
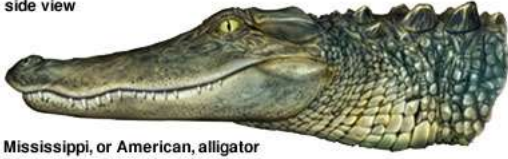


Alligatoridae - Alligators

Taxonomy/Ancestry	<p>subfamilies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● alligatorinae – true alligators; only 1 of 10 genera currently extant; represented today by <i>A. mississippiensis</i> in US and <i>A. Sinesis</i> in China ● caimaninae – caimans in C. and S. America <div> <p>Scientific classification </p> <p>Kingdom: Animalia</p> <p>Phylum: Chordata</p> <p>Class: Reptilia</p> <p>Order: Crocodylia</p> <p>Clade: Globidonta</p> <p>Family: Alligatoridae</p> <p>Gray, 1844</p> <p>Subfamilies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alligatorinae • Caimaninae </div>
Size	<p>alligator: 5-20 ft (1.5-6.1 m)</p> <p>caiman: average maximum weight of 6 to 40 kg (13 to 88 lb) depending on species, with the exception of the black caiman (<i>Melanosuchus niger</i>), which can grow more than 5 m (16 ft) in length and weigh up to 1,100 kg (2,400 lb). The average length for most of the other caiman species is about 2 to 2.5 m (6.6 to 8.2 ft) long. largest species = black caiman, smallest = Cuvier's dwarf.</p>
Color	
Anatomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● diapsid skull ● armored w/ osteoderms and large scales that do not overlap ● forelimbs are smaller and weaker with 5 partially-webbed toes ● distinguishing from crocodiles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – wider, shorter heads w/ more obtuse snouts – 4th enlarged underjaw tooth fits into pit in upper jaw – no teeth visible when mouth closed – no jagged fringe on hind legs + feet – sensory pits appear only on snout and face, not neck and body – toes of hind feet webbed not more than halfway to tips – intolerant to salinity – generally less aggressive and dangerous – partake in foliage and fruit in addition to fish and meat ● caiman characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – no bony septum b/w nostrils – ventral armour composed of overlapping bony scutes formed from two parts united by a suture – longer, more slender, teeth than those possessed by alligators. The calcium rivets on its scales make their hides stiffer, and thus less valuable, than those of alligators and crocodiles.
Dimorphism	males larger and grow faster.

Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ectotherms basking on shoreline • float on surface of water • become more subdued as temperatures drop but do not hibernate, making use of burrows in the winter months • live in groups w/ dominance hierarchies. the highest-ranking individuals assert dominance through ritualized behaviors such as vocalizations and slapping the water with their heads. • high walk: 4-limbed forward motion used for overland travel w/ belly up from the ground • alligator holes in the wetlands increase plant diversity and provide habitats for other animals during droughts
Habitat	lakes, slow-moving streams/rivers, rivers, swamps, marshes, occasionally roadside ditches. freshwater sites w/ slow or still waters. often inhabit heavily-vegetated areas w/ muddy or murky water.
Distribution	a New World group w/ habitats in Central-Northern S. America; parts of southern and western Central America and Mexico; SE United States; eastern China.
Feeding Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunistic scavenger-hunters • juveniles mainly eat snails and other invertebrates • Typical adult diet = fish, small mammals, other reptiles (including smaller alligatorids), and birds, occasionally continuing to eat snails/invertebrates • Predation typically occurs among eggs and hatchlings • Racoons, coati, foxes, skunks, and other mammals, snakes, and various raptors, can raid nests or take hatchlings • occasional cannibalism, but rare • larger alligators help control coypru population
Reproductive Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spring reproductive season • courtship rituals thru loud bellowing choruses, vibrations of the male trunk • use vegetables to construct nest mounds • 12-60 eggs depending on species • egg-laying once a year in midsummer, w/ eclosion 1-2 months afterward • females respond to noises from eggs and assist offspring. offspring also use egg teeth for eclosion. • females remain w/ offspring for up to 1 year. • TSD is associated w/ several species, such as American alligator and common caimans. $38^{\circ}\text{C}/98^{\circ}\text{F}$ = female; $32^{\circ}\text{C}/90^{\circ}\text{F}$ = male. natural sex ratio of 5:1 female:male. • Muja = oldest known in Serbia
Conservation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raised commercially for their meat and skin • ecotourism industry • in Louisiana, heavy grazing by coypru and muskrat are damaging coastal wetlands • Chinese alligator critically endangered; Louisiana and Florida zoos have some in captivity they are trying to preserve

side view



Mississippi, or American, alligator
(*Alligator mississippiensis*)



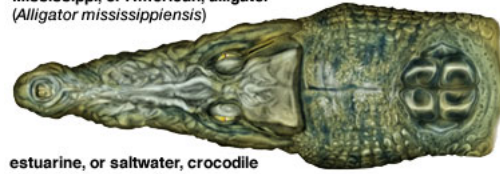
estuarine, or saltwater, crocodile
(*Crocodylus porosus*)

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top view



Mississippi, or American, alligator
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