



Living With Alligators





Purpose

- Alligator history/behavior
- Staying GatorWise
- Overview of SC Alligator management

Population History

1960s: Populations reached lowest levels



1973: Placed under the Endangered Species Act



1987: Removed from total protection



Today: Federally & State managed



Importance of Alligators

Keystone Species

- Habitat Engineers
- Commensal relationship with wading birds
- Control prey populations

Hunting

Wildlife Viewing



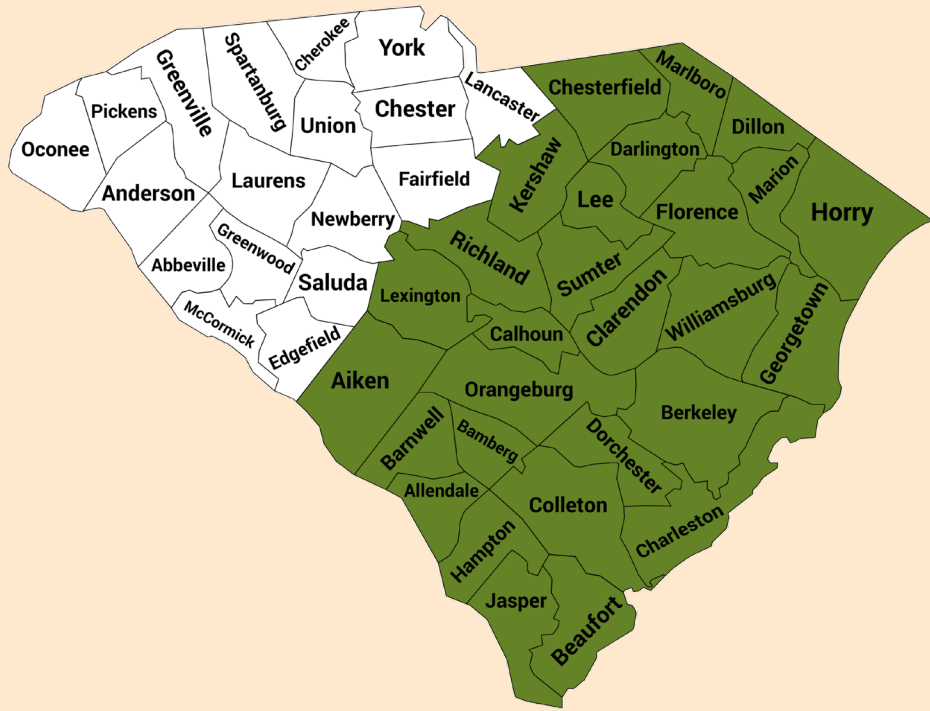
© Janet Pesaturo



Range of American Alligators



Range in South Carolina



- Can be found in any freshwater habitat
- Community ponds important for juveniles
- Rare to see on beaches or in the ocean



Alligators vs Crocodiles



Alligators vs Crocodiles

AN ALLIGATOR



U-shaped snout



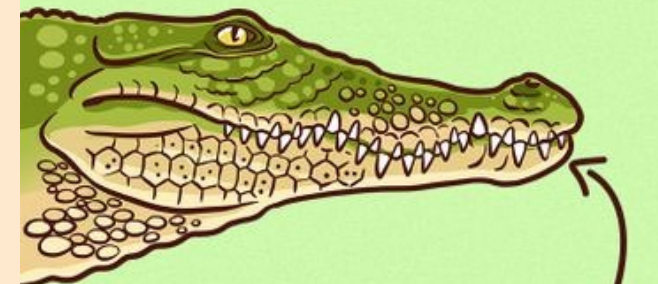
Lower teeth are hidden



A CROCODILE



V-shaped snout



Lower teeth are visible

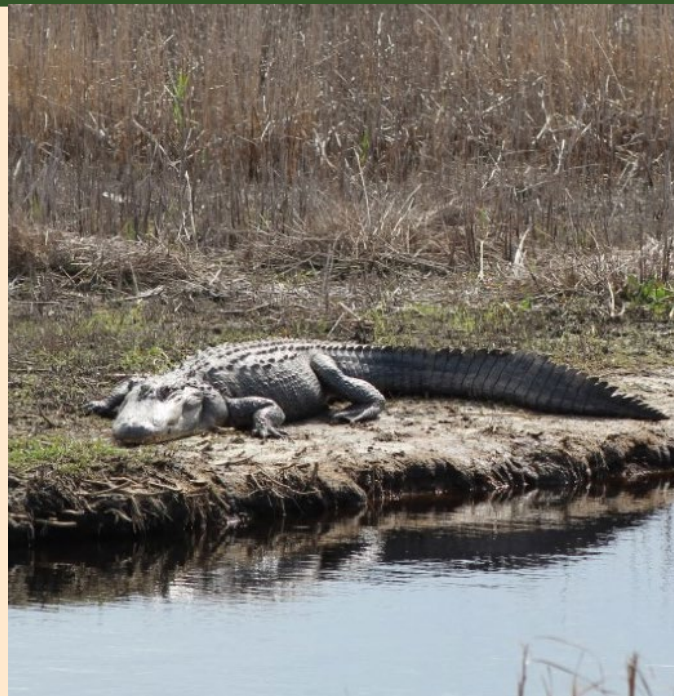


Food Sources



Ectothermic (cold blooded)

- Need the sun to regulate body temperature (Basking)
- A basking alligator is **not** hunting



Spring

Summer

Fall

Winter

Most active

Breeding (Apr/May):

- Adult males looking for females; bellowing

Nesting (Jun/Jul):

- Adult females building nests & laying eggs

Hatchlings (Aug):

- Eggs hatch
- Adult females guarding nests
- chirp for female

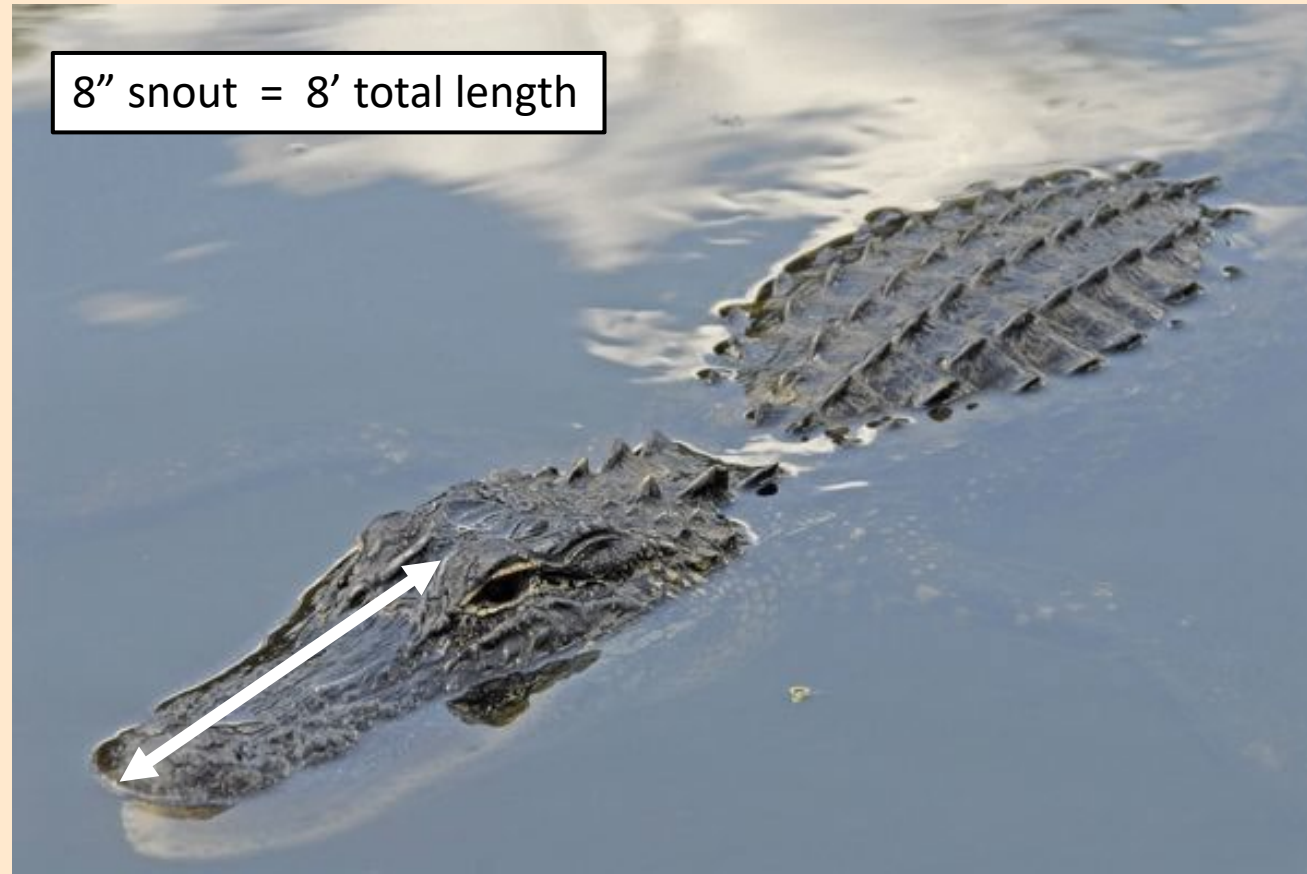
Brumation:

- All ages “hibernating”; occasionally basking & feeding



Length Estimation

Each inch in length from between the eyes to nostrils = 1 foot of total length



Eggs & Hatchlings

Weight Estimates

- Hatchlings = 5oz.
- 1 ft. = <1 lb



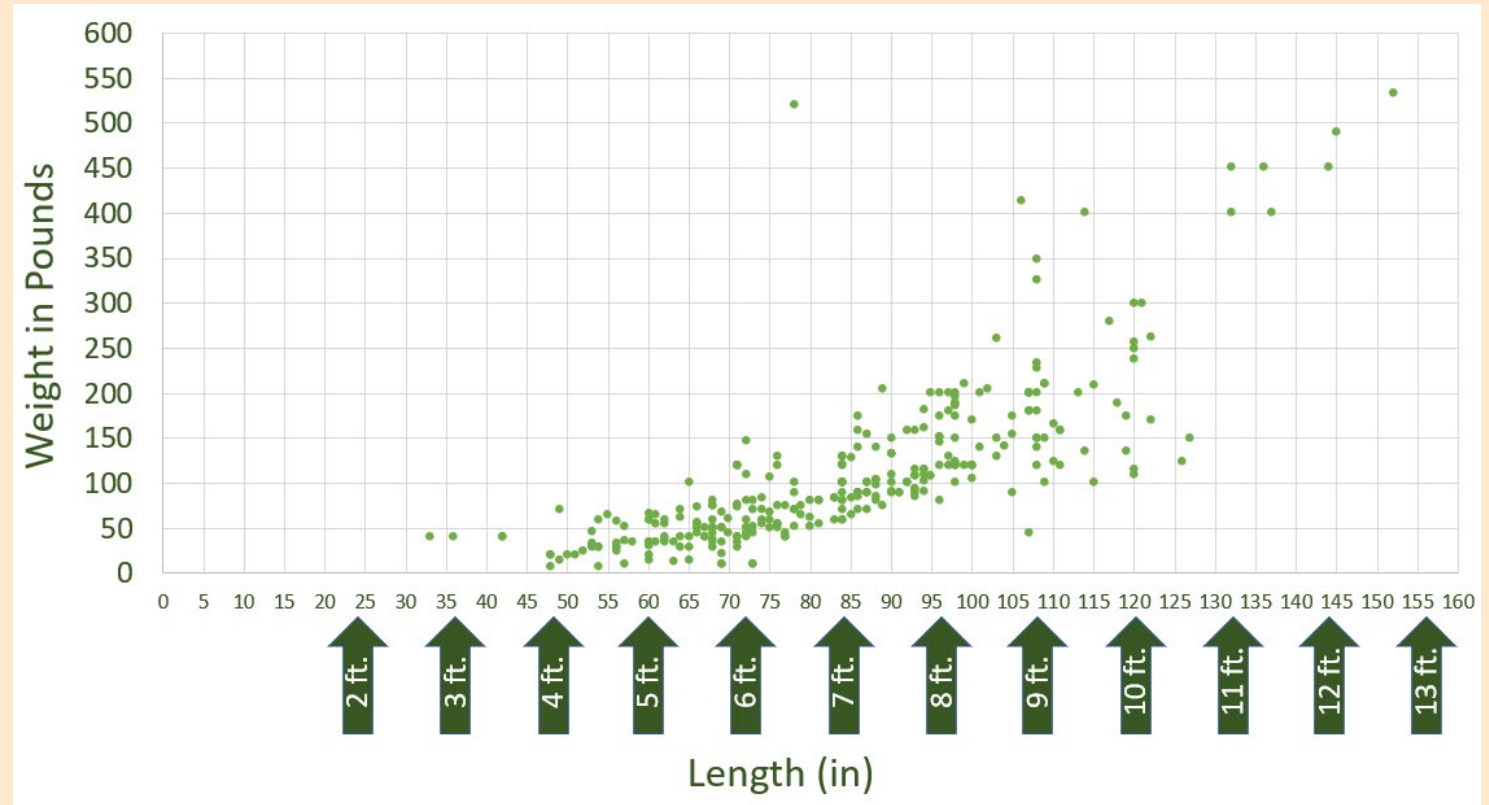
Juveniles (~2-6 ft.)



Weight Estimates

- 3 ft. = <4 lbs
- 4 ft. = 10-15 lbs
- 5 ft. = 20-25 lbs

Adults (6+ ft.)





Alligator Size vs Age

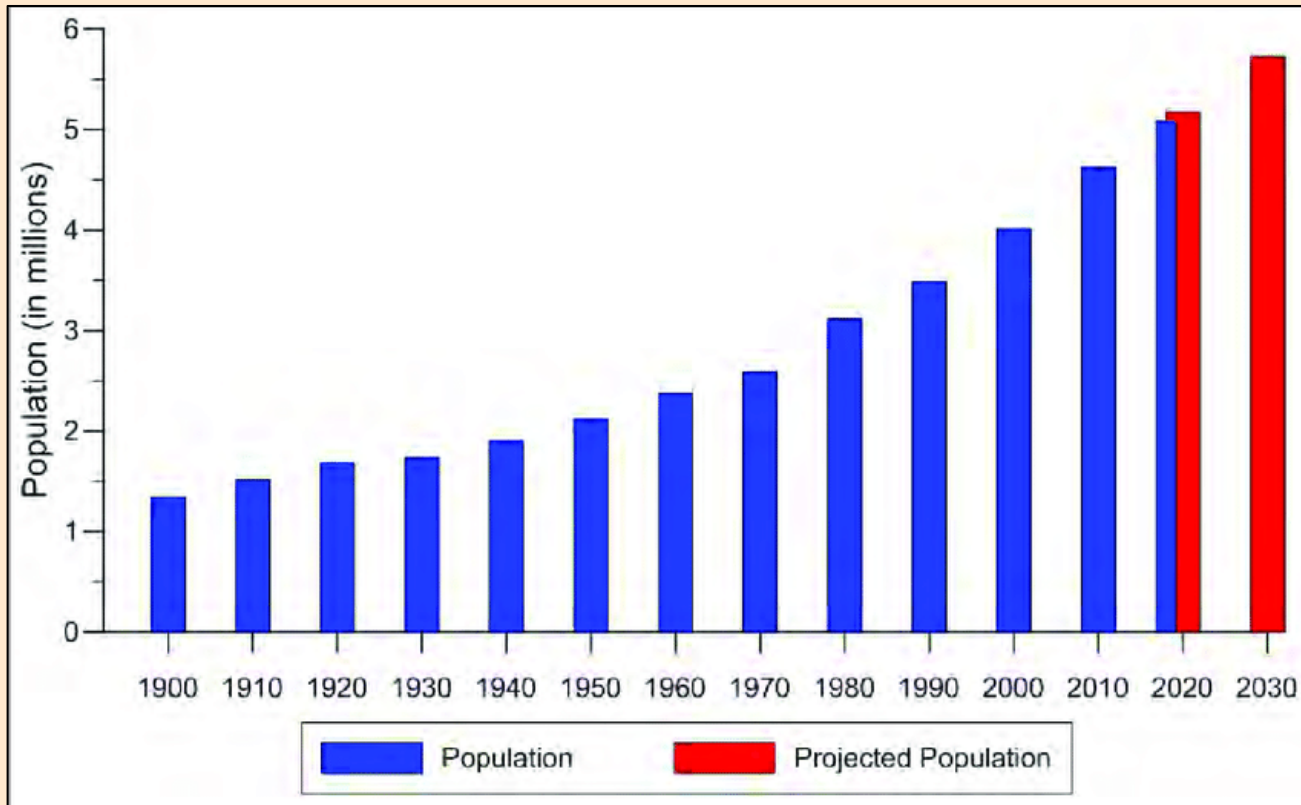
Size	Estimate Age
Males	
6 ft.	9-12 yrs.
8 ft.	17-20 yrs.
10 ft.	27-29 yrs.
12 ft.	36+ yrs.
Females	
6 ft.	12-15 yrs.
8 ft.	20-25 yrs.
9 ft.	26+ yrs.

FAQs about alligators

- Run from an alligator? **No**
- Climb fences? **Yes**
- Relocation? **No**



Threats to Alligators



Walker, Tom. (2019). South Carolina State Water Planning Framework South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.


WILD HOPE

CONSERVATION COMEBACK


American Alligator

SUCCESS


The American Alligator is removed from the endangered species list in 1987. This remarkable recovery took only 20 years and is considered one of the biggest success stories of the endangered species program.




Today, there are an estimated 5 million gators throughout the southeastern United States.




RANGE




STAYING VIGILANT



Wetland drainage and habitat loss continues.



Roadkill and other conflicts are on the rise as gator populations increase.

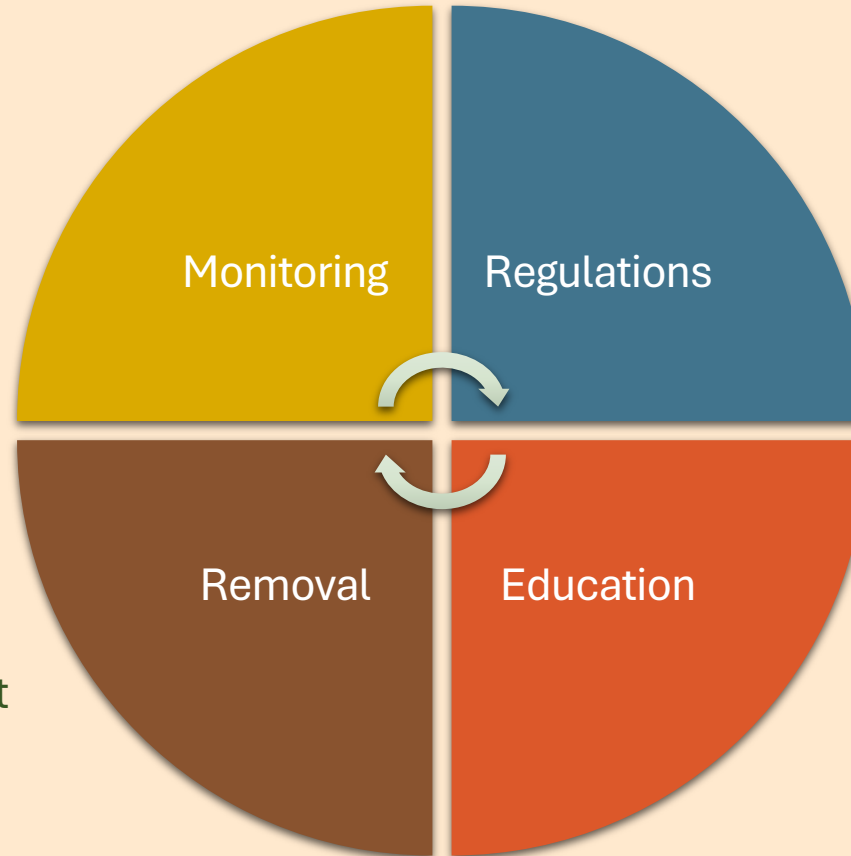


Rising sea levels could threaten gators as salt water floods into freshwater habitats.

Goal: Science-Based Management

Manage & Mitigate conflict

- Harvest Recording
- Statewide Surveys
- Mark/Recapture



- State Laws
- Draw Hunts
- Limits on tags/permits

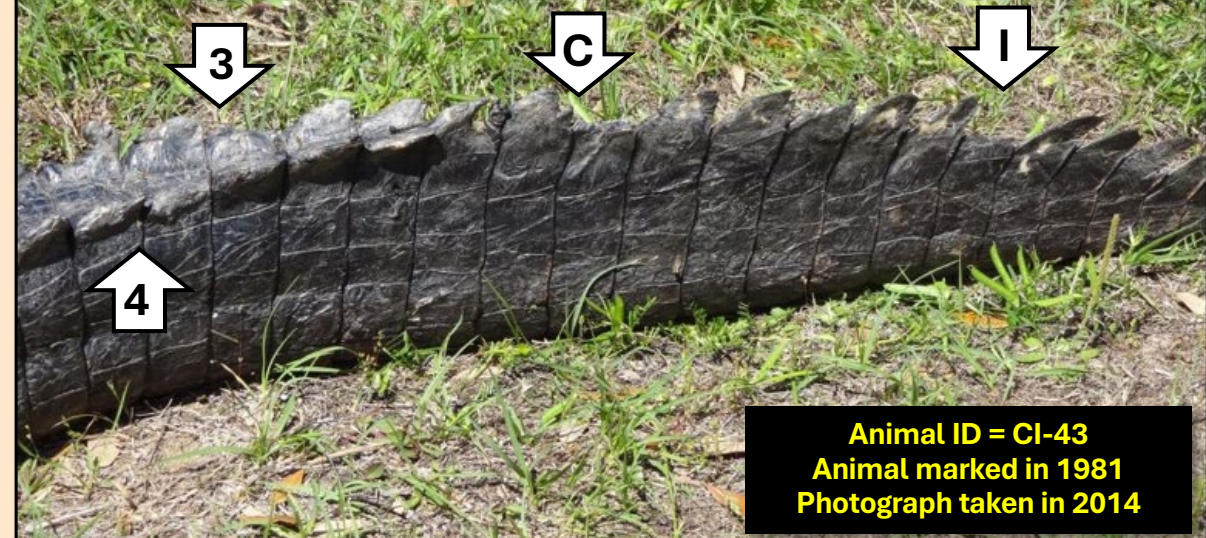
- Public Hunting
- Private Lands Hunt
- Nuisance

- Website/Be Gator Wise
- Outreach

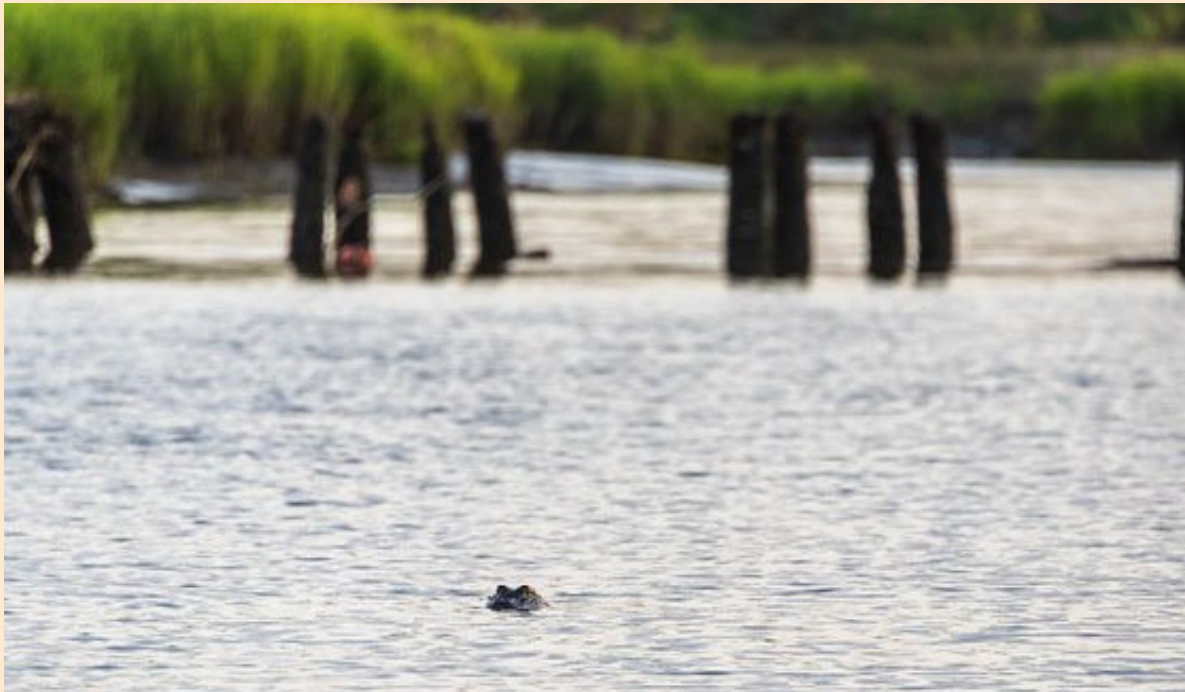
Monitoring

- Statewide eyeshine surveys
- GPS tagging
- Mark-recapture

Example of marking by scute clipping
(Using a letter-number scheme)



Animal ID = CI-43
Animal marked in 1981
Photograph taken in 2014



Regulations



**FEEDING ALLIGATORS
IS DANGEROUS AND
ILLEGAL**



To report someone
feeding an alligator call
1-800-922-5431

Laws against feeding & harassing

- Section 50-15-500(C): It is unlawful to feed, entice, or molest an alligator.
 - Violators are guilty of a misdemeanor

Laws against killing or possessing an alligator without a permit

- Section 50-15-500(D): It is unlawful to kill or possess an alligator without being permitted by SCDNR
 - Violators are guilty of a misdemeanor

Education & Outreach



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Boating Education Fishing Hunting Land Maps Regulations Water Wildlife Buy a license

ENHANCED BY Google
Go

Information

- Alligator Home
- Nuisance Alligators
- Public Draw Hunt
- Private Lands Alligator Program
- General Alligator FAQ's
- Rules & Regulation

Alligators in South Carolina

The American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) appeared over 80 million years ago and has remained mostly unchanged since that time. One of two species of alligator, it is the only crocodylian native to South Carolina.



Did you know? Alligators are more closely related to birds than modern-day reptiles!

To learn more about alligators & alligator management in South Carolina, check out the links in the information box. If you are on mobile this will be under the Menu navigation.

For alligator and other wildlife emergencies, contact Operation Game Thief: 1-800-922-5431

ALLIGATOR ACTIVITY

SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
<p>Breeding (Apr/May) adult males looking for females; bellowing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Adults moving, feeding and basking frequently</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Juveniles moving into retention ponds</p>	<p>Nesting (Jun/Jul) adult females building nests and laying eggs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Adults moving, feeding and basking frequently</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Juveniles traveling among retention ponds</p>	<p>Hatchlings hatch in August, chirp for females</p> <p>Adults & Juveniles feeding, putting on fat for the winter</p> <p>Adult Females guarding nests</p>	<p>Brumation all ages "hibernating;" occasionally basking and feeding</p>



ALLIGATORS

MAY LIVE HERE



Feeding, Harassing, or the Unlawful Killing or Taking of Alligators can result in substantial fines and/or jail time.

An alligator that approaches people for food is dangerous and may have to be killed. A FED GATOR IS A DEAD GATOR.

TIPS TO KEEP SC WILDLIFE WILD AND STAY SAFE

- DO NOT approach
- DO NOT feed or harass
- Swim or wade in designated areas only
- Keep pets away from and out of the water



Report violations to:
SC Department of Natural Resources
24 hours a day at 1-800-922-5431
www.dnr.sc.gov



Removal – Alligator Hunting

Removal



Private Lands Hunt

- Large landowners to hunt on their property
- Tags based on property size
- Season (9 months – over winter)
 - September 1st – May 31st
- ~120 properties enrolled

Public Hunt

- Anyone can apply
- Public waterways
- Draw Hunt: 1 tag per person; 1,400 tags drawn
- Season (1 month)
 - 2nd Sat. in Sept.- 2nd Sat. in Oct.
- 11,900 applicants in 2024



Nuisance Alligator Program Overview

Nuisance Alligator

- Lost its fear of people and/or may cause harm to people
- One trapped in a place it's not supposed to be
- Being fed

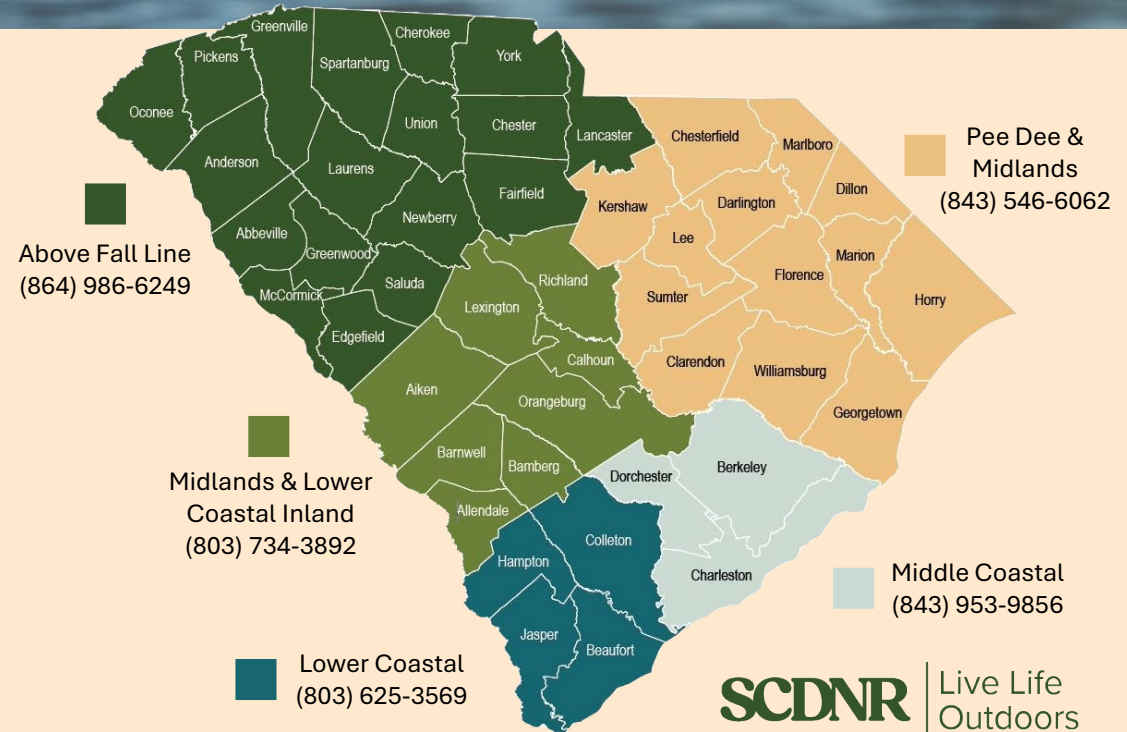
Removal

- Permit & tags required to remove an alligator
- Nuisance alligator → euthanized
- Typically those over 4ft

Operation Game Thief: 1-800-922-5431



Removal



Nuisance Alligator Management

The Public

The Individual:

- Be aware of surroundings when by a body of water
- Keep pets away from water
- Don't feed wildlife living in the water
- Don't throw fish guts back into the water after fishing

HOA/Property Management:

- Make decisions regarding alligators on their property
- Request nuisance tags to remove an alligator
- Educate residents
- Put up signage



The sign features a red-bordered square on the left containing a black silhouette of a person walking a dog on a leash towards a body of water. A red diagonal line crosses the square from the top-right to the bottom-left. To the right of the square is a black silhouette of an alligator. Below these graphics, the text 'BE ALLIGATOR AWARE' is written in large, bold, red capital letters. Underneath that, the phrase 'Protect your pets and yourself' is written in a smaller, bold, black font. A list of three bullet points follows: 'Keep all pets on a leash', 'Do not allow pets near the water', and 'Walking dogs near water is often a factor in fatal human alligator attacks'. At the bottom left is the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources logo, and at the bottom right is a QR code.

BE ALLIGATOR AWARE

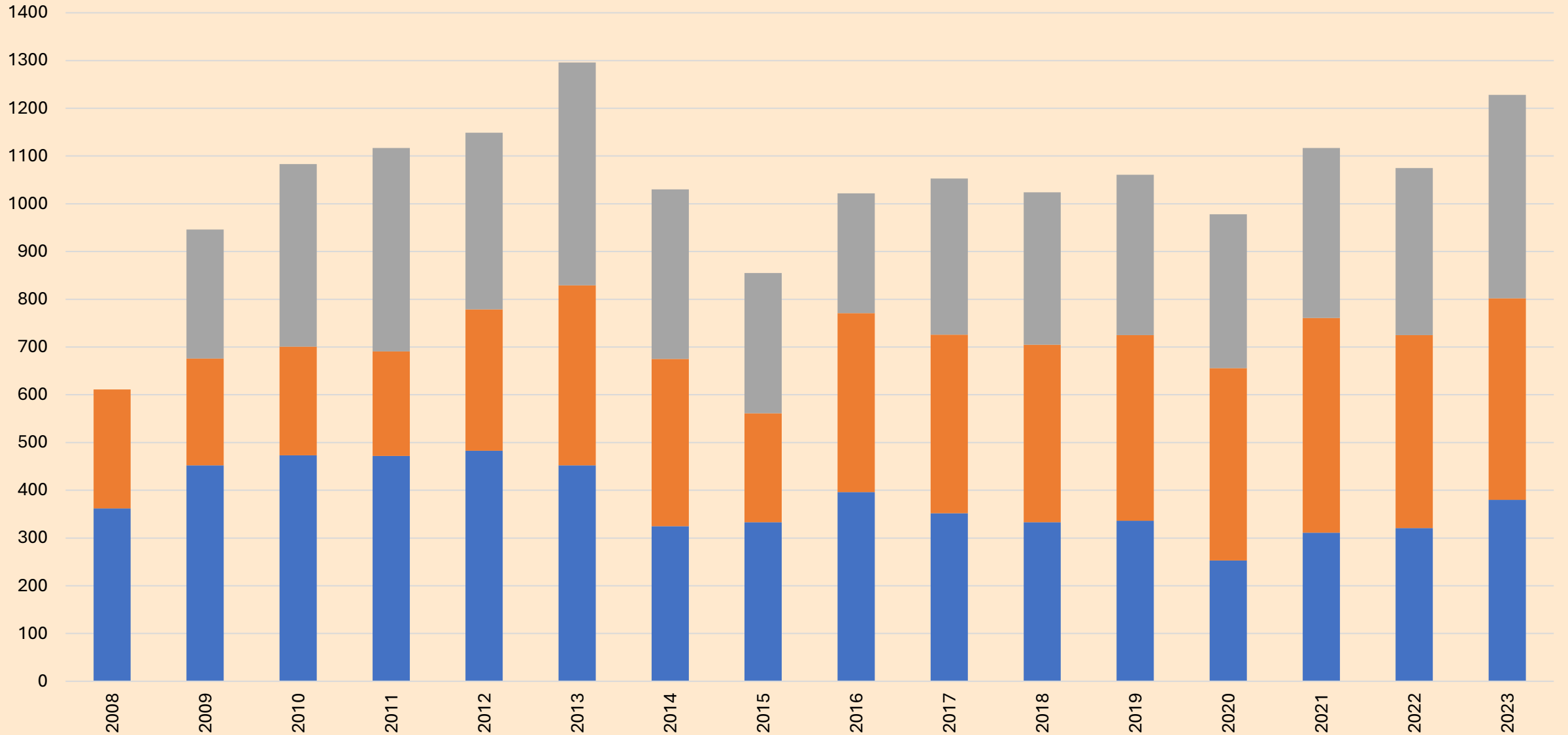
Protect your pets and yourself

- Keep all pets on a leash
- Do not allow pets near the water
- Walking dogs near water is often a factor in fatal human alligator attacks

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
1-800-922-5431 www.dnr.sc.gov

Yearly Statewide Alligator Harvests by Program

- Nuisance
- Private Lands
- Public Hunt





Questions?

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