

British Nature Guide

Alligators - Predators in swamps

In the warmer southern states of the USA around the Gulf of Mexico there are large swamps. The main predator in these swamps is the American Alligator.

Alligators hunt by stealth. They hide among floating vegetation near the edge of a river or lake until a deer or a racoon approaches to drink. The Alligator will grab them with their powerful jaws and drag them under water to drown them, before eating them.

Alligators can grow to over 4 metres in length and weigh more than 200 kilograms.



Alligators are strong swimmers. They have very tough skin with rows of blunt spines running down their backs and along the tops of their tails.

They can hide under the water with just their eyes and nostrils showing, making it very difficult for their prey to see them.

The Alligator has only one predator - man

Alligators are reptiles. This means that they have to spend time out of the water basking in the sun to warm up before they can set out to hunt.

The females lay eggs in a large nest of vegetation near to the water and will stay nearby to guard the young when they hatch.

In the wild an American Alligator can live for up to 50 years.