

Compare and contrast an alligator vs. crocodile

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Comparison between Alligators and Crocodiles Introduction As a result of both crocodiles and alligators being reptilian animals from the same Crocodylia animal order (Ortleb and Cadice x), they can at times tend to exhibit a number of similarities such as sharing a similar diet, an amazing swimming speed that can be as fast as 20 miles per hour and having a similar that can cause it to become relatively difficult to easily distinguish between the two. However, there are a few marked differences that can serve to greatly aid ineffectively distinguishing between the two animals. This paper will attempt to conduct a critical evaluation that will compare and contrast between the two animals.

Alligators are generally categorized as belonging to the alligatoridae family of crocodylians that is seen to also include the caimans. Perhaps on the most distinguishing characteristic aspects of the alligator is the fact that the noses of alligators are generally shaped to have a rather wide U-shaped, and rounded snout that can be deemed as having the appearance of a shovel (Barnes-Svarney and Svarney 187-188). This broad design of an alligator's snout can be perceived to have been designed mainly for strength and is designed to ensure that the animal can be able to easily withstand the stress to its bone structure caused when it applies massive force in cracking the rather hard shells of invertebrates such as turtles that form a significant part of its diet. As a result of an alligator's upper jaw being significantly larger than its lower jaw, its jaws completely overlap when its mouth is closed with the teeth on the lower jaw becoming completely hidden as they neatly fit into small depressions located in the upper jaw (Barnes-Svarney and Svarney 187-188; Tan 40). This aspect can be seen to be especially

pronounced in relation to the large fourth tooth of the animal located in the lower jaw. The salt glands situated on the tongues of alligators are less effective as compared to those of crocodiles and generally appear to have lost their innate ability of enabling the animal to excrete significant amounts of salt (Tan 40). Alligators can be able to grow and attain a length of about 14 to 16 feet a length that is considerably larger than that of some crocodile species (Smith 205).

With a V-shaped snout, the snout of a crocodile is basically found to be more pointed as compared to an alligator. The shape of its snout is seen to cause the animal to become more generalized and much better adapted for a wider range of prey. A crocodile's upper and lower jaws are fundamentally the same width and when closed the teeth located in its lower jaw essentially fit into the margin of the upper jaw when the reptile closes its mouth such that the teeth can be seen to interlock and interdigitate. However, the animals' large fourth tooth located in the lower jaw is very pronounced and fits outside the upper jaw into a well-defined constriction in this upper jaw located behind the nostril that helps in accommodating the tooth when the mouth is closed (Barnes-Svarney and Svarney 187-188; Tan 40). A crocodile's lingual salt glands are relatively better developed as compared to those of an alligator and help the animal in excreting significant amounts of salt. This causes it to become more tolerant to living in saline water (Tan 40). The largest crocodile species can be seen to grow to a length of at least 17 or 18 feet with the Nile crocodile growing up to 20 feet (Cavendish Reference 58), while as a contrast the African dwarf crocodile does not grow any larger than a length of 4 or 5 feet.

Conclusion

Despite the numerous similarities existing between these two reptiles, it should however be noted that some of the defining characteristics of the two animals can sometimes be different as is seen in the case of some crocodiles that have u-shaped snouts.

Works Cited

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