

Crocodile Facts



Crocodile

- Grayish green color
- If present, dark stripes on tail and body
- Fourth tooth on lower jaw exposed when mouth is closed
- Narrow tapered snout



Alligator

- Black in color
- If present, light stripes on tail and body
- Fourth tooth on lower jaw not exposed when mouth is closed
- Broad rounded snout

Top photo by Ft. Lauderdale Research and Education Center, Dept. of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, University of Florida



If you are concerned about a crocodile in your area, call 1-866-FWC-GATOR (1-866-392-4286).


For more information on crocodiles, visit MyFWC.com/crocodile.



Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com

620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600

 printed on recycled paper

A guide to living with Crocodiles



© Gatorama



Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com



The American crocodile, bottom left, has a narrow tapered snout. The alligator, top right, has a broad rounded snout.

A guide to living with crocodiles

The shy and reclusive American crocodile used to live within coastal areas of the southern third of Florida and was found as far north as Charlotte County on the Gulf Coast and in the lower Indian River on the Atlantic Coast. The species is primarily found in South Florida – in brackish and saltwater habitats, such as ponds, coves and creeks of mangrove swamps, which have deeper water, low wave action and relatively low salinities.

Recently though, crocodiles have moved northward within their range and even inland, into freshwater areas in Southeast Florida because of the extensive canal system. Outside of Florida, they live along the coasts in parts of Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

The American crocodile is an endangered species success story. It was listed as an endangered species in 1975, and since that time, its numbers have grown in Florida from less than 300 to more than 1,500, not including hatchlings. The number of documented nests has increased from 10 to 20, to more than 100. The American crocodile is now classified as threatened.

The number of crocodile-related complaints has risen as a result of their recovery and the increasing number of people living and enjoying nature in South Florida. However, conflicts between American crocodiles and people are extremely rare throughout their range. When such incidents have occurred, they have involved large crocodiles. Large crocodiles are still uncommon in Florida, but – as with any predatory animal – people must use caution when near them.



If you see a crocodile

American crocodiles are a recovering species, and as such, they must be managed responsibly, taking into consideration their needs as well as human safety. Often the best course of action is simply to leave the crocodile alone.

The species is an important part of Florida's natural history as well as an integral component of the ecosystems in which it lives. For the American crocodile to continue its recovery, people must learn to coexist with it when possible.

Alligators also may be present in places where crocodiles live. The following are some things you can do to minimize any risk to you, your family and pets from crocodiles and alligators:

- Closely supervise children when they are playing in or around water. Never allow small children to play near water unsupervised.
- Crocodiles are most active at night, between dusk and dawn. Swim only during daylight hours.
- Do not allow pets to swim, exercise or drink in water that may contain crocodiles or in designated swimming areas with humans. Dogs are more susceptible to being bitten than humans because dogs resemble the natural prey of crocodiles.
- Use fencing or other barriers to separate you and your pets from crocodiles.
- Leave crocodiles alone. State and federal law prohibits killing, harassing or possessing crocodiles.
- Never feed or entice crocodiles – it is dangerous and illegal. When fed, crocodiles may overcome their natural wariness and learn to associate people with food.

■ Inform others that feeding crocodiles is illegal and can create a problem for people who want to use the water for recreational purposes.

■ Dispose of fish scraps in garbage cans at boat ramps or fish camps. Do not throw them in the water. Although you are not intentionally feeding crocodiles when you do this, the result can be the same.

■ Never remove a crocodile from its natural habitat or accept one as a pet. It is illegal and dangerous to do so. Handling even a small one could result in it biting you.

■ Seek immediate medical attention if you are bitten by a crocodile because bites can result in serious infections.

■ Observe and photograph crocodiles only from a distance.

Bottom left and right photos by Ft. Lauderdale Research and Education Center, Dept. of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, University of Florida



A crocodile's fourth tooth on its lower jaw is exposed when the mouth is closed.