



Alligators at Risk



1 There are two species of known alligators in the world, the American alligator and the Chinese alligator. The American alligator can be found in the wetlands of the southern United States. These reptiles have been hunted for many years and, at one point, were close to extinction. In order to protect this species, they were listed under the Endangered Species Act, making hunting alligators illegal. Due to the efforts of the Endangered Species Act, the species has made a huge recovery and was taken off the endangered species list in 1987. Since the American alligator population has repopulated so well, hunting and egg collecting is once again allowed.

2 On the other hand, the Chinese alligator is a class one endangered species. The Chinese alligator can be found in the subtropical regions of China in low-lying areas such as rivers, streams, and marshes. This species of alligator is classified as critically endangered because it has a decline in population greater than 80% in specific areas of population. The destruction of their habitats comes largely from the conversion of the lands they inhabit being used for agricultural purposes. The Chinese alligator is very similar to the American alligator in appearance, but they are much smaller.



What Are Reptiles?

3 Snakes, turtles, and lizards are reptiles. These animals are cold-blooded; this means their body temperature depends on their environment and their skin is covered with hard scales that serve as protection for the animal. They have to keep warm by laying in the sun. Since they do not burn too much energy to keep warm, they do not have to eat as much food as mammals or other warm-blooded animals.

4 Most reptiles lay eggs. Alligators tend to create nests from nearby vegetation to keep their eggs safe. The decomposing vegetation creates the heat needed to keep the eggs incubated. The sex of the baby alligators is determined by the temperature of the nest. If the nest is cooler, it will produce a clutch of female hatchlings, and if the temperature is above 93 degrees Fahrenheit, the eggs will produce male hatchlings.

American Alligator	Chinese Alligator
<p>An average adult American alligator's weight and length is 790 pounds and 13.1 feet</p> <p>The largest ever recorded, found in Louisiana, measured 19.2 feet</p> <p>Adult alligators are black or dark olive-brown with white undersides</p>	<p>Rarely exceeds 6.9 feet in length and usually weighs less than 100 pounds</p> <p>The body is fully armored, even under its belly</p>

"Alligators at Risk" written for educational purposes.



Alligator Habitats

5 American alligators can be found in freshwater environments like rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps, and marshes. They also like to live in areas that are brackish, which means the water is slightly higher in salt content than fresh water, but not salty like sea water. Alligators tend to stay in marshy areas during the breeding season. The wetlands make nest building much easier for the alligators and keep the temperatures of the nests ideal for incubating their eggs.



6 Adult American alligators create holes in their swamp habitats. They construct these alligator holes by using their feet, tail, and snout. These holes create areas that help the alligator stay cool during hot weather. Alligator holes also provide habitats for other animals during droughts.



7 Other animals found in these types of habitats are amphibians, shellfish, bears, and panthers. The types of animals found in these habitats depends on whether the swamp is a freshwater swamp or a saltwater swamp. These animals make this their home since they are able to live in low-oxygenated, slow-moving waters.

8 Many species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish live and do well in swamp ecosystems. These swamp areas are important because many fish and amphibians lay their eggs in the nearby dry areas. When the eggs hatch, the young crawl into the water.



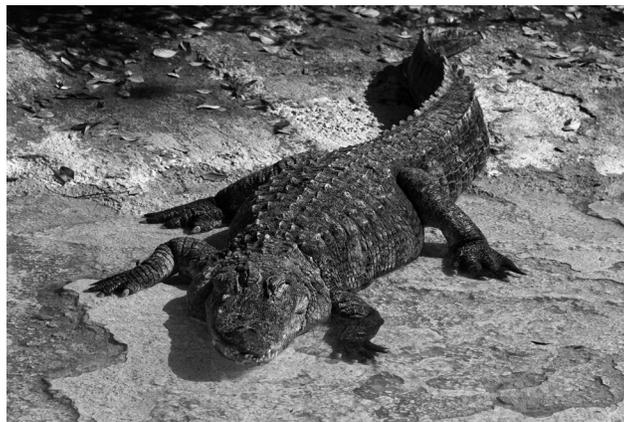
Types of Reptiles Found in the Everglades

9 The Everglades National Park in Florida is a freshwater swamp and is home to hundreds of types of birds, many species of reptiles, the Florida black bear, and the Florida panther. Both the American crocodile and the American alligator coexist in the Everglades swamp. Florida weather makes this an ideal habitat for the alligator, as well as many other animals.

10 Turtles: The most common turtles found in a swamp-like habitat are the striped mud turtle commonly found along trails, the Peninsula Cooter often found in shark valley, and the Florida red-belly found in freshwater marshes.

11 Snakes: Most of the snakes found in the Everglades National Park are adapted to living in water. The striped crayfish snake is the best swimming snake in Florida, but

is not easy to spot since they spend their time in marsh plants. The brown water snake is seen often in plain view and sometimes mistaken for the poisonous Florida cottonmouth.



12 Amphibians: Amphibians are animals that spend the early part of their life in water using gills to breathe. They grow into adults that may live in water but use lungs for breathing. These include frogs, toads, and salamanders. Most

commonly seen in the Florida Everglades is the grass frog which is the tiniest frog in North America, the pig frog whose grunt-like call can be heard day or night, and the dwarf siren salamander.

13 All of these reptiles have an important role to play in the habitat they live in.

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Basic Essay about Alligators

Did you know that the largest ever recorded alligator measured 19.2 feet? Alligators are interesting because there are two different species, they are a type of reptile, and they live in various habitats. Alligators aren't as scary once you learn more about them.

First, there are two different species of alligators in the world. According to the text Alligators at Risk, the most well-known type of alligator is the American alligator. The American alligator lives in the wetlands of the Southern United States. It was listed under the Endangered Species Act, and it was illegal to hunt them. Another type of alligator species is the Chinese alligator. The author states in Alligators at Risk that the Chinese alligator looks very similar to the American alligator. However, these reptiles are much smaller. There are also far fewer Chinese alligators than American alligators because they are listed as critically endangered. Alligators are fascinating animals, and it is important to know the similarities and differences between the two species.

Second, alligators are animals classified as reptiles. Based on the information in Alligators at Risk, alligators fall into the category of reptiles because they are cold-blooded. Cold-blooded means their environment controls their body temperature, and they have scales for protection. When their body temperature is too low, they warm up by laying in the sun. Similarly, alligators are classified as reptiles because they lay eggs in nests. Baby alligators are either male or female based on the temperature of the nest that the eggs are in. In the article Alligators at Risk, it states that if the nest is above 93 degrees the eggs will be male, and if it is cooler than that the eggs will end up being female. After learning about the characteristics of reptiles, I can understand why alligators are classified this way.

Third, alligators are adapted to live in various habitats. In paragraph one of Habitats, it says that you can find alligators in freshwater habitats like rivers, as well as brackish habitats such as swamps. Brackish means the water is saltier than fresh water, but not as salty as seawater. Freshwater and brackish water habitats are the perfect places for alligators to live and lay eggs. Another habitat alligators live in are holes that they create in swamps. According to the text Habitats, the author says they dig these holes by using their body parts such as their feet and tail. Alligator holes are very useful because they help alligators keep cool in the hot weather and also camouflage them from their prey so that they can capture meals easily. It is important to know where alligators like to live so that we can make sure we protect those areas from destruction.

In conclusion, alligators are remarkable because there are two different species, they are a type of reptile, and they live in various habitats. I think everyone should learn more about alligators so they can understand this mysterious creature. Alligators are an important part of their ecosystem.

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Advanced Essay about Alligators

Did you know that the largest ever recorded alligator measured 19.2 feet? Alligators are interesting because there are two different species, they are a type of reptile, and they live in various habitats. Alligators aren't as scary once you learn more about them.

First and foremost, there are two different species of alligators in the world. The most well-known type of alligator is the American alligator, and that is because there are many that live right in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana. According to the article *Alligators at Risk*, "The American alligator can be found in the wetlands of the Southern United States." It is hard to believe that these animals were once close to extinction because I have seen so many around where I live. It is very common to see alligators. In the first passage, I learned that the American alligator was listed under the Endangered Species Act and it was illegal to hunt them. As a result of the Act, the alligators have a high enough population to be taken off of the endangered species list in 1987. Another type of alligator species is the Chinese alligator. "The Chinese alligator is very similar to the American alligator in appearance. However, these reptiles are much smaller," says the author of the article *Alligators at Risk*. There are also far fewer Chinese alligators than American alligators because they are listed as critically endangered, based on what I read in the article *Alligators at Risk*. The Chinese alligator is not as familiar to me as the American alligator because it is only located in China and I have never seen one in real life. I can imagine they look the same, but are a little smaller than the American alligator. Alligators are fascinating animals, and it is important to know the similarities and differences between the two species.

Additionally, alligators are animals classified as reptiles. Alligators fall into the category of reptiles because they are cold-blooded unlike humans, birds, and bears. The author states in the passage *Alligators at Risk*, that cold-blooded "means their body temperature depends on their environment. They have to keep warm by laying in the sun." I have seen alligators spending most of the day sunbathing along the banks of the wetlands. I think the strong sun and warmer weather is why they prefer to live in the Southeast. Similarly, alligators are classified as reptiles because they lay eggs in nests. According to the passage *Alligators at Risk*, baby alligators are either male or female based on the temperature of the nest that the eggs are in. If the nest is above 93 degrees, the eggs will be male, and if it is cooler than that, the eggs will end up being female. After learning about the characteristics of reptiles, I can understand why alligators are classified this way.

Last but not least, alligators are adapted to live in various habitats. You can find alligators in freshwater habitats like rivers, lakes, and marshes, as well as brackish habitats such as swamps. Brackish means "the water is slightly higher in salt content than fresh water, but not salty like seawater," states the author of the second source titled *Habitats*. Of all of the places alligators prefer to live, none of them are purely salt water. It would be extremely rare to find an alligator at the beach. They are definitely more common in lakes and ponds. Another habitat alligators live in are holes that they create in swamp habitats. I read in the article *Habitats* that "they construct these alligator holes by using their feet, tail, and snout." I can imagine alligators burrowing themselves down in the cool, wet sand. Alligator holes are very useful because they help alligators keep cool in the hot weather and also camouflage them from their prey so that they can capture meals easily, states the text titled *Habitats*. These holes are a great survival technique. They allow the alligators to regulate their body temperature and hunt. It is important to know where alligators like to live so that we can make sure we protect those areas from destruction.

In conclusion, alligators are remarkable because there are two different species, they are a type of reptile, and they live in various habitats. I think everyone should learn more about alligators so they can understand this mysterious creature. Alligators are an important part of their ecosystem.