


American Crocodile

Crocodylus acutus

- The geographic range of the American crocodile extends from the southern part of Florida down to Venezuela on the Caribbean side. It also is located on the Pacific Coast of Central and South America from southern Mexico down to Ecuador.
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- According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the American crocodile is considered Vulnerable of extinction. Previously, illegal hunting and drowning in fishnets were a major cause for small population numbers. Currently, the major threats are habitat destruction and pollution, although illegal hunting continues.
 - The American crocodile is one of the largest species of crocodylians alive. Historically it could reach 20ft (7m). Average now is about 13-14ft (4-4.3m).
 - The most distinguishing morphological feature of the American crocodile is its pre-orbital hump on its snout, in front of its eyes.
 - The American crocodile is a salt-water crocodile. It is known to travel great distances among the cayes and the islands, possibly “surfing” the waves or using the current to disperse around like their cousin the Saltwater crocodile.
 - The American crocodile is NOT a man-eater. They prefer eating fish, crab, shrimp, and small mammals like raccoons.
 - Mating season for the American crocodile on the cayes is between December thru February. Gestation lasts for about 60-90 days in which females will create a mound nest and lay their eggs for another 60-90 days. Eggs usually hatch at the beginning of the rainy season.

- 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 illustrates what we think of one species is actually 3 cryptic species of the American crocodile. One evolutionary unit has been identified on the Pacific coast along Mexico, a second along the Yucatan and Belize coast, and a third evolutionary unit among the Antilles. Interestingly, mainland American crocodiles are more closely related to *Crocodylus intermedius* from South America than American crocodiles from the Caribbean. American crocodiles along the Antilles are more closely related to *Crocodylus rhombifer*. But here is another evolutionary fact thrown at ya... *C. moreletii* is more closely related to *C. rhombifer*! More genetic work is underway, but we will likely see what we currently know as the American crocodile is really several different cryptic species!



Above information was provided by **Crocodile Research Coalition**
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