

# American alligator

## *Alligator mississippiensis*



(Photo by FWC)

### **Taxonomic Classification**

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum:** Chordata

**Class:** Reptilia

**Order:** Crocodylia

**Family:** Alligatoridae

**Genus/Species:** *Alligator mississippiensis*

**Common Name:** American alligator

### **Listing Status**

**Federal Status:** Threatened (Similarity of Appearance to the American Crocodile)

**FL Status:** Federally-designated Threatened (Similarity of Appearance)

**FNAI Ranks:** G5/S4 (Globally: Demonstrably Secure/State: Apparently Secure).

**IUCN Status:** LC (Least Concern)

### **Physical Description**

The American alligator is a black reptile that can reach lengths of 13-14.7 feet (4-4.5 meters) and a weight in excess of 1,000 lbs (454 kilograms) (Florida Museum of Natural History, n.d.). A special feature of the alligator is its nostrils. The nostrils are upward facing on the long snout, which allows the alligator to breathe when its body is submerged (Smithsonian National Zoological Park, n.d.). Also, armored plates (scutes) cover the body. Alligators have a vertically flattened tail, and a light yellow throat and belly. Alligators are ectothermic (body temperature is externally regulated) and are generally active when external temperatures are 82-92°F (28-33°C).



[Florida Museum of Natural History](#)  
[FWC Species Profile](#)  
[FWC Hunting Information](#)  
[FWC Nuisance Alligator Program](#)  
[International Union for Conservation of Nature](#)  
[National Geographic](#)  
[Smithsonian National Zoological Park](#)  
[University of Georgia Savannah River Ecology Laboratory](#)  
[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

## **References**

Florida Museum of Natural History. (n.d.). *Alligator mississippiensis* (Daudin, 1801). Retrieved May 10, 2011, from: [http://crocodilian.com/cnhc/esp\\_amis.htm](http://crocodilian.com/cnhc/esp_amis.htm)

Krysko, K., K. Enge, and P. Moler. 2011. *Alligator mississippiensis* (Daudin 1801) American alligator. Atlas of Amphibians and Reptiles in Florida.

Smithsonian National Zoological Park. (n.d.). *American Alligator*. Retrieved 10 May , 2011, from Smithsonian National Zoological Park Friends of the National Zoo:  
<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/ReptilesAmphibians/Facts/FactSheets/Americanalligator.cfm>

University of Georgia . (n.d.). *American Alligator (Alligator mississippiensis)*. Retrieved May 10, 2011, from Savannah River Ecology Laboratory:  
<http://www.uga.edu/srelherp/alligators/allmis.htm>