

New bilingual children's book invites readers to protect an "enormous vegetarian" of the sea ^[1]

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Salvando a un enorme
**VEGETARIANO
MARINO**
y a su ensalada

Saving a humongous marine vegetarian and its salad



Antonio Mignucci

Ilustraciones por / Illustrations by
Mrinali Álvarez Astacio

The Caribbean Manatee Conservation Center of the Inter American University of Puerto Rico announces the launch of its new bilingual children's book: *Saving an Enormous Marine*

Vegetarian and His Salad, an illustrated story that celebrates the gentle nature of the manatee and the importance of protecting seagrass meadows in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. The book presentation will take place on **January 3, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.** at **Casa Norberto Bookstore**, where the author will offer a brief talk on the importance of seagrasses and the conservation of the Caribbean manatee. The event will include a read-aloud session and a book signing.

Written by marine scientist **Antonio Mignucci** and illustrated by artist **Mrinali Álvarez Astacio**, the book invites readers to dive into the underwater world of the manatee—a gentle giant that feeds exclusively on marine plants—to discover how everyone can help conserve this iconic endangered species. Designed for children ages 5 to 14, the book blends science, empathy, and humor in a visually vibrant narrative, with text in both Spanish and English on every page.

“We wanted to create a book that sparks love for the ocean from an early age. The manatee is a sweet, curious, and completely harmless animal; teaching children about its world and its ‘salad’ is a powerful way to inspire future environmental stewards,” explained Mignucci, director of the Caribbean Manatee Conservation Center.

The book addresses essential topics in a friendly way, such as the manatee’s diet, the importance of marine ecosystems, and the role communities play in protecting coastal environments. With immersive illustrations depicting seagrass meadows, tropical fish, and the daily life of these enormous vegetarians, the work complements the Center’s educational mission.

Saving an Enormous Marine Vegetarian and His Salad is part of the Center’s initiative to promote ocean literacy among students, teachers, and families. The book will be available to schools, libraries, community organizations, and the general public. As with previous Center publications, proceeds will directly support rescue, rehabilitation, and conservation programs for manatees, sea turtles, birds, and other vulnerable species.

The hardcover book features 47 full-color pages and stands out for its accessible style, ideal for independent reading, family reading at home, or as a classroom resource for science, social studies, and environmental education teachers.

Saving an Enormous Marine Vegetarian and His Salad is now available for purchase at bookstores across the island, as well as at the Manatee Conservation Center at the Inter American University, Bayamón Campus. The retail price is **\$19.95**, and proceeds will support the Center’s marine education and conservation projects. For more information, visit www.manatipr.org [2].

About the Author

Antonio Mignucci is an aquatic veterinary technician and professor of marine sciences at the Inter American University, Bayamón Campus. Dr. Mignucci is the founder and director of the Caribbean Manatee Conservation Center. With more than 100 scientific publications and decades dedicated to the study and protection of marine mammals, he is one of the leading voices in marine conservation in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. In addition to his scientific work, he has devoted much of his career to science communication for children and youth.

About the Illustrator

Mrinali Álvarez Astacio is a Puerto Rican illustrator and artist recognized for her colorful, expressive, and narrative-driven style. Her work combines environmental sensitivity, visual richness, and a deep connection to Caribbean wildlife. This book marks her collaboration with the Center in creating children's literature with a conservation focus.

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