

American Alligator

(*Alligator mississippiensis*)

Protected

Species Status

- Feeding is illegal
- Permit required to hunt or trap



Habitat

- Freshwater/brackish wetlands from the Carolinas to Florida to western Texas

Characteristics

- Cold-Blooded
- Wide, rounded snout
- Smooth/soft light color underside with a hard/rough dark color top side
- Lack a salt extracting gland—intolerant to saltwater
- Juveniles have yellow-white colored stripes with interchanging dark wide bands
- Adults are solid, dark gray-green on top
- Grow approx. one foot every year
- Hear underwater
- Adult males are larger; average length is 9-11 feet; adult females are smaller—average being 8-10 feet
- Live around 40 years or more in wild and around 70 years in captivity
- Ectothermic—rely on outside temperature to regulate body temperature
- 80 teeth in a conical shape and teeth are hollow inside
- Muscles in jaw are weak to open but have a crushing power of 3,000psi



Fun Facts

- Record length is 19'2" from Louisiana
- "Alligator" comes from the Spanish word "el lagarto" meaning "lizard"
- Have a 4 chambered heart like birds and mammals while other reptiles have 3
- 2 hours underwater when relaxing, but 20 minutes when swimming
- Survived past dinosaurs (more than 150 million years)

Breeding

- Mating season is from mid-April through May—extra aggressive
- Males head-slap the water and make a deep rumbling sound to attract females
- Once they pair, they swim together, touch one another's snout, and blow bubbles



Nesting

- Females construct the nest by mounding vegetation, sticks, leaves, and mud in a sheltered area, in or out of water
- Body and tail clear the spot, jaws used to drag and gather vegetation, hind legs to dig a hole for the eggs
- Cover eggs with vegetation for incubation
- Females protect the nest and defend from any predators
- Incubation of eggs lasts around 65 days
- Temperature of eggs determine sex of babies; cooler is females, warmer is males

