

What is it?



Crocodile

- Grayish green color on back
- 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 on back
- 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.



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A Guide to Living with Crocodiles



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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

Historically, the American crocodile lived in 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. Outside of Florida, this species also is found along the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean. In Florida, crocodiles most commonly occur in brackish and saltwater habitats, such as ponds, coves and tidal creeks lined with mangroves. However, crocodiles also can be found in inland freshwater habitats due to the extensive canal system of South Florida.

The Florida population of the American crocodile is an endangered species success story. The species was listed as endangered in 1975, and since then, its numbers have grown from a few hundred to more than 1,500, not including hatchlings. The Florida population is currently classified as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The number of crocodile-related complaints has risen as a result of the recovery of the crocodile population and the increasing number of people living in South Florida. Consequently, crocodiles are being seen in places where they have not occurred in decades. However, the presence of crocodiles is no reason for immediate concern. People can safely co-exist with this uncommon and unique native animal.

If You See a Crocodile

American crocodiles are a recovering species, and as such, must be managed responsibly. Human safety is the highest priority. However, for the Florida crocodile to continue its recovery, people must be willing to co-exist with it when possible. Often, the best course of action is simply to leave the crocodile alone.

People can safely co-exist with crocodiles by following a few common sense safety tips, such as:

- Swim only in posted swimming areas.
- Avoid swimming in areas that may be inhabited by crocodiles.
- Swim only during daylight hours. Crocodiles are most active between dusk and dawn.
- Crocodiles naturally prey on small mammals. A dog or cat is just another small mammal to a crocodile. Consequently, pets are not safe near the water. Therefore, keep pets at least ten feet from the water and never allow them to run free or swim where crocodiles may live.
- Use fencing or other barriers to separate your pets and family from crocodiles.
- Leave crocodiles alone. State and federal law prohibits killing, harassing, feeding or possessing crocodiles.
- Never feed crocodiles – it is illegal. When fed, crocodiles may become used to people and may be more likely to become a nuisance.
- Inform others that feeding crocodiles is illegal and can create a problem for people who want to use the water for recreational purposes.



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

- Discard fish scraps only in designated waste containers. Discarding scraps in the water may attract crocodiles by providing the opportunity of a free meal.
- Feeding other aquatic wildlife such as ducks, fish and turtles also can attract crocodiles by attracting potential prey animals. Crocodiles are normally shy and wary. However, directly or indirectly feeding them can cause them to lose their natural wariness of humans and be more likely to become a nuisance.
- Always maintain a safe distance between you and a crocodile. Crocodiles, like many wild animals, can become accustomed to humans. They can learn over time through experience that people are not dangerous to them. When this occurs, crocodiles may allow a person to approach them closer than they normally would.

