

Living With Alligators



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
Commission

Alligators are one of Florida's most distinctive native creatures, and are regarded with curiosity and awe by visitors and residents alike.

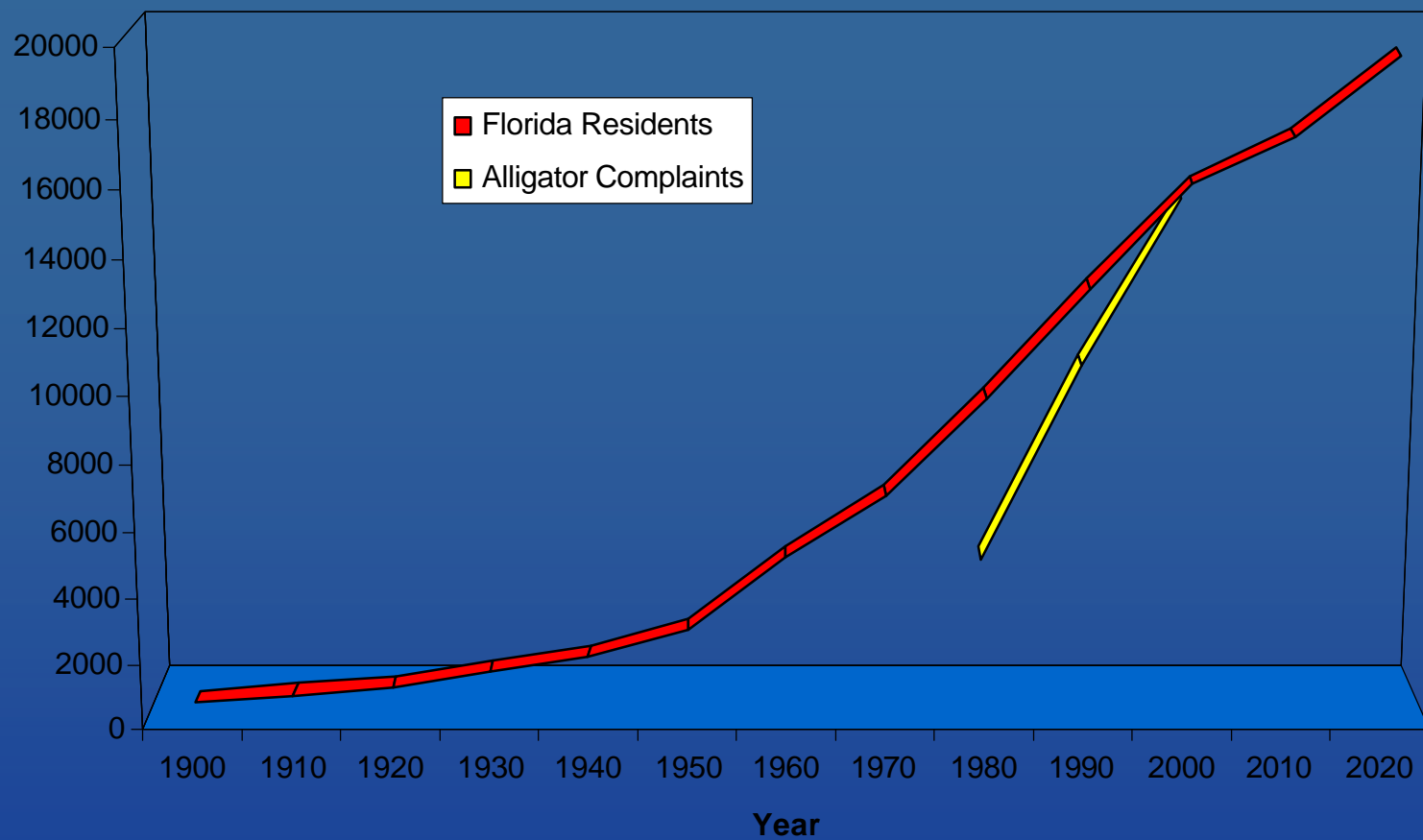




Alligators also play an important role in Florida's wetlands. "Gator holes" keep vegetation from crowding out open water areas in the marsh, and provide wet areas for other wildlife in periods of drought.

Alligators are predators, and can grow up to 14 feet long and 1,000 pounds. Because of their large size, problems between alligators and humans can arise.





Florida's human population has increased rapidly in recent years, and continues to do so. As new developments encroach on alligator habitat, human/alligator conflicts will almost certainly continue to increase.

Annually, the FWC receives more than 15,000 alligator complaints, which result in the removal of over 5,000 nuisance alligators. Most of these complaints relate to alligators turning up in unwelcome places, such as backyard ponds, pools or golf courses.



The mere presence of an alligator does not always mean it is a nuisance animal. Often, if left alone, an alligator basking by the water's edge will simply move on.





Unfortunately attacks on pets and livestock do occur.

Also, alligators do sometimes attack humans.

Between 1948 and 2004, the FWC has documented 242 unprovoked alligator attacks on humans, of which 15 were fatal.

If you encounter an alligator that poses a threat to humans, pets, or livestock, call the Nuisance Alligator Hotline: **1-866-FWC-GATOR** (1-866-392-4286).

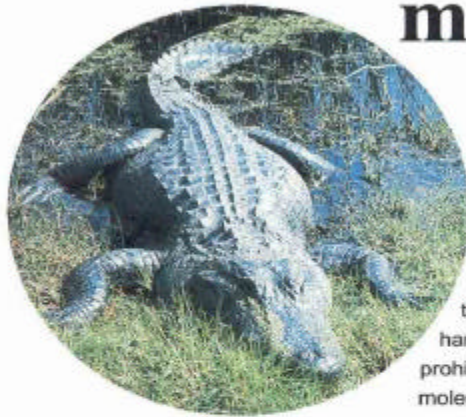
The FWC will review your complaint and, if necessary, send a licensed nuisance alligator trapper to remove the animal.

If the situation is an **emergency**, a trapper or an FWC officer will be sent to the location immediately, or you can call 911 and your local police or Sheriff's Office will respond.

The following **safety tips** can help you protect yourself and your pets from harm by alligators.

1. *Leave alligators ALONE!*

**Don't feed
or
molest.**



Gators CANNOT be tamed and feeding them can result in their mistaking a hand for a handout! Florida law prohibits the feeding or molesting of alligators!!

SUPPORT Wildlife Alert!
If you see someone feeding or molesting an alligator, call the nearest office of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. . .

There may be a REWARD!!

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
CALL TOLL FREE
1-888-404-FWCC (3922)

* FWC or # FWC for most cellular service providers.

Funded by Florida's Conservationists



The danger of being injured by a provoked alligator is much higher than by an unprovoked one.

2. NEVER feed alligators!

Feeding wild alligators is illegal and dangerous!



Alligators lose their natural fear of humans when fed, and become accustomed or attracted to people.

Alligators that have been fed may be more likely to attack, and are more likely to become nuisance animals that must be destroyed.

3. Inform others that they should never feed alligators.



Feeding alligators is not only a violation of state law, it can create a problem for neighbors and others who use the water for recreation.

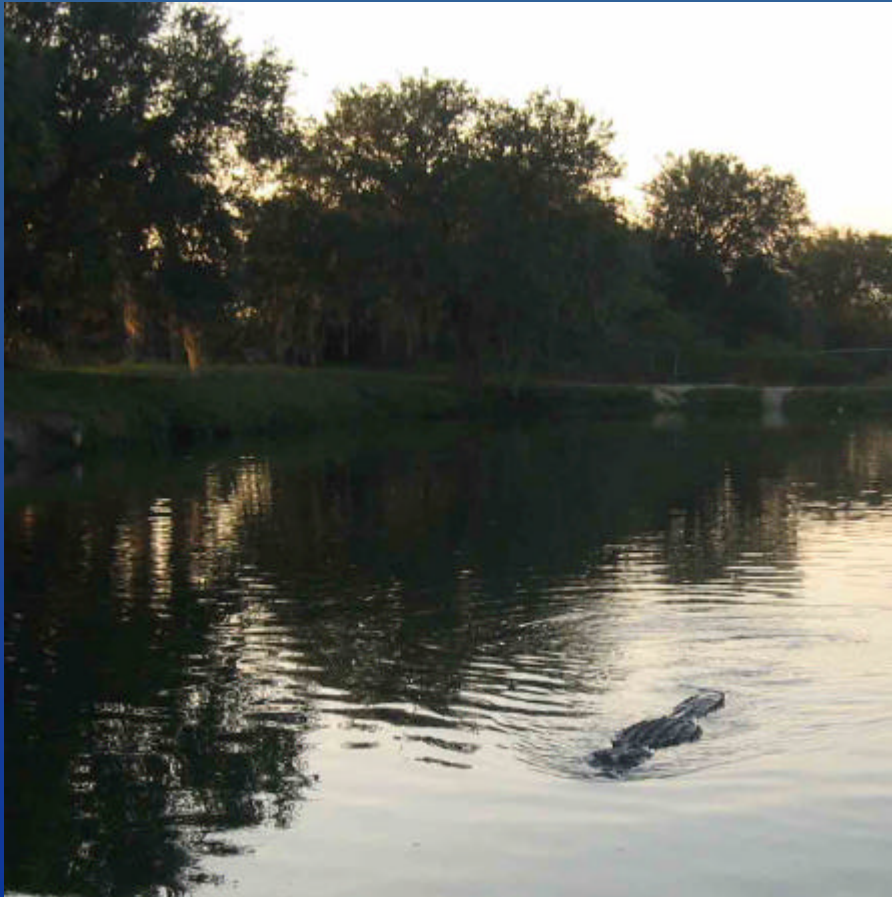
4. *Dispose of fish scraps in garbage cans at boat ramps.*



Though not intentional, throwing scraps in the water at fish camps and boat ramps is still feeding alligators.



5. *Swim only during the day.*



Alligators are more active at night or at dawn or dusk. At these times they are more likely to be feeding than during the heat of midday.

6. *Do not swim in areas that may contain large alligators or outside of posted swimming areas.*

Alligators are most active during the summer months. Since this is the time of year when people are also likely to be in the water, areas known to contain alligators should be avoided.



7. Never allow children to play alone near water.

Closely watch children when they are playing near water.



8. *Don't allow your pets in waters known to have alligators.*



Dogs and other small pets are more likely to be attacked than humans because they resemble a natural prey item for the alligator. Therefore, pets can attract alligators to swim areas and create a danger for humans also.

9. *Never capture an alligator, or accept one as a pet.*

Capturing alligators is illegal and can be dangerous. Alligators do not become tame in captivity, and handling even small ones could result in a bite.



10. See a doctor right away if you are bitten by an alligator.



Because of the environment in which they live, alligators' mouths can harbor very dangerous bacteria (particularly *Aeromonas hydrophila*). Any bite or scratch, even a small one, should be examined by a physician.

Alligators are important not only for their role in Florida ecosystems, but also for their economic and aesthetic values.



Florida's residents and visitors should enjoy viewing alligators from a distance in their natural setting.



For more
information on
alligators, please
visit our Web site at:

MyFWC.com/alligator

Prepared by the Alligator Management Program

(B. Hayman et al.)

Games Species Management Section

Division of Hunting and Game Management