



Everglades Alligator Farm (oldest alligator farm in South Florida) has been in operation since 1991 in South Dade, Miami-Dade County, Florida City. It is on the road near "Robert is Here," a family-owned fruit stand in Homestead, Florida before one enters the Everglades National Park.

"Located at the southernmost tip of the Florida mainland, just before the Florida Keys, Everglades National Park is the largest subtropical wilderness in the U.S. and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The park's 1.5 million acres are a mosaic of ecosystems, from slow-flowing freshwater sloughs and salt-tolerant mangrove forests to tropical hardwood hammocks, pine rocklands, freshwater marl prairies, moss-draped cypress domes and the sparkling marine waters of Florida Bay. In these complex systems, you'll find a wide range of native water and land animals, including alligators basking right off the Anhinga Trail, herons and egrets feasting in the marshes and slow-moving manatees cruising the bay." <miamiandbeaches.com>

The Everglades Alligator Farm is an "Old Florida-style attraction." It has shade trees, large and small ponds, flora, a small bird aviary, airboat rides, and animal area attractions, but its emphasis is alligators. The Farm is a working operation and tourist attraction with over 2,000 gators. They provide alligators to zoos and other endeavors. There are various shows provided during the day. We saw the handler and the alligator feeding shows. It was quite exciting. There is a 14-foot alligator skin called "Grandpa" in their pavilion. It is quite impressive.

"Alligators are large reptiles and members of the order Crocodylia. The two existing species of alligators and the many worldwide species of crocodiles are closely related." The difference between the two can be distinguished by their snout. The alligator's is wide, rounded, and blackish in color. The crocodile has a pointed snout and is greenish in color. Alligators are mainly found in the southern United States (eastern Texas and Oklahoma to North Carolina, and throughout Florida. There is some overlap, however, near the southern tip of the U.S. among alligators and crocodiles." <livescience.com>

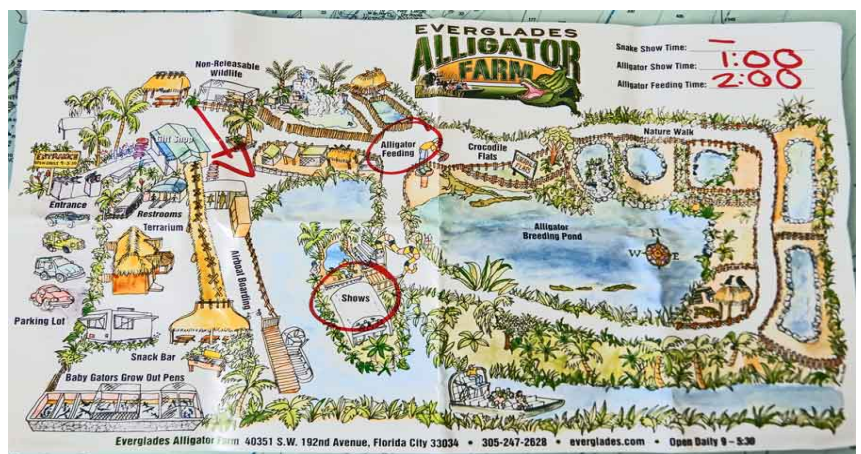
According to the San Diego Zoo, American alligators can swim up to 20 mph and run on land as fast as 11 mph. <livescience.com>

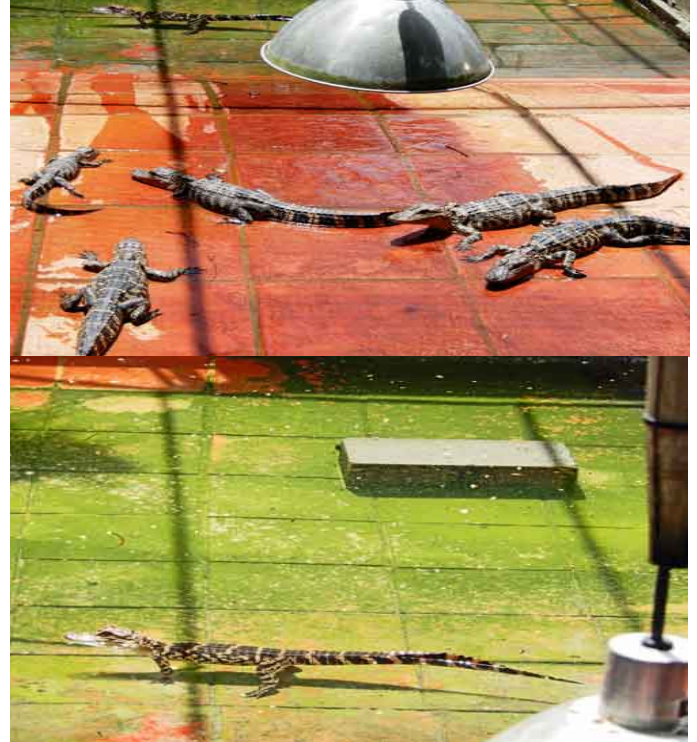
"The American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) is the largest reptile in North America. They live in freshwater wetlands. The American alligator is a conservation success story. Once endangered, they have now made a remarkable recovery. State and federal conservation measures, habitat preservation, and reduced demand for alligator products have resulted in a wild population of more than one million alligators." *Wired* magazine has an interesting article entitled, "The Creature Feature: 10 Fun Facts About the American Alligator." See the address in the sources below.

During the feeding show we had the pleasure of meeting one of the two species of vultures found in Florida. They are the turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*) and the black vulture (*Coragyps atratus*). There were over fifty black vultures joining us on trees above us, on fences, and even in the pond with alligators. Unlike the turkey vulture, the black vulture flaps its wings more and soars less. The black vultures eat carrion from roadkill and elsewhere. They are aggressive birds and will injure or even kill young or incapacitated livestock. They are protected and can only be hunted or killed by permit. They have been known to tear up screen porches and even chew on shingles or roofs. <myfwc.com>

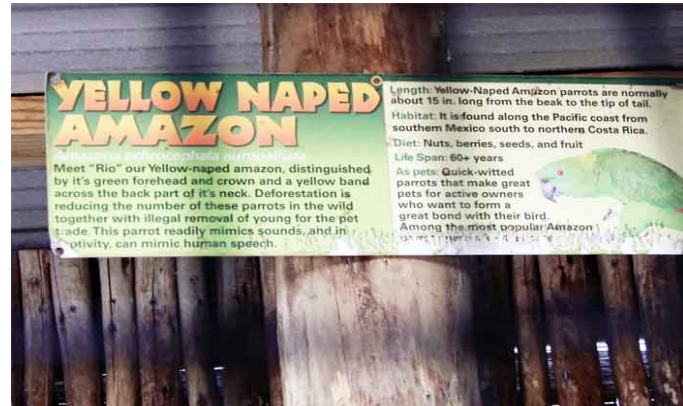
The Handler & Alligator Show was very interesting. The handler, Tyler, has been wrestling and handling alligators for 10 years. He said it took him several years before he and his alligators "sort-of" bonded. Not an easy job, but also not a high paying one. It seems that if someone dreamed of doing it, the pay was not a concern. Awareness, care, and concern are the key words to being an alligator handler.

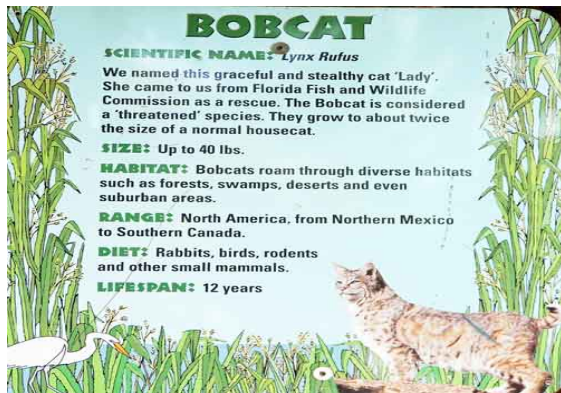
This photo program includes this article plus two YouTube programs: "[Handler & Alligator](#)" and "[Alligator Feeding](#)."





Bird & Animal Attractions at the Farm







Handler&Alligator Show



Tyler has worked at the Alligator Farm for 10 years; he works with two alligators for his show. This one is a male and 35 years old.
 Watch Tyler's two shows on YouTube – "[Handler&Alligator](#)" and "[Alligator Feeding](#)."



Sources: <https://everglades.com/>, <https://www.miamiandbeaches.com/thing-to-do/attractions/everglades-alligator-farm/2142>, <https://www.grainger.com/know-how/inspiration/kh-video-everyday-heroes-alligator-handler>, <https://careertrend.com/the-average-salary-of-an-exotic-animal-handler-13659759.html>, <https://myfwc.com/license/wildlife/alligator-permits/>, <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/birds/raptors-and-vultures/vultures/>, <https://www.livescience.com/27306-alligator-facts.html>, <https://www.miamiandbeaches.com/thing-to-do/parks-recreation/everglades-national-park/2108>, and <https://www.wired.com/2015/03/creature-feature-10-fun-facts-american-alligator/>.

acuri.net John R. Vincenti Southern Florida's Alligator Farm