

■ 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



Tim Donovan, FWC

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

A Guide to Living with **Alligators**



Jamie Feddersen





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 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.