

catowba
science
center



ADOPT
an **Animal**



**AMERICAN
ALLIGATOR**

Alligator mississippiensis

AMERICAN ALLIGATOR | *Alligator mississippiensis*

CLASS: Reptilia | ORDER: Crocodylia | FAMILY: Alligatoride

PROFILE

Favorite treat: Shrimp

Habitat: Freshwater swamps, marshes, rivers & lakes in the Southeastern US from NC to Texas

Loves to: Rearrange her habitat's decor

Conservation status: Least Concern

NICE BELT. Alligators, like all reptiles are covered in scales. Lining their backs are osteoderms (or scutes), specialized bony plates that act like armor. The young have bright yellow stripes on the tail; adults have dark stripes. Male alligators are larger than females. The average adult size for a female is 8.2 feet while the average size for a male is 11.2 feet. The longest alligator on record measured 19.2 feet and the heaviest weighed 1,043 pounds.

DEATH ROLL DELIGHTS. Adults (generally when they reach 4 feet in length) are apex predators; humans and other alligators are their only threats.

SEE YOU LATER... Alligators have nictitating membranes, a clear third eye lid that covers their eyes side to side. Though they have relatively poor eyesight, this adaptation allows them to see underwater. Their ears are located behind their eyes on top of their head and allow them to sense vibrations in the water. Alligator faces are more sensitive to touch than human fingertips. Thousands of integumentary sensory organs, which look like small dark spots, are located in their scales around and in their mouths.

FUN FACTS

The word alligator comes from the Spanish word for lizard - el largarto

An alligator nest temperature determines the sex of hatchlings. A nest that dips below 86°F will produce females. Eggs in a nest that stay between 86°F – 93°F may develop as male or female. If the temperature rises about 93°F, the hatchlings will be male.

An alligator continuously cycles though teeth, like a shark, as they wear down or fall out.

An alligator can have 3000 teeth in a lifetime.

IN A WHILE... Crocodiles differ from alligators in a few ways. Crocodiles have more pointed v-shaped snouts and visible lower teeth. Alligators have wider, rounded snouts and an overbite. Crocodiles can also live in salt water while Alligators cannot due to more efficient salt glands.