.”

With so much at stake, the easy operation of the SCD09 — enabled by features such as the easy-to-set-up graphic RCL system, automotive-style dash panel, and hydraulic joystick control — is a welcome bonus for the ZooTampa staff.

“Not only is the crane pretty intuitive to operate, but it’s also the perfect size for our needs,” Dijenno said. “It’s also pretty quiet, quick, and efficient, which is really helpful when we need to move the animals as fuss-free as possible. And with its compact frame [19ft 7in long by 7ft 3in wide] and three steering modes [front, four-wheel coordinated and four-wheel crab steer with electronic alignment], it’s really easy to maneuver around the small area that we have, making sure we can quickly and efficiently move manatees between the truck and the pool.”

The facility’s limited space meant maneuverability was a key factor in ZooTampa’s purchasing decision, said Lippincott.

“This crane has worked out incredibly well for us,” Dijenno said. “We never know what’s going to happen on any given day — we have to be mentally prepared to jump into the crane at any moment. And the great thing about the Shuttlelift is, because it’s so easy to use, we’ve always been successful in moving them properly.”

This is all a far cry from the traditional industrial applications of the four-model 9 – 25 USt capacity Shuttlelift range, with many models in Florida being involved in the phosphate business, power plants, and construction industry. Nevertheless, the compact SCD09 was the obvious choice for ZooTampa, according to Jerome Willis, new equipment sales manager at Sims Crane, Florida’s largest crane service provider.

“Over 20 years ago, we started them off with our 8.5 t model and they kept it going ever since, so it was clearly doing something right. But, last year, they decided that they needed a new machine, so I came out to take another look at the location with Jaime Vaccaro, the animal care supervisor, and when she heard about the improvements Manitowoc made to the SCD09, the deal was done the same night.”

“One option they were keen to take advantage of was the dual-fuel GM3.0L EFI gasoline/LP gas engine, which creates a much more pleasant environment for wildlife,” added Tim Moffitt, regional business manager at Manitowoc. “There’s also an optional 12 ft swingaway jib, although the 33 ft three-section main boom more than meets the zoo’s lifting needs. The exclusive three-position pivoting boom nose [0°, 40° or 80°] is another useful feature. Every pick can be made in a smooth, controllable way, ensuring utmost care for the manatee.”

ZooTampa at Lowry Park is operated by the Lowry Park Zoological Society, an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization “committed to excellence in conservation, education, recreation, and research.” ZooTampa is recognized for the rehabilitation and care of Florida species and is an eleven-time winner of the Trip Advisor Travelers' Choice Award (2010-2022), ranking among the top 10% of attractions worldwide.

For full specifications on the Shuttlelift SCD09, click [here](https://www.manitowoc.com/shuttlelift/shuttlelift-carrydeck-cranes/scd09). To learn more about ZooTampa’s manatee conservation program, click [here](https://zootampa.org/conservation/zt-saves/manatee-conservation/). To visit Sims Crane’s website, click [here](https://simscrane.com/).

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