

CROCODILE WETLANDS (Map Ref 39)



LP, MP, LS, US

Freshwater Crocodiles are smaller than Saltwater Crocodiles but can still reach a length of three metres, they also have a narrower snout and are not as aggressive. Their colour can range from grey to an olive- brown and they are usually white underneath. This colour helps them to camouflage themselves both in the water and in the brush surrounding the waterways.

Crocodiles feed on a range of prey including fish; frogs, crustaceans, reptiles, birds and mammals. Whilst in the water they are able to float or swim so that only their eyes and nostrils can be seen above the water. This often means that they will sneak up on their prey, not disturbing the water at all as they approach. Freshwater Crocodiles prefer to hunt at night time although they are active during the day and night

Crocodiles are able to block off their nostrils while they are underwater. They can also feed underwater by using a flap of skin in their mouth to seal the windpipe so that no water can enter their lungs.

Crocodile's have webbing between their toes to assist them with swimming, however, when they are moving in the water they mainly use their tail. Even though they have very short legs, they can move very quickly out of the water, reaching a running speed of up to 18km/hr.

Crocodiles lay eggs. The female digs a hole near the water's edge where it is still moist. She lays one egg at a time onto her hind feet. She will then lower it down into the nest. She will lay up to 20 eggs before filling the nest up again. It takes between 65 and 95 days for the eggs to hatch. During this time the freshwater crocodile does not protect the nest but she will return once her eggs begin hatching to help the young into the water. She will sometimes carry them to the water in her mouth.

Q3

Considering the issues described above, should crocodiles be a protected species? Form an argument for your point-of-view.

A3

Crocodiles have no natural predators, yet they became threatened a number of years ago. Humans shot thousands of crocodiles for their valuable leather. This near disaster was stopped when crocodiles were declared a protected species in Australia. Commercial crocodile farming now ensures the survival of these unique and prehistoric animals in the wild and permits are required for exporting crocodile products. In your group, identify issues surrounding crocodile farming vs. crocodile hunting, discuss each one carefully.

