Morelet's Crocodile

Crocodylus moreletii

- The geographic range of the Morelet's crocodile extends from southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. They live in sympatry with the American Crocodile in Belize and Mexico, and *Caiman* spp. in the southwest of Mexico, and possibly northern Guatemala.

- According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Morelet's crocodile is of Least Concern. Previously, poaching was a major cause for killings and small population numbers. However, Morelet's have recovered, particularly in Belize and Mexico. Currently, the major threats are habitat destruction and pollution.
- The Morelet's crocodile is a medium-size species of crocodilian. Males can reach up to 10ft (~3m).
- Morelet's crocodile have a very wide snout, similar to alligators. This reflects their preferred prey such as raccoons, and other small mammals.
- The Morelet's crocodile is principally a freshwater dwelling crocodile. It primarily inhabits freshwater lakes, rivers, but can be found in brackish water.
- The Morelet's crocodile is NOT a man-eater. They prefer eating fish, crab, shrimp, and small mammals like raccoons.

- Mating season for the Morelet's crocodile begins mid-dry season. Gestation lasts for about 60-90 days in which females will create a mound nest and lay their eggs for another 60-90 days between mid-May and mid-June. Eggs usually hatch at the peak of the rainy season (September or August).

- Current research illustrates that *C. moreletii* and *C. acutus* diverged from a single common ancestor about 7.3 million years ago. Yet after divergence they began to hybridize between 2.47 million years ago to 230,000 years ago.

- Recent genetic research on crocodiles in Mexico illustrates that the majority of Morelet's crocodiles are a new "hybrid species" and there are very few pure Morelet's crocodile populations left in the wild which causes concern in elevating their conservation status. Given the rate of hybrids, it's possible Morelet's will be headed to extinction, or evolve into a new species. Only time will tell (and evolution and natural selection).

Above information was provided by **Crocodile Research Coalition**
For further information please contact the Crocodile Research Coalition at
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