

Alligator or Crocodile?

A Compare and Contrast Book
by Jennifer Shields



Alligator or Crocodile?

A note for parents and caregivers

Some of the most often confused reptiles are alligators and crocodiles. While both are crocodylians and, in some cases, may even inhabit the same areas, they are quite different. Readers learn what they have in common and how to tell them apart. Both spend time on land and in water. One eats small animals but the other preys on animals larger than they are! One tends to have wide snouts and the other has v-shaped snouts. Explore fascinating facts about these large (and scary) animals in this latest installment of the Compare and Contrast Book series.

Arbordale Publishing offers so much more than a picture book. We open the door for children to explore the facts behind a story they love.

The *For Creative Minds* includes

- True or False?
- Match the Adaptation

Thanks to John Brueggen, Director of the St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park, for verifying the accuracy of the information in this book.

Arbordale's interactive ebooks read aloud in both English and Spanish with word-highlighting and adjustable audio speed. Available for purchase online.

Jennifer Shields has been a zoo educator and animal trainer for over thirty years working at zoos in Ohio, Florida, Alabama, California, and now in Louisiana where she is the Curator of Education at the Baton Rouge Zoo. She is a certified Master Animal Trainer and has worked with a wide variety of animals from elephants, sea lions, and tigers to bats, pythons, and alligators. She shares her home with three dogs and two cats and shares her property, which is a certified Louisiana native plant and wildlife habitat, with native animals large and small. Louisiana has provided the chance to spend time with alligators in the wild and has deepened her understanding of and affection for these often-misunderstood creatures. This is Jennifer's debut book.



Jennifer Shields

Helping young children develop critical thinking skills is a gift they'll have for life. The book you are holding can help you to help them do just that.

Before reading the book, ask the child(ren) how they think these animals are alike or different. That helps you to understand what they already know or if they have any misconceptions.

After reading, go back through the book together looking at photos to find and discuss things. Ask verbal children to describe or explain what they see. Even young, non-verbal children can find and point to things. For example, have children find or point to:

- gators/crocs basking in the sun or in the water
- pointed versus rounded snouts
- different body parts (eyes/noses above water, webbed feet, etc.)
- images of babies with moms
- photos with bottom teeth showing in a closed mouth (or not showing)

Look at some of the sizes mentioned and measure them out. Have child(ren) find something of a similar size or weight.

Ask children to describe one new thing they learned or found most interesting.

Do the "For Creative Minds" activities in the back of the book with them.

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Alligators and crocodiles are reptiles. They are members of a group called crocodylians. Caimans and gharials are also crocodylians.

If you look closely, you will notice differences between them.

There are two species of alligators, two gharials, and six caimans.

American alligator



Chinese alligator



Gharial



Malayan gharial



Black caiman



Broad-snouted caiman



Cuvier's dwarf caiman



Schneider's smooth-fronted caiman



Spectacled caiman



Yacarè caiman



There are fourteen species of crocodiles.
The American alligator and American crocodile are the only crocodylians native to North America.

Mugger crocodile



New Guinea freshwater crocodile



African dwarf crocodile



African slender-snouted crocodile



Nile crocodile



Orinoco crocodile



American crocodile



Australian freshwater crocodile



Philippine crocodile



Saltwater crocodile



Cuban crocodile



Morelet's crocodile

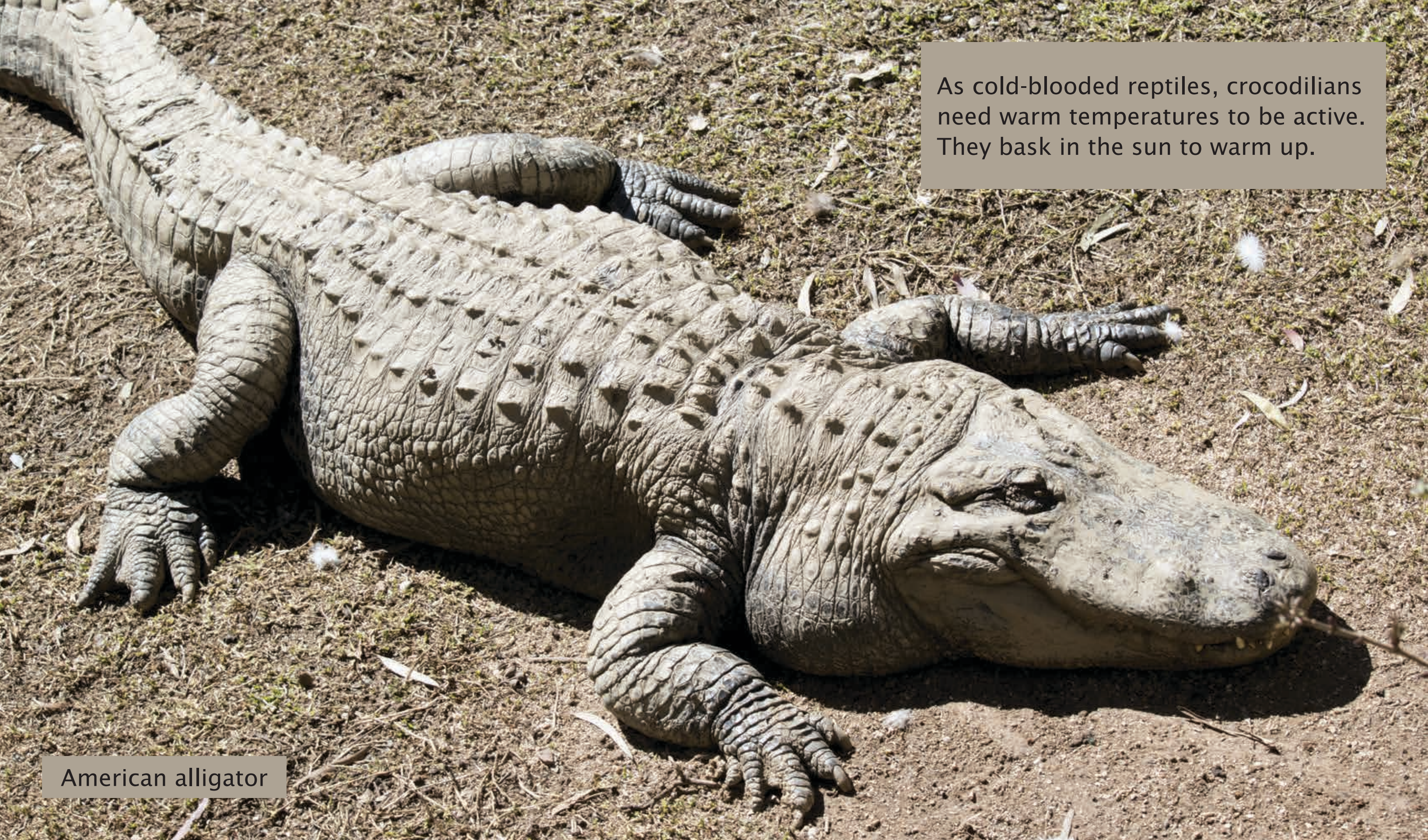


Siamese crocodile



West African crocodile





As cold-blooded reptiles, crocodylians need warm temperatures to be active. They bask in the sun to warm up.

American alligator

Both alligators and crocodiles live on land and in water.



They have a third eyelid called a nictitating membrane. These eyelids are clear like goggles to protect their eyes so they can see underwater.

They can keep most of their body under the water to hide from prey. Their eyes, ears, and nose are on the top of their heads and can be above water to see, hear, and breathe.



Nile crocodiles

Both female alligators and crocodiles build nests on land to lay their eggs. Unlike most reptiles, crocodilian moms guard their nests and protect their babies after they hatch. They will gently carry their newly-hatched babies in their mouths to the water.



American alligators



Nile crocodiles



Nile crocodiles

For Creative Minds

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True or False?

Using what you read in the book, determine whether these statements are true or false.

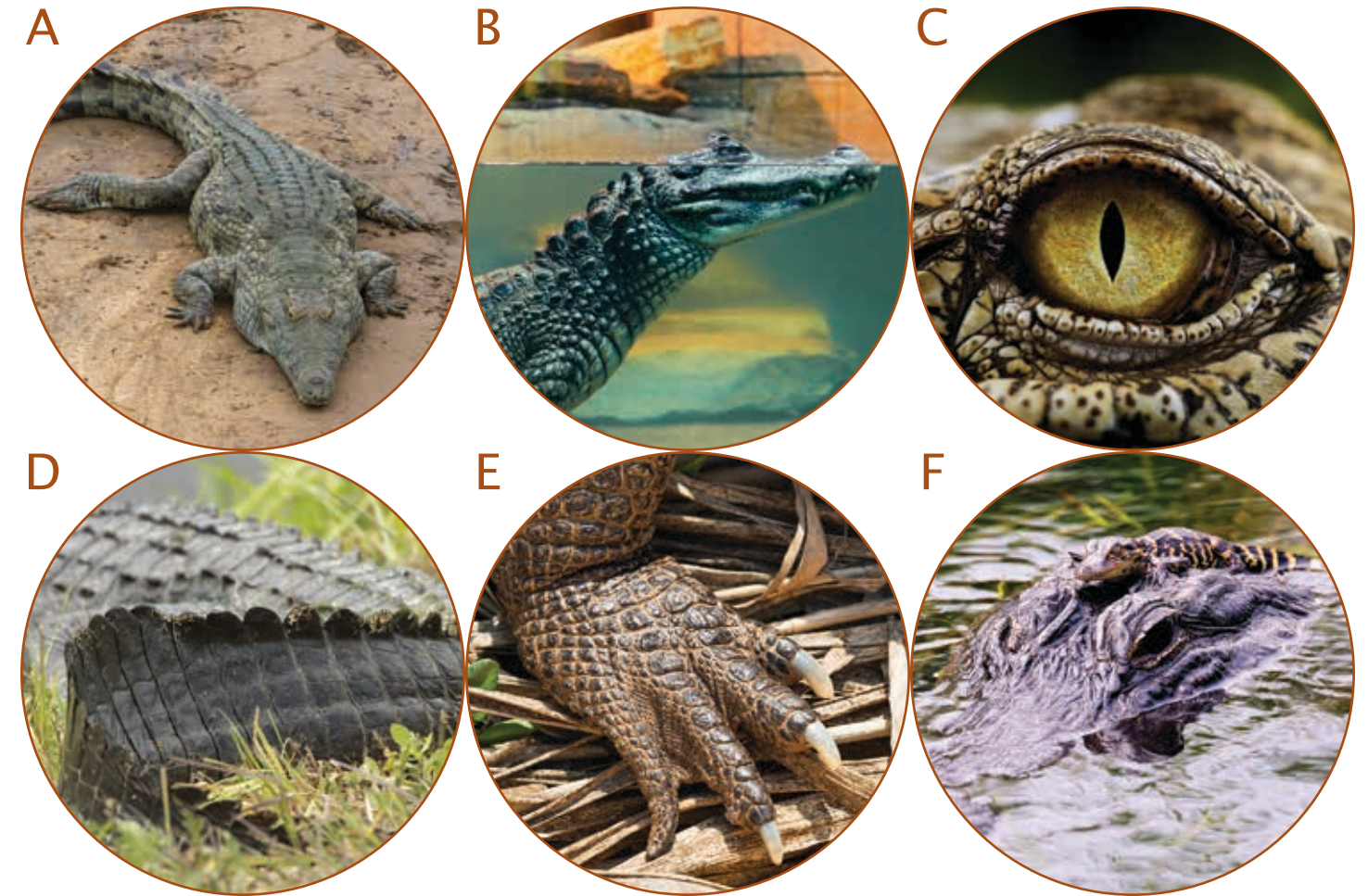
<p>1</p> <p>There are 14 different species of alligators and 2 crocodiles.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Five species of crocodylians are native to North America.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Cold-blooded alligators and crocodiles bask in the sun to warm themselves.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>All reptiles lay eggs and the young survive purely on instinct.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>All alligators and crocodiles have tough, thick skin.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>In general, alligators have large, wide snouts. Many crocodiles have long pointed snouts but there is variation between species.</p>
<p>7</p> <p>If an alligator or crocodile loses a tooth, it will never grow back.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Alligators and crocodiles have webbed feet to help them move through water and claws to help them move on land.</p>

Answers: 1-False: There are 14 species of crocodiles and 2 alligators. 2-False: American alligators and American crocodiles are the only crocodylians that are native to North America. 3-True. 4-False: Most, but not all reptiles, lay eggs and the young survive on instinct. Alligator and crocodile moms protect and raise their young. 5-True. 6-True. 7-False: It just takes a few days for a new tooth to grow back! 8-True.

Match the Adaptation

All living things have adaptations that help them survive in their habitat. Match the photo of alligator and crocodile adaptations to the description.

- Alligators and crocodiles have a third, clear eyelid (nictitating membrane) that helps them see underwater.
- Mothers care for, protect, and raise their young.
- Since they are cold-blooded, they bask in the sun to warm up.
- They hide from potential prey by hiding most of their body underwater and keep their eyes, ears, and noses above water.
- They have both webs and claws on their feet to help them move in water and on land.
- Strong tails help push them through the water and even let them jump to grab prey.



Answers: 1C; 2F; 3A; 4B; 5E; 6D

To my late husband, David Leadingham, who encouraged me to be brave and try new adventures—JS
Thanks to John Brueggen, Director of the St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park, for verifying the information in this book and for his photograph of the New Guinea freshwater crocodile. All other photographs are licensed through Adobe Stock Photos or Shutterstock.

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