



# COEXIST WITH *Alligators*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JEFF HALL / NCWRC

**American alligators** occur naturally in North Carolina, inhabiting bay lakes, rivers, creeks, marshes, swamps and ponds, with local populations distributed in patches along the entire coast. Alligators become less common in coastal NC as you move from south to north. Climate, specifically the number of cold weather days, limits their “growing season” and their ability to survive and reproduce. Coastal NC is considered the northern extent of their range, and alligators in NC have much slower growth rates, reproduce less frequently, and populations are more vulnerable to local extinctions than other more southern states. It is unlawful for the public to kill, harm or harass an alligator in NC.

## **Alligator Quick Facts:**

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### **What good are alligators?**

Alligators strengthen our coastal wetland ecosystems. Alligator holes dug into embankments and at the bottom of ponds and lakes provide hiding places for other aquatic species. Alligator eggs and hatchlings provide food for a host of species. Juveniles feed on insects, snails, and small fish. Larger alligators feed on snakes, turtles, birds, small mammals and occasionally fish.

### **When are they active?**

Alligators are reptiles, and they are generally active when temperatures are warm from early spring through early fall. During winter they burrow into embankments, use dens created by trees along river banks or submerge into ‘gator’ holes for the winter.

### **What should I do if I see an alligator?**

Alligators are usually quite shy and secretive. Simply seeing one is generally not cause for concern. The best option is to simply leave the alligator alone and it will typically move on within a few hours to a couple of weeks. To insure that alligators do not hang around and become a problem, refrain from feeding them. It is unlawful in North Carolina to intentionally feed an alligator.

### **Are alligators a threat to people or pets?**

North Carolina alligators are rarely a threat. They can become a problem when they are fed by people, which causes them to associate humans with an easy meal. Ducks, geese, and fish should not be fed in water areas where alligators are present. Large alligators (greater than 8 feet long) can be a safety risk for humans and pets. Pets should be on leashes in areas where alligators have been seen.



### **How fast do they grow and how big do they get?**

North Carolina alligators grow slowly. Alligators less than 6 feet long grow about 4 inches per year. Larger alligators grow about 3 inches per year. Females generally grow to less than 9 feet while males can grow to 12-13 feet and weigh 500 pounds or more.

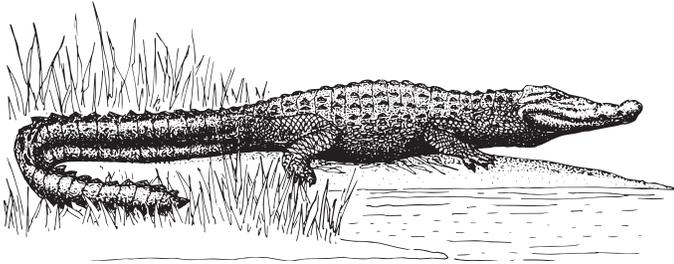
### **Can someone remove an alligator from my property?**

Typically, an alligator will move from an area if given time. The process of trapping and relocating alligators can be hazardous for everyone involved, including the alligator. The safest and best course of action is to simply leave the alligator alone and allow it to move on its own. Alligator hunting or otherwise killing an alligator is prohibited in North Carolina. Occasionally, an alligator in a place of business or on a highway is moved by WRC employees or authorized individuals.



## Preventing Conflicts with Alligators

Although seeing an alligator for the first time may be scary, North Carolina alligators rarely pose a threat to humans. If an alligator is seen on private or public property it is not immediate cause for alarm. Follow these common sense tips and in the majority of cases, these native reptiles will remain shy and secretive and move on.



*Alligators are naturally secretive and shy, and pose little threat to human safety if left alone.*

Alligators can become a safety issue if they are habituated to being fed by humans. It is unlawful in NC for anyone to intentionally feed an alligator.

If you know of someone poaching, harming, harassing or intentionally feeding alligators in NC please call our Wildlife Enforcement hotline at 1-800-662-7137.

Alligators are part of the natural fauna in North Carolina, inhabiting bays, rivers, creeks, marshes, swamps and ponds along the entire coast.

To insure alligators keep their secretive and shy behavior, **DO NOT** feed them no matter where they are seen.

## Common Sense Safety Tips:

- Do not intentionally feed an alligator no matter what its size.
- Do not throw food into waters where alligators may be found.
- Fishermen should dispose of fish scraps in garbage cans, and not throw them into the water.
- Do not feed ducks, geese, other waterfowl or fish in areas where alligators have been seen.
- Follow local leash laws or otherwise keep pets on a leash in areas where alligators could potentially occur.
- Never leave children unattended near any body of water.
- Don't allow pets to swim, exercise or drink in or near waters that may contain alligators.
- Be particularly cautious between dusk and dawn when alligators are most active.
- Do not harass or provoke any alligator.
- Children and adults should never approach an alligator or any other large wild animal.
- If the alligator is in a residence or place of business, or interrupting traffic on a public road, call WRC at 800-662-7137.

## Long-term Exclusion and Environment Options:

- Install a fence with a minimum height of 4.5 feet around retention ponds, lakes, or other bodies of water that might attract alligators
- Install bulkhead along edges of lakes and waterways
- Add grates to culvert pipes
- Fence causeways between ponds
- Minimize vegetation growing in water or near the water's edge

For technical assistance with exclusion or habitat modification call 866-318-2401 or 919-707-4011.

Alligator hunting or otherwise killing an alligator is prohibited in North Carolina. Only authorized wildlife biologists and wildlife officers can remove problem alligators.



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