

ALTINA WILDLIFE PARK

a **unique** wildlife adventure

ALTINA WILDLIFE



American Alligator

Scientific Name:
Alligator mississippiensis

Distribution: Southern United States and Central America.

Habitat: The American Alligator is primarily found in freshwater swamps and marshes, as well as small rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. throughout many countries including the United States and Australia.

Description: The Alligator has a large lizard-like body with four short legs, webbed feet and a long muscular tail. The young are dark grey to black, striped with bright yellow which fades with age. Adults range from 1.8 - 4.9 metres and can weigh up to 450kilograms, females are slightly smaller than males. The snout is broad and rounded and houses up to 80 teeth. The large fourth tooth is not visible when the mouth is closed unlike other crocodiles.

Status: Threatened

Interesting facts:

- **Diet:** Alligators will feed mainly on fish, turtles, snakes, wading birds, frogs and small mammals. Being opportunists a hungry “gator” will eat almost anything, including humans. They are nocturnal and swallow their prey whole, the teeth are used for catching their prey, not for tearing it apart and as a consequence many teeth are lost but re-grow quickly.
- **Reproduction:** Alligators mature at approx 1.8m in length or around 10-12 years of age. Mating occurs in open water. The female then proceeds to a thick marshland area to build her nest of muddy vegetation which she constantly guards. 1 week later she lays 30 to 70 eggs which hatch after 2 months. The young will grunt which signals the female to break the nest and allow the young to escape to the water. The young usually stay by mother’s side for a further 18 months before finding their own way.
- Alligators can stay underwater for up to 1 hour and swim with a serpentine movement.
- **Lifespan:** Approx. 70 years