

[\[Collapse\]](#)

“

”

I love a library that never closes - one of my childhood dreams fulfilled.

— Ralph from the USA, donated \$100

[Learn More...](#)

[\[Expand\]](#)

Support Wikipedia: a non-profit project.

American crocodile

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

American crocodile



American crocodile in Jalisco, Mexico

[Conservation status](#)



Vulnerable (IUCN 2.3)^[1]

Scientific classification

Kingdom: [Animalia](#)
 Phylum: [Chordata](#)
 Class: [Sauropsida](#)
 Order: [Crocodilia](#)
 Family: [Crocodylidae](#)
 Subfamily: [Crocodylinae](#)
 Genus: [Crocodylus](#)
 Species: *C. acutus*

Binomial name

Crocodylus acutus
 (Cuvier, 1807)



Terrestrial range of *Crocodylus acutus* (green).

The **American crocodile** (*Crocodylus acutus*) is a species of [crocodilian](#) found primarily in Central America. It is the most widespread of the four [extant](#) species of [crocodiles](#) from the [Americas](#). Populations occur from the [Atlantic](#) and [Pacific](#) coasts of southern [Mexico](#) to [South America](#) as far as [Peru](#) and [Venezuela](#). It also breeds on [Cuba](#), [Jamaica](#), and [Hispaniola](#), and there is a remnant population of less than 1200 in [Florida](#), [United States](#). The habitat of the American crocodile consists largely of coastal areas. The American crocodile is larger than some other crocodile species, with some males reaching lengths of 6.1 metres (20 ft) in [Central](#) and [South America](#).

Contents

[\[hide\]](#)

- [1 Physical description](#)
 - [1.1 Size](#)
- [2 Range and distribution](#)
- [3 Systematics](#)
- [4 Conservation status](#)
- [5 Interaction with humans](#)
- [6 References](#)
- [7 External links](#)
 - [7.1 Media](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Physical description



Head of an adult at the [Philadelphia Zoo](#).

Like all [crocodilians](#), the American crocodile is a [quadruped](#), with four short, splayed legs; a long, powerful tail; a [scaly](#) hide with rows of ossified [scutes](#) running down its back and tail.^[2] The snout is elongated and includes a strong pair of [jaws](#). The eyes have [nictitating membranes](#) for protection along with [lachrymal glands](#), which produce tears.

The [nostrils](#), [eyes](#), and [ears](#) are situated on the top of its head, so the rest of the body can be concealed underwater for surprise attacks.^[2] [Cryptic coloration](#) also helps them prey on food. American crocodiles normally crawl on their belly, but they can also "high walk".^[3] Larger specimens can [gallop](#) up to 10 miles per hour (16 km/h).^[4] They can [swim](#) at as much as 20 miles per hour (32 km/h) by moving their body and tail in a sinuous fashion, but they cannot sustain this speed.^[5]

American crocodiles are more susceptible to cold than [American alligators](#).^[6] Unlike the American alligator which can subsist in water of 7.2 °C (45.0 °F) for some time, an American crocodile would become helpless and drown.^[2] It is thought that this intolerance to cold is the reason why American crocodiles never spread as far northward as the alligators. American crocodiles, however, have a faster growth rate than alligators, and are much more tolerant of [salt water](#).^[2]

Unlike the Old World crocodiles which are sometimes cleared of parasites by birds, the American crocodile relies more on fish for parasite removal.^[2]

[\[edit\]](#) Size

Newborn hatchlings are about 22 centimetres (8.7 in) in size and about 60 grams (0.13 lb) in mass.^{[7][8]} The average mature male is 4 metres (13 ft) long and weighs 182 kilograms (400 lb), and the average female is 3 metres (9.8 ft) and 73 kilograms (160 lb).^{[9][10]}

In the United States adult length has been recorded as high as 4.6 metres (15 ft).^{[7][11]} This species is said to grow largest in the [South American](#) river basins, but even old males do not generally exceed 6 metres (20 ft).^[11] A skull of this species was found to measure 72.6 centimetres (28.6 in) and is estimated to have belonged to a crocodile of 6.6 metres (22 ft) in length.^[12]

[\[edit\]](#) Range and distribution

C. acutus is the most widespread of the four [extant](#) species of [crocodilians](#) from the [Americas](#).^[1] It inhabits waters such as [mangrove swamps](#), river mouths, fresh waters, and salt lakes and can even be found at sea (hence its wide distribution on the Caribbean islands).^[2] Southern Florida, the Greater Antilles and southern Mexico to Colombia and Ecuador.^{[7][13]} The American crocodile is especially plentiful in Costa Rica.^[14] One of the largest documented populations of American crocodiles is in [Lago Enriquillo](#), a landlocked, hypersaline lake in the Dominican Republic.^[10] The species has also been recorded from [Jamaica](#).^[15]

American crocodiles in the United States cohabit with the [American alligator](#), and are primarily found in [Everglades National Park](#), [Florida Bay](#), [Biscayne Bay](#) and the [Florida Keys](#) from Miami southward.^{[6][8]} A sizable population occurs near [Homestead, Florida](#), at the [Turkey Point Nuclear Generating Station](#).^{[8][16][17]} Some individuals wander northward to warm summer waters and have been sighted in [Sarasota County](#) and [Palm Beach County](#).^[7]

The ancestors of the American crocodile are thought to have colonized North America during an [ice age](#), when sea levels were 300 feet lower than today. The crocodiles crossed the Florida Straits from Cuba, then established themselves in North America. The crocodiles were prevented from colonizing inland by the presence of alligators, so they established a niche in brackish coastal waters.^[18]

[\[edit\]](#) Systematics

[Cuvier](#) originally described the species as *Crocodylus acutus* in 1807.^[19] Over time, it commonly became known as the "sharp-snout alligator". In 1822, [Constantine Samuel Rafinesque](#) postulated that the species was in fact a crocodile.^[18]

The species was re-described as *Crocodylus floridanus* by [William T. Hornaday](#) in 1875,^{[20][21]} when Hornaday and [C.E. Jackson](#) were sent from [Washington, D.C.](#) to Florida in order to collect alligator hides. Upon hearing of a "big old gator" in Arch

Creek at the head of [Biscayne Bay](#), Hornaday and his companions searched for it and reported:

"In a few hours we got sight of him, out on the bank in a saw-grass wallow. He was a monster for size—a perfect whale of a saurian, gray in color—and by all the powers, he was a genuine crocodile!"^[22]

Crocodylus floridanus is now considered an invalid [junior synonym](#) of *C. acutus*.^{[23][24]}

[\[edit\]](#) Conservation status

Due to hide hunting, pollution, loss of habitat, and removal of adults for commercial farming, the American crocodile is [endangered](#) in parts of its range.^[8] In 1972, Venezuela banned commercial crocodile skin harvesting for a decade, as a result of 1950s and 1960s overhunting.^[25]

One thousand to two thousand American crocodiles live in Mexico and Central and South America, but populations are data deficient.^[10] The American crocodile is considered a [vulnerable species](#), but has not been assessed since 1996.^[1] It has an estimated wild population of 500 to 1200 in South Florida.^[26] On March 20, 2007, the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) declassified the American crocodile as an endangered species, downgrading its status to "[threatened](#)"; the reptile remains protected from illegal harassing, poaching or killing under the federal Endangered Species Act.^{[27][28]}

[\[edit\]](#) Interaction with humans

See also: [Crocodile attacks](#)

American crocodiles can be dangerous to humans, and attacks in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Guatemala are not unprecedented. These attacks rarely make international news, and therefore this species is not as well-documented a man-eater as its relatives.^[2] The species is reportedly timid, and seemingly lacks the propensity to attack humans of American alligators and Old World crocodiles.^[18] In May of 2007, there were two instances within one week of children being attacked and killed by this species—one in Mexico just south of Puerto Vallarta and one in Costa Rica.^{[29][30]} No attacks on humans by the American crocodile have been reported in the United States, despite assorted anecdotes.^[31]

[\[edit\]](#) References

- [^] ^{[a](#)} ^{[b](#)} ^{[c](#)} Crocodile Specialist Group (1996). *Crocodylus acutus*. 2006 *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. IUCN 2006. Retrieved on 7 December 2008. Listed as Vulnerable (VU A1ac v2.3)
- [^] ^{[a](#)} ^{[b](#)} ^{[c](#)} ^{[d](#)} ^{[e](#)} ^{[f](#)} ^{[g](#)} Guggisberg, C.A.W. (1972). *Crocodiles: Their Natural History, Folklore, and Conservation*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles. pp. pp.195. [ISBN 0715352725](#).
- [^] (PDF). <http://eprint.uq.edu.au/archive/00002011/02/croc.pdf>.

4. [^] ["Earth's Birthday Project | Rainforest Exploration | Teachers"](http://www.earthsbirthday.org/explore/teachers/infocrocodile.htm). Earthsbirthday.org. <http://www.earthsbirthday.org/explore/teachers/infocrocodile.htm>. Retrieved on 2008-12-12.
5. [^] ["Everglades-American Crocodile"](http://www.miamisci.org/ecolinks/everglades/crocinfo.html). Miamisci.org. <http://www.miamisci.org/ecolinks/everglades/crocinfo.html>. Retrieved on 2008-12-12.
6. ^{^ a b}.
7. ^{^ a b c d} *Reptiles and Amphibians Eastern-Central North America, 3rd ed.*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1998. pp. 142–3. [ISBN 0395904528](#).
8. ^{^ a b c d} ["The Croc Docs - Research - The American Crocodile: A Story of Recovery"](http://crocdoc.ifas.ufl.edu/posters/croc_p1.htm). Crocdoc.ifas.ufl.edu. http://crocdoc.ifas.ufl.edu/posters/croc_p1.htm. Retrieved on 2008-12-12.
9. [^] Savage, The Amphibians and Reptiles of Costa Rica: A Herpetofauna between Two Continents, between Two Seas. University Of Chicago Press (2005), [ISBN 978-0226735382](#)
10. ^{^ a b c} ["American Crocodile, American Crocodile Profile, Facts, Information, Photos, Pictures, Sounds, Habitats, Reports, News - National Geographic"](http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/reptiles/american-crocodile.html?nav=A-Z). National Geographic.com. <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/reptiles/american-crocodile.html?nav=A-Z>. Retrieved on 2008-11-29.
11. ^{^ a b} Behler JL, King FW. 1979. The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Reptiles and Amphibians. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 743 pp. LCCCN 79-2217. [ISBN 0-394-50824-6](#).
12. [^] Wood, The Guinness Book of Animal Facts and Feats. Sterling Pub Co Inc (1983), [ISBN 978-0851122359](#)
13. [^] ["Crocodilian Species - American Crocodile \(Crocodylus acutus\)"](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/cnhc/csp_cacu.htm). Flmnh.ufl.edu. http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/cnhc/csp_cacu.htm. Retrieved on 2008-11-29.
14. [^] ["8 Crocodiles kill man in Mexico | Sindh Today"](http://www.sindhtoday.net/world/11409.htm). Sindhtoday.net. <http://www.sindhtoday.net/world/11409.htm>. Retrieved on 2008-11-29.
15. [^] Ahrenfeldt, Robert H. (1954-05-05). ["Identification of the Amphibia and Reptilia Recorded in Jamaica by Hans Sloane \(1688-89\)"](#). *Copeia* (American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists) **1954** (2): 105–111. doi:[10.2307/1440328](#). <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1440328>. Retrieved on 24 December 2008.
16. [^] http://www.fpl.com/environment/plant/pdf/turkey_point_crocodile_fact_sheet.pdf
17. [^] Allen, Greg. ["American Crocodiles Make a Comeback : NPR"](#). Npr.org. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9718547>. Retrieved on 2008-12-12.
18. ^{^ a b c} *Liquid Land: A Journey Through the Florida Everglades* by Ted Levin, University of Georgia Press, 2004 [ISBN 0820326720](#)
19. ^{^ *} [Crocodylus acutus \(TSN 174361\)](#). [Integrated Taxonomic Information System](#). Retrieved on [24 December 2008](#).
20. [^] [Hornaday, William T.](#). "The crocodile in Florida". *The American Naturalist* **9**.
21. [^] [A New Day Dawns in the Everglades](#)
22. [^] Hornaday, William T. (1925). *A Wild-animal Round-up*. C. Scribner's Sons. p. 147. <http://books.google.com/books?id=00lAAAAMAAJ&q=%22whale+of+a+saurian%22&ei=YQdXSfLRHZPqyQTnjtTRDQ&pgis=1>. Retrieved on 28 December 2008.
23. ^{^ *} [Crocodylus floridanus \(TSN 209643\)](#). [Integrated Taxonomic Information System](#). Retrieved on [24 December 2008](#).
24. [^] [Stejneger, Leonhard](#) (1933-10-15). ["Crocodilian Nomenclature"](#). *Copeia* (American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists) **1933** (3): 117–120. doi:[10.2307/1436233](#). <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1436233>.
25. [^] F. Harvey Pough ... (2004). *Herpetology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall. pp. 628–9. [ISBN 0131008498](#).

26. [^] ["NPCA American Crocodile"](http://www.npca.org/marine_and_coastal/marine_wildlife/crocodile.html).
http://www.npca.org/marine_and_coastal/marine_wildlife/crocodile.html. Retrieved on 7 December 2008.
27. [^] ["U.S. Crocodiles Shed "Endangered" Status"](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/pf/98669458.html). National Geographic. 21 March 2007.
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/pf/98669458.html>. Retrieved on 7 December 2008.
28. [^] [American Crocodile No Longer Near Extinction](#). March 21, 2007.
29. [^] ["Boy killed in crocodile attack in Mexico - Americas- msnbc.com"](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18474361). Msnbc.msn.com. May 3, 2007. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18474361>. Retrieved on 2008-11-29.
30. [^] ["Crocodile makes off with boy | WORLD | NEWS | tvnz.co.nz"](http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411749/1098603). Tvnz.co.nz.
<http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411749/1098603>. Retrieved on 2008-11-29.
31. [^] Langley, Ricky L. (2005). ["Alligator Attacks on Humans in the United States"](#) (PDF). *Wilderness and Environmental Medicine* **16**: 119–124.
http://www.allenpress.com/pdf/weme_16_303_119_124.pdf.

[[edit](#)] External links



[Wikispecies](#) has information related to: *[Crocodylus acutus](#)*

- [American Crocodile](#) at Crocodylian Species List
- [University of Florida's crocodile research in Southwest Florida](#)
- [National Parks Conservation Association - American Crocodile](#)
- *American crocodile* at the [Encyclopedia of Life](#)

[[edit](#)] Media



Wikimedia Commons has more pictures of: *[Crocodylus acutus](#)*

- [Crocodylus acutus](#) at [CalPhotos](#)
- [ARKive images and movies of the American crocodile \(*Crocodylus acutus*\)](#)

[show]
v • d • e
Extant Crocodylian species
[show]
Family Gavialidae
<i>Tomistoma</i> False gharial (<i>T. schlegelii</i>)

[Gavialis](#) Gharial (*G. gangeticus*)

[[show](#)]

Family [Alligatoridae](#)

[Alligatorinae](#)
(Alligators)

American Alligator (*A. mississippiensis*) • Chinese Alligator (*A. sinensis*)

[Caimaninae](#)
(Caimans)

[Paleosuchus](#) Cuvier's Dwarf Caiman (*P. palpebrosus*) • Smooth-fronted Caiman (*P. trigonatus*)

[Caiman](#) Spectacled Caiman (*C. crocodilus*) • Broad-snouted Caiman (*C. latirostris*) • Yacare Caiman (*C. yacare*)

[Melanosuchus](#) Black Caiman (*M. niger*)

[[hide](#)]

Family [Crocodylidae \(Crocodiles\)](#)

[Crocodylinae](#)

[Crocodylus](#) American Crocodile (*C. acutus*) • Slender-snouted Crocodile (*C. cataphractus*) • Orinoco Crocodile (*C. intermedius*) • Freshwater Crocodile (*C. johnsoni*) • Philippine crocodile (*C. mindorensis*) • Morelet's Crocodile (*C. moreletii*) • Nile crocodile (*C. niloticus*) • New Guinea Crocodile (*C. novaeguineae*) • Mugger Crocodile (*C. palustris*) • Saltwater Crocodile (*C. porosus*) • Cuban Crocodile (*C. rhombifer*) • Siamese Crocodile (*C. siamensis*)

Osteolaemus Dwarf Crocodile (*O. tetraspis*)

[[show](#)]

v · d · e

Related articles on [alligators](#), [caimans](#), [crocodiles](#) and [gharials](#)

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_crocodile"

Categories: [IUCN Red List vulnerable species](#) | [Crocodiles](#) | [Crocodylidae](#) | [Marine reptiles](#) | [Reptiles of Central America](#) | [Fauna of Cuba](#) | [Fauna of Jamaica](#) | [Fauna of the Dominican Republic](#) | [Fauna of Haiti](#) | [Megafauna of North America](#)

Views

- [Article](#)
- [Discussion](#)
- [Edit this page](#)
- [History](#)

Personal tools

- [Log in / create account](#)

Navigation

- [Main page](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Featured content](#)
- [Current events](#)
- [Random article](#)

Search

<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="Go"/>	<input type="button" value="Search"/>
----------------------	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Interaction

- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)

- [Contact Wikipedia](#)
- [Donate to Wikipedia](#)
- [Help](#)

Toolbox

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Upload file](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Printable version](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Cite this page](#)

Languages

- [Български](#)
- [Català](#)
- [Česky](#)
- [Deutsch](#)
- [Español](#)
- [Français](#)
- [Galego](#)
- [Italiano](#)
- [Nāhuatl](#)
- [Nederlands](#)
- [□□□](#)
- [Polski](#)
- [Português](#)
- [Русский](#)
- [Slovenčina](#)
- [Suomi](#)
- [Svenska](#)
- [Tiếng Việt](#)
- [Türkçe](#)
- [□□](#)
- [□□](#)



- This page was last modified on 28 December 2008, at 05:05.
- All text is available under the terms of the [GNU Free Documentation License](#). (See [Copyrights](#) for details.)

Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a U.S. registered [501\(c\)\(3\) tax-deductible nonprofit charity](#).

- [Privacy policy](#)
- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Disclaimers](#)