

ALLIGATORS

play an important role in Florida's ecosystem. Alligators build ponds and nest in wetlands that create habitats for a wide variety of wildlife.

Alligators also have complex social behavior, including elaborate courtship displays. You can hear the bellowing of courting alligators in swamps in the spring.

Recent studies on alligator social behavior show significant complexity in these animals' ability to communicate vocally and visually through a complex series of body postures. Female alligators are very protective of their nests, and baby alligators will stay with their mothers for as long as two years.

These unique animals have existed for about 150 million years and can live to be 35 years old in the wild. Yet these much-maligned creatures have much to fear when they encounter human beings, who have left them with dwindling habitats and food sources as we continue to develop open land. To make matters worse they are tortured and killed for our amusement and profit.

HOW YOU CAN HELP FLORIDA'S MAJESTIC ALLIGATORS

1. Educate friends and family members about alligators and how they are a vital to Florida's ecosystem.
2. Please don't feed alligators. Like other wildlife, alligators may become accustomed to handouts and grow dependent on humans - a risky proposition for both feeders and animals. This dependency endangers the lives of alligators, since those who come too close to populated areas searching for food are usually considered a threat and killed.
3. Don't support tourist attractions that display alligator wrestling. Ask friends and family members visiting Florida to do the same.
4. Never buy products made from alligators. The alligator farming industry is attempting to introduce alligator products into mainstream markets. Please speak out against the sale of alligator meat or skin.
5. Contact us or visit our website to learn more!

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FLORIDA ALLIGATORS

Back from the brink
of extinction, these
resourceful reptiles
remain the victims of
extreme cruelty.

www.arff.org



Alligators and humans have lived in peaceful co-existence for millions of years and attacks are a rarity - typically occurring when people have unnatural interaction with alligators (such as feeding), disturb their territory or pose a threat to their young. Habitat preservation, combined with respect and a basic understanding of alligator behavior are key to maintaining a healthy relationship with our wild neighbors.

ALLIGATOR WRESTLING

Alligator wrestling is one of Florida's cruelest attractions. Shows are billed as "Man vs. Gator," a contest in which the odds are stacked against the alligator. One thing is certain: alligators are never willing participants in this spectacle.

The act begins when an alligator is dragged by the tail into the center of a ring. A wrestler often jumps onto the alligator's back, putting pressure with both hands on the animal's neck, forcing his or her head down. Other wrestlers force the mouth closed with one hand, and attempt to flip the animal. This show ends with the overturned alligator losing consciousness.

ALLIGATOR FARMING

Alligators are raised for their skin and flesh on alligator "farms" throughout the southern United States. Alligators breed easily in captivity. Throughout the South, close to 200 farms raise alligators from eggs to slaughter. Tens of thousands of these magnificent animals are killed in Florida yearly. Farmed alligators often live for years in dirty, crowded, highly unnatural conditions in concrete or metal tanks. Disease and fighting among farmed alligators is commonplace.

Slaughter on alligator farms is often inhumane. Alligators are clubbed with hammers or shot with a bangstick, while some farms sever the spinal cord using axes or sharp wedges, leaving the animal alive but paralyzed while he or she is skinned. It is not uncommon for alligators to be skinned while still breathing, their eyes open and fully conscious.

ALLIGATOR HUNTING

Alligators are hunted in darkness on lakes and waterways in Florida. Harpoons are the most popular weapon for hunting alligators, although a three-prong "snatch" hook used with a fishing rod, baited wooden pets, and bows are also common.

After being harpooned or hooked, the unlucky alligator is fought to exhaustion, drawn close to the boat, and killed by lowering his or head beneath the water and firing a bangstick. Hunters describe how, upon firing this device, the "blood colors the water a cloudy red."

Regulations state that alligators must be killed before being dragged into a boat, but the improper placement and discharge of the bangstick frequently renders the alligator only temporarily unconscious. Without having the spinal cord severed and the brain destroyed, the alligator is left to suffer long after being pulled from the water.



Alligators are part of what makes Florida unique and we must learn to respect them, as they are living symbols of our state.

Although they may seem intimidating, alligators are naturally fearful of humans and will typically only attack if they or their young are being threatened. They only lose their fear when they are fed and handled by humans.