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# Alligators

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**Prepared by the National Wildlife Control Training Program. <http://WildlifeControlTraining.com>**

Research-based, certified wildlife control training programs to solve human – wildlife conflicts.

One source for training, animal handling and control methods, and wildlife species information.

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**Figure 1. American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) Photo by Ron Case.**

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## Species Overview

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### Conflicts

Alligators sometimes excavate burrows or dens for refuge from cold temperatures, drought, other alligators, and humans. Alligator burrowing can damage dikes, levees, and impoundments, and breach fences.

An alligator will prey on any animal it can physically consume. They readily take domestic dogs and cats.

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### Legal Status

Alligators are federally classified as “threatened due to similarity of appearance” to other endangered crocodilians. The classification provides federal protection for alligators but allows state-approved programs for management and control. Alligators can be taken legally only by individuals with proper licenses or permits. Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas have programs to control problem or nuisance alligators that allow hunters with permits to kill or facilitate the removal of alligators. Other

states use state wildlife officials to remove alligators that are causing problems.

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### Identification

American alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*, Figure 1), often called “gators,” are one of 22 crocodilian species worldwide and the most common crocodilian native to the US. The other native crocodilian species is the American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*). Caimans (*Caiman* spp.), imported from Central and South America, survive and reproduce in Florida.

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### Physical Description

An alligator is distinguished from American crocodiles and caimans by a more rounded snout and black and yellow-white coloration. American crocodiles and caimans are olive-brown in color and have pointed snouts. Alligators and crocodiles are similar in physical size, while caimans are about 40% smaller. Male alligators can grow to more than 14 feet long and 1,000 pounds. Females can exceed 10 feet and 250 pounds. The growth rate of an alligator depends on diet, temperature, and sex. To reach 6 feet in length, alligators take up to 10 years in Louisiana, 14 years in Florida, and 16 years in North Carolina. Alligators can grow to 6 feet in 3 years when they are raised on farms under ideal conditions.

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### Species Range

Alligators thrive in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. The northern range is limited by low temperatures in winter. Alligators rarely are found south of the Rio Grande River.

American crocodiles are scarce and protected in the US. They are found in the coastal waters of Florida, south of Tampa. Caimans rarely survive winters north of central Florida and reproduce only in southern Florida.

### Health and Safety Concerns

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Alligators usually are not aggressive toward humans. Unprovoked attacks by alligators smaller than 5 feet are rare, but unusual behavior does occur. Single bites usually are made by alligators that are less than 8 feet long. Most bites occur in Florida, which documented 340 attacks between 1948 and 2006, of which 17 resulted in human fatalities. Attacks also have been documented in South Carolina, Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, and Alabama. Most attacks are non-fatal, although one-third involved repeated bites, major injury, or death.

Serious and repeated attacks normally are made by alligators greater than 8 feet in length. Death occurs either by suffocation or by drowning.

Alligators inflict damage with sharp, cone-shaped teeth and powerful jaws. Bites are characterized by puncture wounds and torn flesh. Alligators often seize an appendage and twist it off by spinning. Many serious injuries involve badly damaged and broken arms on humans, or legs on other animals. All alligator bites require medical treatment, and serious wounds may require hospitalization.

In the most serious alligator attacks, victims were unaware of the alligator before the attack. Most attacks occur in water, but alligators have assaulted humans and pets on land. People who are walking their pets often are the secondary target after the pet escapes. Alligators quickly become conditioned to humans, especially when food is associated with people. Alligators that habituate to humans can be dangerous, especially to children. Alligators fed by humans often become aggressive and must be removed.

Ponds and waterways at golf courses and high-density housing are problem sites when alligators become accustomed to living near people.

Few attacks are attributed to wounded or territorial alligators, or females defending their nests or young. When defending a territory, alligators normally display, hiss, and approach on the surface of the water where they can be more intimidating.

In the rare event that you are attacked, awareness of alligator behavior may save your life. Alligators clamp down with powerful jaws, then twist and roll. If an alligator bites your arm, it may help to grab the alligator and roll with it to reduce tearing of the arm. Strike the nose of the alligator hard and often, and try to gouge the eyes. If at all possible, do not allow the alligator to pull you into the water.

### General Biology, Reproduction, and Behavior

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#### Reproduction

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Alligators reach sexual maturity when they are 6 to 8 feet long. Throughout most of their range, alligators begin courting in April and breed in late May and early June. A female lays a single clutch of 30 to 50 eggs in a mound of vegetation during early June to mid-July. They incubate eggs for about 65 days. In late August or early September, 9- to 10-inch hatchlings are liberated from the nest by the female. The female may defend and stay with her hatchlings for up to a year, gradually removing herself as caregiver as the next breeding season approaches.

#### Nesting/Denning Cover

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Alligator nests are about 2 feet high and 5 feet wide. Nests are constructed of vegetation and materials in the surrounding habitat, which commonly includes marsh grasses, peat, pine needles, and soil.

## Behavior

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Alligators are ectothermic, meaning they rely on external heat sources to maintain their body temperature. They are most active during warm weather (82° to 92° F), stop feeding when the ambient temperature drops below 70° F, and become dormant below 55° F.

## Habitat

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Alligators are found in wetlands throughout the coastal plains of the southeastern US. They may be found in almost any freshwater habitat, and densities are greatest in wetlands that provide sites for nesting and feeding. Alligators often inhabit urban wetlands (canals, lagoons, ponds, streams, and impoundments).

## Food Habits

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Alligators are carnivorous and prey on any animal that is available. Juvenile alligators (less than 4 feet) eat crustaceans, snails, and small fish. Sub-adults (4 to 6 feet) eat fish, crustaceans, small mammals, and birds. Adults (greater than 6 feet) eat fish, mammals, turtles, birds, and other alligators. Diet is dependent on where the alligator lives. In coastal marshes of Louisiana, adult alligators primarily feed on nutria, whereas in Florida and northern Louisiana, rough fish and turtles comprise most of their diet. Cannibalism is common among alligators in Florida and Louisiana.

## Voice, Sounds, Tracks, and Signs

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Alligators communicate through bellowing and slapping their heads against the water.

## Damage Identification

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### Damage to Landscapes

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Alligators sometimes damage turf and other landscapes with their burrowing and nesting activities.

### Damage to Livestock and Crops

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Alligators will prey on any animal it can physically consume. They readily take domestic dogs and cats. Losses of livestock other than domestic waterfowl are uncommon and difficult to verify. In rural areas, large alligators may take calves, foals, goats, hogs, domestic waterfowl, and occasionally full-grown cattle and horses.

## Damage to Structures

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Alligators sometimes excavate burrows or dens that can damage dikes, levees, and impoundments, and breach fences.

## Damage Prevention and Control Methods

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### Habitat Modification

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Most wetland modifications are unlawful and can be detrimental to other wildlife. Check with appropriate conservation authorities before modifying wetlands.

Eliminate emergent vegetation to reduce cover for alligators. Construct trails at least 15 feet from the edge of water. Keep vegetation cut along trails.

### Exclusion

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Alligators are most dangerous in water or at the edge of water. They occasionally make forays over land in search of new habitat, mates, or prey. Along waterways and lakes, concrete or wooden bulkheads that are at least 3 feet above the high water mark will discourage alligators from getting to land.

Alligators have been documented climbing 5-foot chain-link fences to get at dogs. Angle the top of a fence outward to prevent climbing. All fences should be made with 4-inch mesh, with 2 feet buried into the soil. Alligators have difficulty digging in firm, dry soil but they easily excavate soil that is mucky.

### Frightening Devices

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Aversive conditioning and rough handling of captured alligators have had limited success in several areas. Pressure from hunting appears to be the most effective way to increase wariness of alligators, and may be responsible for reducing attacks by alligators in Florida, despite increasing populations of both humans and alligators. The low rate of attack in Louisiana is attributed to a history of intense hunting.

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### Repellents

None are registered for the control of alligators.

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### Toxicants

None are registered for the control of alligators.

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### Shooting

In South Carolina, nuisance alligators should be reported to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). Licensed trappers have been permitted by the SCDNR to remove and dispatch of any alligator who may exhibit aggressiveness, habituated behavior towards humans (most likely from feeding), illness/injury, or inhabit a recreational swimming area.

Alligators can be shot during night or day. Be careful while shooting over water because of the risk of ricochet. Alligators in water sink almost immediately when shot, making them difficult to recover with gaff or snatch hooks, especially in a current or heavy vegetation.

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### Trapping

Contact the SCDNR for nuisance alligator complaints.

Trapping alligators can be dangerous and is best left to professionals. Never place your hands near the head of an alligator, as it can swing and snap with great speed. Use catch-poles and other devices to handle and control alligators. Never assume an alligator is dead. Secure the jaws with duct tape as soon as safely possible.

Alligators are attracted to bait and easily lured to traps; wire box traps have been effective. Use cages large enough to catch the alligators in your area. Before trapping, obtain proper permits or licenses from your state wildlife agency.

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### Disposition

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#### Relocation

Relocation of alligators in South Carolina is illegal.

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#### Translocation

Translocation of alligators in South Carolina is illegal.

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#### Euthanasia

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#### Contact the SCDNR for nuisance alligator complaints.

To euthanize an alligator more than 5 feet long, discharge a .243-caliber bullet or larger into the brain. Avoid placing the shot between the eyes or the top the skull, as the bullet may ricochet off the bone. Shoot at the base of the skull instead. If using a bangstick, only discharge it underwater to reduce the potential of injury from fragments. Small alligators can be killed with a blow to the brain with a sharp object.

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### Resources

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#### Web Resources

<http://dnr.sc.gov>

For more information on the National Wildlife control Training Program visit <http://wildlifecontroltraining.com>  
<http://icwdm.org/>  
<http://wildlifecontrol.info>

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Certified wildlife control training programs to

solve human – wildlife conflicts. The only research-based source for training, animal

handling and control methods, and wildlife species information





■ Never feed alligators – it's dangerous and illegal. When fed, alligators can overcome their natural wariness and learn to associate people with food. When this happens, some of these alligators have to be removed and killed.

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

■ Seek immediate medical attention if you are bitten by an alligator. Alligator bites can result in serious infections.

■ Observe and photograph alligators only from a distance. Remember, they're an important part of Florida's natural history as well as an integral component of aquatic ecosystems.



Janice Plain

To report nuisance alligators call  
**866-FWC-GATOR (866-392-4286).**



[MyFWC.com/Alligator](http://MyFWC.com/Alligator)



Tim Donovan, FWC

Call 866-FWC-GATOR (392-4286) to report nuisance alligators.

# A Guide to Living with **Alligators**



Jamie Feddersen



Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission  
[MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com)





Lizabeth West, FWC

Do not swim outside of posted swimming areas or in waters that may be inhabited by alligators.

### **Living with Alligators**

In Florida, the growing number of people living and recreating near water has led to a steady rise in the number of alligator-related complaints. The majority of these complaints relate to alligators being where they simply aren't wanted. Because of these complaints, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program permits the killing of approximately 7,000 nuisance alligators each year. Using this approach, and through increased public awareness, the rate of alligator bites on people has remained constant despite the increased potential for alligator-human interactions as Florida's human population has grown.

Alligators are an important part of Florida's landscape and play a valuable role in the ecology of our state's wetlands. Alligators are predators and help keep other aquatic animal populations in balance. A better understanding of the facts and information presented in this brochure will help ensure that people and alligators can continue to coexist.

Visit [MyFWC.com/Gators](http://MyFWC.com/Gators) for more information about alligators and the latest nuisance alligator program statistics.



Tim Donovan, FWC

### **Alligators and People**

Alligators are a fundamental part of Florida's wetlands, swamps, rivers and lakes, and they are found in all 67 counties. Florida continues to experience human population growth. Many new residents seek waterfront homes, resulting in increased interactions between people and alligators.

Although most Floridians understand that we have alligators living in our state, the potential for conflict exists. Because of their predatory nature, alligators may target pets and livestock as prey. Unfortunately, people also are occasionally bitten. Since 1948, Florida has averaged about five unprovoked bites per year. During that period, a little more than 300 unprovoked bites to people have been documented in Florida, with 22 resulting in deaths.

In the past 10 years, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has received an average of nearly 16,000 alligator-related complaints per year. Most of these complaints deal with alligators occurring in places such as backyard ponds, canals, ditches and streams, but other conflicts occur when alligators wander into garages, swimming pools and golf course ponds. Sometimes, alligators come out of the water to bask in the sun or move between wetlands. In many cases, if left alone, these alligators will eventually move on to areas away from people.

### **Safety Tips**

■ Generally, alligators less than four feet in length are not large enough to be dangerous unless handled. However, if you encounter any alligator that you believe poses a threat to people, pets or property,

call the Nuisance Alligator Hotline at 866-FWC-GATOR (866-392-4286). Please be aware, nuisance alligators are killed, not relocated.

- Be aware of the possibility of alligators when you are in or near fresh or brackish water. Bites may occur when people do not pay close enough attention to their surroundings when working or recreating near water.
- Do not swim outside of posted swimming areas or in waters that might be inhabited by large alligators.
- Alligators are most active between dusk and dawn. Therefore, avoid swimming at night.
- Dogs and cats are similar in size to the natural prey of alligators. Don't allow pets to swim, exercise or drink in or near waters that may contain alligators. Dogs often attract an alligator's interest, so do not swim with your dog.
- Leave alligators alone. State law prohibits killing, harassing or possessing alligators. Handling even small alligators can result in injury.



Tim Donovan, FWC

A young alligator wanders onto a porch in a residential neighborhood.



# Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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## Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program

### Species Profiles

#### Managed Species

##### Alligator Management Program

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#### Imperiled Species

#### Nonnative Species

#### Invasive Plants

#### Captive Wildlife

#### Wildlife Assistance

#### Living with Wildlife

#### Prescribed Fire

#### Habitat Information

#### Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Restoration

[Nuisance Alligator Public Service  
Announcement](#) 📄[Mobile Link](#) 📱

The Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP) is administered by the FWC's Division of Hunting and Game Management. SNAP is one of five components of Florida's comprehensive Alligator Management Program. Its mission is to address complaints concerning alligators.

Persons with concerns about an alligator should call our toll-free **Nuisance Alligator Hotline at 866-FWC-GATOR (866-392-4286)**. When someone concerned about an alligator calls the Nuisance Alligator Hotline, we will dispatch one of our contracted nuisance alligator trappers to resolve the situation. Generally, an alligator may be deemed a nuisance if it is at least four feet in length and the caller believes it poses a threat to people, pets or property.

SNAP uses contracted nuisance alligator trappers throughout the state to remove alligators from locations where they are unwanted or unwelcome. If a complaint meets the qualifying criteria, SNAP will issue a permit to a contracted nuisance alligator trapper authorizing the removal of the animal.

Complainants must be able to grant legal access to the property on which the alligator is located. SNAP does not permit the removal of nuisance alligators from private or publicly managed property without first obtaining permission from the property owner or management authority.

In 2017, SNAP received 13,210 nuisance alligator complaints resulting in the removal of 8,455 nuisance alligators.

#### Program News and Information

**New!** Create awareness of the possible presence of alligators in ponds and canals with these signs.

- **Don't Feed Alligators!** 📄
- **Be Alert!** 📄

#### What is a nuisance alligator?

Generally, an alligator may be considered a nuisance if it is at least four feet in length and is believed to pose a threat to people, pets or property.

#### Why aren't small alligators removed?

Alligators less than 4 feet in length are not large enough to be dangerous unless handled. They eat fish, frogs and other small animals. Typically, they are not large enough to be a threat even to small pets. The mere presence of a small alligator is not cause for concern. Occasionally, alligators less than 4 feet in length are legitimate problems and must be addressed. If an alligator less than four feet in length is a concern, call the Nuisance Alligator Hotline at 866-FWC-GATOR (866-392-4286).

#### Why does the FWC not relocate nuisance alligators in Florida?

Florida has a healthy and stable alligator population. We have about 1.3 million alligators in Florida. Alligators live in all 67 counties, and they inhabit all wild areas of Florida that can support them. The removal of nuisance alligators does not have a significant impact on our state's alligator population.

Relocated alligators often try to return to their capture site. They can create problems for people or other alligators along the way. If an alligator successfully returns, capturing it again would be necessary and likely more difficult the second time.

To avoid creating a problem at the release site, nuisance alligators would need to be relocated to remote areas where they would not encounter people. These remote areas already have healthy alligator populations, and the ones that already live there have established social structures. The introduction of a new alligator to these areas would likely cause fighting, possibly resulting in the death of a resident alligator or the introduced alligator.





# Human-Alligator Incidents

## Fact Sheet

(Updated October 2017)

### **General Information**

Alligators are considered fully recovered in all of their native-range states but are still included on the federal endangered species list within the category of “Threatened Due to Similarity of Appearance.” Alligators are listed this way because they closely resemble the American crocodile, which is threatened.

Alligators occur in all 67 counties in Florida and can be found in practically all fresh and brackish water bodies and occasionally in salt water. Although exact population figures are not known, Florida has a healthy and stable population of about 1.3 million alligators of every size. This population estimate is based on an estimated 6.7 million acres of suitable habitat.

Alligators are opportunistic feeders and will eat animals that are readily available to them. They prefer to go after prey they can overpower easily. Opportunity is the primary factor that causes an alligator to pursue prey.

Most alligators are naturally afraid of humans but may lose that fear when people feed them. Feeding alligators teaches them to associate people with food. For that reason, it is illegal to feed wild alligators.

Alligators seldom bite people for reasons other than food. Female alligators may protect their nests by hissing and opening their mouths to frighten intruders but rarely bite people.

Alligator bites are most likely to occur in or around water. Bites on humans have occurred in a variety of water bodies, many of which are small and not regularly used by alligators.

Although alligators can move quickly on land, they are not well adapted for capturing prey out of the water. However, they can lunge at prey within a few feet of the shoreline.

Alligator bites can result in serious infection. Victims should seek immediate medical attention if bitten.

The FWC allows an annual alligator harvest, and this carefully regulated opportunity has been nationally and internationally recognized as a model program for the sustainable use of a renewable natural resource. Florida’s statewide alligator harvest program provides commercial and recreational hunting opportunities and helps achieve population management objectives. Alligator hides, meat and their parts can be sold from legally harvested and tagged alligators.

## **Safety Tips**

- If you encounter an alligator that is believed to pose a threat to people, pets or property, call the **FWC's Nuisance Alligator Hotline, toll-free at 1-866-FWC-GATOR (392-4286)**. The FWC's Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP) uses contracted nuisance alligator trappers throughout the state to remove alligators 4 feet in length or greater that are believed to pose a threat.
- Be aware of the possible presence of alligators when in or near fresh or brackish water. Negative alligator encounters may occur when people do not pay close attention to their surroundings when working or recreating near water.
- Closely supervise children when they are playing in or around water.
- Never swim outside of posted swimming areas.
- Swim only during daylight hours. Alligators are most active between dusk and dawn.
- Do not allow pets to swim, exercise or drink in or near waters that may contain alligators or in designated swimming areas with humans. Dogs are more susceptible to being bitten than humans because dogs resemble the natural prey of alligators. The sound of dogs barking and playing may draw an alligator to the area.
- Never feed or entice alligators – it is dangerous and illegal. When fed, alligators overcome their natural wariness and associate people with food.
- Inform others that feeding alligators is illegal and creates problems for others who want to recreate in or near the water.
- Dispose of fish scraps in garbage cans at boat ramps and fish camps – do not throw them in the water. Although you are not intentionally feeding alligators when you do this, the end result can be the same.
- Observe and photograph alligators only from a safe distance. Remember, they are an important part of Florida's natural history as well as an integral component of freshwater ecosystems.
- Leave alligators alone. State law prohibits killing, harassing or possessing alligators except under permit.
- Never remove an alligator from its natural habitat or accept one as a pet. It is illegal and dangerous to do so. Handling even small alligators can result in injury.

- If an alligator bites you, the best thing to do is fight back, providing as much noise and resistance as possible. Hitting or kicking the alligator or poking it in its eyes may cause it to release its grip. When alligators seize prey they cannot easily overpower, they will often let go and retreat.
- Seek immediate medical attention if bitten by an alligator. Alligator bites often result in serious infection.

### **Risk of Being Bitten by an Alligator**

Florida has experienced tremendous human population growth in recent years. Today, many residents seek waterfront homes, and water-related recreational activities are popular. As more people are drawn to the water, more alligator-human interactions can occur, creating a greater potential for conflict. But, alligators seldom bite people and fatalities from such occurrences are rare.

Over the last 10 years, Florida has averaged six unprovoked bites per year that are serious enough to require professional medical treatment. The frequency of these serious bites is variable but there has not been a significant trend in the past 10 years. The likelihood of a Florida resident being seriously injured during an unprovoked alligator incident in Florida is roughly only one in 3.2 million.

From 1948 to 2017, 401 unprovoked bite incidents have occurred in Florida. Twenty-four of these bites resulted in human fatalities.

**For more information on alligators, visit [www.MyFWC.com/alligator](http://www.MyFWC.com/alligator)**



## Hilton Head gators unafraid

My family and I recently visited Hilton Head Island for the first time. It is very beautiful and clean and we will visit again.

The reason for sending this is the horrible alligator incident. We were horseback riding on Aug. 8 in the Sea Pines community when we saw an alligator looking at us, watching us pass not more than 20 feet away.

Myself, growing up in Louisiana, the state with

by far the most alligators, I was in a state shock to see this alligator showing no fear whatsoever. I said that is messed up, downright scary. I don't know what people have gotten used to on Hilton Head, but that is not normal. I have over 35 years of experience on bayous and swamps in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas, and alligators, unless they are pets, do not ever act that way.

They are very, very afraid or skittish unless it's a mother with babies. This should not be news to anyone. For goodness sake, if one sits there and watches you walk by in broad daylight, it needs to be killed. Someone has been feeding it.

- Steve Baughman  
Wylie, Texas

EDITOR

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FOR GOODNESS  
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HAS BEEN  
FEEDING IT.

*Steve Baughman*

As a member of the Maintenance Committee, about two years ago I was responsible for gathering information from Kiawah Island Resort and Homeowners Assn. I am good friends with the ex-mayor.

I was sent a video recently which, for some reason, I cannot forward. The video discusses how Kiawah was handling their alligator problem. They tagged every alligator with an easily visible number. When an alligator acts up, they know exactly which gator it is and take appropriate action.

Earle N.

On Fri, 31 Aug 2018 12:20:12 -0400

Margot Gilbert <gilbertwtg@yahoo.com> wrote:

>My opinion:

>The job belongs to the POA. Let them do it. I'd like the club to offer our help.

>Margot

>Sent from my iPhone

>

>> On 31 Aug 2018, at 9:57 am, Richard Fitzgerald <rfitzgeraldpe@comcast.net> wrote:

>>

>> Below is an email I sent to the Board a little over a year ago. Also, I have again included the prior attachments. To my knowledge there has been no follow-up by the Fishing Club to attempt to meet with the POA, Security and SC DNR on what we can and should do to identify and remove "nuisance" alligators. It is my belief that such a step could be a substantial benefit to safety within the plantation. I would be happy to help in any way I can.

>>

>> By separate email, I will be sending a letter to the editor about alligators that show no fear of humans. This letter to the editor essentially reflects the view of the SC DNR.

>>

>>	Richard Fitzgerald	Home (843) 715-8287
>>	68 Old Fort Drive	Cell (615) 804-8307
>>	Hilton Head Island, SC 29926-3000	rfitzgeraldpe@comcast.net

>>

>>

>> From: Richard Fitzgerald <rfitzgeraldpe@comcast.net>

>> Sent: Thursday, June 22, 2017 10:22 AM

>> To: "Terry Howland" <terryhowland@hotmail.com>

>> Cc: "Dave Morse" <bdmhhi01@gmail.com>; "Margot Gilbert"

>> <gilbertwtg@yahoo.com>; 'Earle Nirmaier' <earleandjo@hargray.com>;

>> 'Jeff McLaren' <jeffsmclaren@gmail.com>; 'Gary Turner'

>> <gtisland@roadrunner.com>; 'Dennis Waronsky' <dwarplum@mac.com>; 'Bob

>> Wilcox' <bobnmaryw3@gmail.com>; 'Stan Colquitt'

>> <stan@webinnovations.org>

>> Subject: Nuisance alligators & precautions for Kids Camp

>>

>> Attached for consideration by the Board is information on how to identify nuisance alligators, and whether any special precautions are necessary when a large group of children (and adults) are fishing along ponds where alligators are present. I have had telephone conversations with two people with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and located some articles about alligators in general and "nuisance" alligators in particular.

>>

## **Identifying “Nuisance” Alligators in Hilton Head Plantation**

Richard Fitzgerald  
68 Old Fort Drive

(843) 715-8287      Cell (615) 804-8307  
[rfitzgeraldpe@comcast.net](mailto:rfitzgeraldpe@comcast.net)

### **Precautions to be taken for Kids Camp**

**\*\*\* See attached publications on Alligators \*\*\***

### **Sarah Chabaane, Aquatic Education Coordinator, SC Department of Natural Resources**

Coordinates Family Fishing Clinics, Fishing Rodeos (for kids) and  
Family Fishing Instructor Certification Program  
(803) 737-8483      [chabaanes@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:chabaanes@dnr.sc.gov)

5-16-17 telephone discussion by Richard Fitzgerald

Issue of safety precautions to take for children fishing in events similar to HHP Kids Camp around ponds that have alligators has never come up -- at present, SC DNR does not utilize any special safety precautions when they have their Fishing Rodeos for children.

### **Andrew Grosse, Alligator Coordinator (Santee office), SC Department of Natural Resources**

Coordinates removal of nuisance alligators  
5-16-17 telephone discussion by Richard Fitzgerald      (843) 546-6062

Not aware of any problems with kids fishing around alligators. When I mentioned the suggestion made by Prescilla Calanni, a resident of HHP, for using a rope laid on the ground to keep kids from being too close to the water, Mr. Grosse said laying the rope 5 or 6 feet away from the edge of the pond should be plenty far back.



**Jay Butsiloski, Biologist, SC Department of Natural Resources**

**Need to contact** -- (803) 734-4024

See: "How not to ring an alligators dinner bell," in Island Packet 4-8-17 in which Ashley Jean Reese interviewed Jay Butsiloski

**Priscilla Calanni, Resident of HHP (330) 620-2838 prissdoor@yahoo.com**

Telephone discussion May 2017 by Richard Fitzgerald

Has not had problems with alligators attacking her dog or child

She talked to Peter Kristian, General Manager of HHP POA

Her child was going to be going to Kids Camp, and she was concerned about the alligators in the Kids Camp pond

Made suggestion: Lay a rope along the ground a few feet from the edge of the pond and tell the kids not to get any closer

**Miscellaneous comments by Richard Fitzgerald**

Unknown if POA issues a warning to parents of children who will attend Kids Camp or Camp Leo that one or more alligators are normally present in Seabrook Lagoon Pond (the pond at which the children would fish), that throughout the many years Kids Camp and Camp Leo fishing activities have been conducted no child or adult has been attacked by an alligator, alligators are wildlife

**Identifying nuisance alligators**

**Andrew Grosse, Alligator Coordinator (Santee office), SC Department of Natural Resources**

Coordinates removal of nuisance alligators

5-16-17 telephone discussion (843) 546-6062

Generally, during the day alligators bask only. They are principally nocturnal predators; i.e., normally feed at night, from dusk till dawn.

Alligators want easy prey. Even large alligators will not normally target mammals such as humans (adults or children) because of the amount of energy that may be required to capture the prey (e.g. having leave the water and possibly have to run

along the ground).

6 to 7 foot alligators feed on small prey such as fish, frogs and snakes. Humans swimming during the daytime in the presence of alligators of this size is normally not a problem.

7 to 10 foot alligators feed on animals such as ducklings.

10 to 12 foot alligators feed on small animals such as racoons; and, therefore, are more of a concern especially for small pets.

An alligator has a natural fear of humans, and will normally avoid contact. If basking on the ground alongside a pond, they will normally drive into the water for safety if a human is approaching.

An alligator becomes a “nuisance” gator as a result of being frequently purposely fed, or attracted by bait. Alligators want an easy meal, and can lose their fear of humans if purposely fed. If an alligator approaches you and does not stop approaching until he is close to where you are, especially if it comes to the edge of the pond near you, that alligator has lost its fear of humans and has become a “nuisance” gator.

When fishing around alligators, alligators will cue off of splashing in the water, and will often want to investigate what is occurring. For example, a fish which is flopping in the water while trying to through a fisherman’s hook or being landed. They may also investigate and chase a top water lure (such as a buzz bait) that is making a commotion as it moves across the surface of the water.

Just like there are sharks in water when you are swimming or wading in the ocean, you should always assume there are alligators in or around ponds, and use good judgment when near ponds.

**Jay Butsiloski, Biologist, SC Department of Natural Resources**

**Need to contact** -- (803) 734-4024

**Documenting the existence and location of nuisance alligators**