

America's  
**ANIMAL  
COMEBACKS**

# American Alligators



*Freshwater Survivors*

by Aaron Feigenbaum

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by Aaron Feigenbaum

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# Visiting the Nests

It was a hot, sticky day in July 2000. **Biologist** Walt Rhodes sloshed through the muddy waters of the Santee Coastal **Reserve** in South Carolina. He was looking for alligator nests filled with eggs. When he found a nest, he stuck his hands into it.

"Ouch!" he cried.



Walt Rhodes checks on an alligator nest.



A mother alligator can lay between 20 to 70 eggs. Only about 7 to 10 of the babies will survive. The rest will be eaten by other animals, such as birds and raccoons.

Fire ants stung his arms. Walt ignored the pain. He needed to quickly take the temperature of the nest to find out when the eggs would hatch. Then he would check on some of the other nests.

Soon Walt returned to his boat. The stings hurt, but at least he hadn't run into a mother alligator. She would not have been happy to find him touching her eggs.

Not long ago, Walt would have had few eggs to study. In the mid-1900s, American alligators were on the brink of **extinction**.

An American alligator



# Long Ago

American alligators have lived on Earth for more than 200 million years. Very few kinds of living creatures have been on Earth that long. Alligators ruled the swamps before dinosaurs roamed the land!



Alligators have an extra eyelid on each eye. It helps protect their eyes. The eyelid is clear so alligators can see under water.

Millions of alligators once lived in what is today the southeastern United States. The warm weather is good for them because they are **cold-blooded**. Alligators need warm weather to help keep their body temperature up. The **region** also provides the perfect **environment** for them. Alligators live both on land and in water. The Southeast is filled with lakes, rivers, ponds, and **wetlands**.



Alligators cool off by swimming in the water.

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## *About the Author*

Aaron Feigenbaum is an anthropologist, editor, and children's book author. He currently resides in New York City.

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**American Alligators**  
Freshwater Survivors

**American Bison**  
A Scary Prediction

**Bald Eagles**  
A Chemical Nightmare

**Black-footed Ferrets**  
Back from the Brink

**Florida Manatees**  
Warm Water Miracles

**Florida Panthers**  
Struggle for Survival

**Gray Wolves**  
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**Grizzly Bears**  
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**Southern Sea Otters**  
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