

ALLIGATOR SAFETY

Alligators occur in all 67 counties of the State of Florida and can be found in practically all fresh and brackish bodies of waters, and occasionally in salt water.

ALLIGATOR SAFETY TIPS

(provided by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

- If you encounter an alligator over four feet in length that poses a threat to humans or property, call the FWC's Nuisance Alligator Hotline, toll-free at 1-866-FWC-GATOR (392-4286). The FWC will evaluate your complaint, and if warranted, send a contracted nuisance alligator trapper to remove the animal.
- Be aware of the possible presence of alligators when in or near fresh or brackish water. Negative alligator encounters may occur when people do not pay close attention to their surroundings when working or recreating near water.
- Closely supervise children when they are playing in or around water. Never allow small children to play unsupervised near water.
- Alligators are most active between dusk and dawn.
- Do not allow pets to swim, exercise or drink in or near waters that may contain alligators or in designated swimming areas with humans. Dogs are more susceptible to being bitten than humans, because dogs resemble the natural prey of alligators. The sound of dogs barking and playing may draw an alligator to the area.
- Never feed or entice alligators – it is dangerous and illegal. When fed, alligators overcome their natural wariness and associate people with food.
- Dispose of fish scraps in garbage cans at boat ramps and fish camps – do not throw them in the water. Although you are not intentionally feeding alligators when you do this, the end result can be the same.
- Observe and photograph alligators only from a safe distance. Remember, they are an important part of Florida's natural history as well as an integral component of freshwater ecosystems.
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- If an alligator bites you, the best thing you can do is fight back, making as much noise and commotion as possible. Hitting or kicking the alligator, or poking it in its eyes may cause it to release its grip. When alligators seize prey they cannot easily overpower, they will often let go and retreat.

Risk of Being Bitten by an Alligator

Florida has experienced tremendous human population growth in recent years. Today, many residents seek waterfront homes, and water-related recreational activities are very popular. As more people are drawn to the water, more alligator-human interactions can occur, creating a greater potential for conflict. But,

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alligators seldom bite people, and fatalities from such occurrences are extremely rare.

Florida is averaging about seven unprovoked bites per year that are serious enough to require special medical treatment. The frequency of these serious bites is increasing at a rate of about 3 percent each year, or one additional bite every 4-5 years. However, the likelihood of a Florida resident being seriously injured during an unprovoked alligator incident in Florida is roughly only one in 2.4 million.

As of March 2015, the FWC has documented 595 alligator bites on humans, 373 of which were unprovoked and 220 were provoked. Twenty-two of these bites resulted in human fatalities.

For more information on alligators, go to www.MyFWC.com/gators or contact the Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program at 1-866-FWC-GATOR (392-4286).