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Dwarf Crocodile



Crocodylians were once abundant in many tropical waters around the world.

Crocodiles, along with their relatives the alligators, caimans, and gavials, are ancient animals that walked the Earth alongside the dinosaurs. Throughout history, crocodiles have been both feared and respected by people. The ancient Egyptians believed crocodiles were a river god that had to be appeased by the annual sacrifice of a beautiful virgin.

The art of some African peoples depicts crocodiles as water spirits and messengers to the supernatural world. This reverence, however, has not spared crocodylians from destruction at the hand of humans.

Species Description and Range

The dwarf crocodile, at no more than 5 feet (1.5 m) long, is the smallest of 3 species of crocodile which occur in Africa. It is found in swamps and slow-moving streams in the Tropical rain forests of West and Central Africa. The dwarf crocodile is now regarded as rare throughout its range.

Timid and slow moving, the dwarf crocodile is active mostly at night. All crocodiles are carnivores (meat eaters); they eat fish, birds, snakes, frogs, carrion, and any mammals that they

can catch. Except in the case of the largest of crocodilians, the huge saltwater crocodile of Australia and New Guinea, humans are rarely a prey item. Crocodilians are known to prey upon domestic animals, however.

The dwarf crocodile nests in mounds of vegetation near water, and it is dependent upon the heat generated by the decaying vegetation to incubate its small clutch of eggs.

Crocodile parents are more attentive to their young than any other group of reptiles. Baby crocodiles live a perilous life from the moment they hatch. They are eaten by birds, fish, small predators such as mongoose and civets, and even larger crocodiles. Often, the adults will carry and protect their young inside their fearsome-toothed jaws.