

# ALLIGATOR HUNTING STUDY GUIDE



## Life History

The American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) is primarily found in freshwater swamps, rivers, lakes, ponds, and canals, but it can also be found in brackish water and even saltwater on rare occasions. Alligators are capable of traveling long distances across land to relocate to new areas.

Classified as an ectothermic reptile, alligators depend on external sources to regulate their body temperature. When it is cool, they can be found basking in the sun and will return to water when they become too warm.

Alligators are opportunistic carnivores and scavengers. Their food sources vary by location and habitat type but can include turtles, waterfowl, frogs, fish, mammals, rodents, crabs, shrimp, stingrays, and other salt and brackish water species.

Reproduction in alligators typically occurs in the spring, between late April and early June. Males attract and court females with courting behaviors including deep bellowing and body posturing. After mating, females lay 25 to 60 eggs in a mound of vegetation and mud.



## Conservation Status

The American alligator represents a conservation success story with Alabama playing a lead role. Due to unregulated harvest across its range during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, alligators were nearly hunted to extinction. In 1938, Alabama passed laws to protect the alligator, with other states following our lead soon after. In 1967, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service placed the alligator on the Endangered Species List. Only two decades later (1987), populations had rebounded, and the alligator was removed from the Endangered Species List but retained as a federally protected species.

In 2006, due to its steady population growth, Alabama implemented its first regulated alligator hunting season to better manage its population.

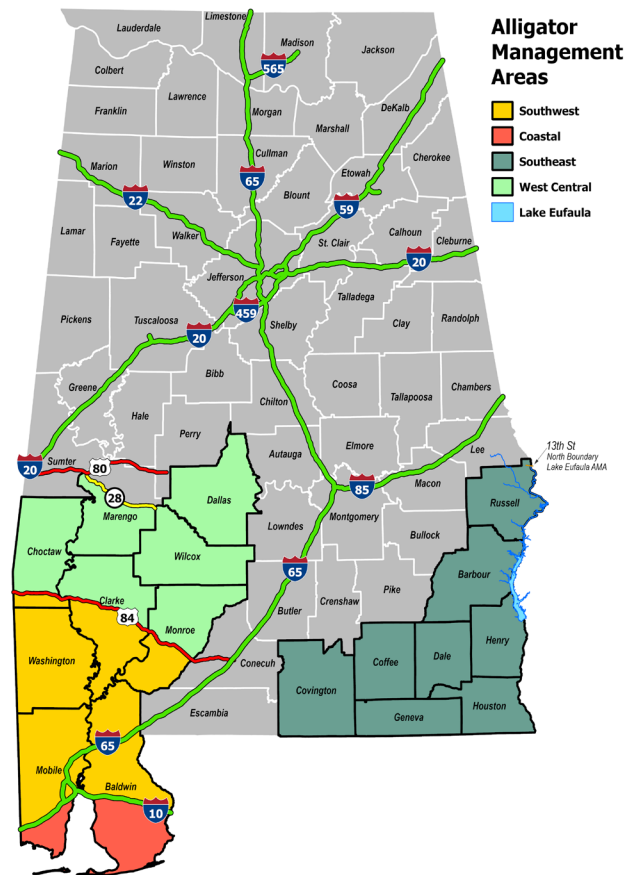


# Alligator Management Areas

Currently, Alabama's regulated hunting season is divided among five distinct Alligator Management Areas (AMAs), including the Southwest, Coastal, Southeast, West Central, and Lake Eufaula Alligator Management Areas.

The Southwest, Coastal, West Central, and Lake Eufaula AMAs have hunt periods spanning two Thursday through Sunday hunt day allotments in August and one Thursday through Sunday hunt in September. The Southeast AMA hunting season begins on the second Saturday in August and ends on the first Monday in September. Hunting on private land is permitted but requires written permission.

Boundaries for certain AMAs may have been modified, so be sure to thoroughly review the regulations and AMA map included in the hunt packet you receive in the mail. The Southeast AMA no longer has access to the River Bend area of the Chattahoochee River in Russell County as the North Boundary for the Lake Eufaula AMA has been extended north to the 13th Street bridge in Phenix City, Alabama. In the Lake Eufaula AMA, south of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge hunters must remain west of the green buoys that designate the Chattahoochee River channel. North of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, hunters must be in a creek, slough, etc., along the west bank of the Chattahoochee River before hunting can begin. Hunting for alligators in the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge is not permitted.



Refuge boundaries can be difficult to locate, so please reference a map of the Refuge, which can be found at the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters and online at [www.fws.gov/refuge/eufaula/map](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/eufaula/map). Scouting during daylight hours before the hunt is encouraged for all AMAs to become familiar with boundaries, access points, and navigational data (It all looks very different in the DARK!).

If hunting within the boundaries of the Walter F. George Reservoir (Lake Eufaula), a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hunting permit is required. The necessary permit can be purchased at [www.recreation.gov/permits/5232323](http://www.recreation.gov/permits/5232323).

Hunting hours for all AMAs is from official sunset to official sunrise.

# Alligator Tagging

All harvested alligators must have a Temporary Alligator Possession Tag attached to the alligator immediately following harvest and before moving from harvest location. The tag is to be attached within the last 9 inches of the tail between the lower and middle scales. These tags are issued to the Alligator Harvest Permit holder in the information packet. Following their harvest, Alligator Harvest Permit holder in the Coastal, Southwest, West Central, and Eufaula AMAs must transport and present their harvested alligator to the appropriate Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) District Check Station for biological data collection and have WFF personnel attach the permanent CITES tag. Alligator Harvest Permit holders in the Southeast AMA must transport and present their hide with the attached Temporary Alligator Possession Tag and completed harvest information form at any District Office to receive the permanent CITES tag. If an individual is selected for two or more AMAs, they must select the AMA they would like to hunt; the remaining vacant slots will be filled from the alternates list.

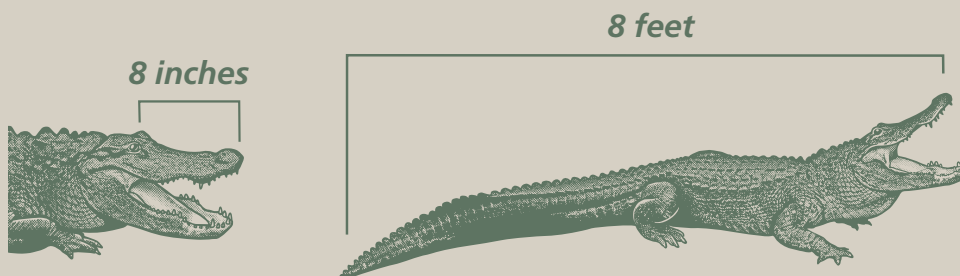


The Harvest Permit, Bonus Management Harvest Permit (resident or non-resident), and Possession Tags are non-transferable.

Each person receiving an Alligator Harvest Permit (resident and non-resident), or an Alligator Bonus Management Harvest Permit (resident or non-resident) will be allowed to harvest one (1) alligator per permit.

The Lake Eufaula AMA has a minimum alligator harvest size restriction of 8 feet. All other AMAs have no length requirement for alligators. Alligator Bonus Management Harvest Permits (resident or non-resident) are not available for the Lake Eufaula AMA.

## How to Estimate an Alligator's Length



A field measurement that provides a rough estimate of the total length of an alligator is the length between the nostrils and the center of the skull (between the eyes). For example, if the measurement on the diagram above was 8 inches, one can estimate that the entire animal is approximately 8 feet long.

# Application Process

Applications for a limited quota alligator harvest permit are open to residents of Alabama and non-residents. Alabama residents and Lifetime Hunting License holders of Alabama must possess any valid all-game or small-game Alabama Hunting License and 16 years of age or older. Non-residents who are 16 years of age or older must possess a valid all-game or small-game Alabama Non-resident Hunting License.

If selected through the limited quota random selection process and after completing the mandatory training course, the applicant is eligible to purchase a Resident Alligator Harvest Permit (for residents) or a Non-resident Alligator Harvest Permit (for non-residents). The cost for the permit is \$250 for a Resident and \$1,000 for non-residents. Each selected applicant has the option to purchase a Resident or Non-resident Alligator Bonus Management Harvest Permit (except for the Lake Eufaula AMA). Resident and Non-resident Alligator Bonus Management Harvest Permits cost \$125 and \$500, respectively. All alligators harvested with an Alligator Bonus Management Harvest Permit (resident or non-resident) shall be no larger than 6 feet in length.

Residents and non-residents may apply for Alligator Harvest Permits at the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources website at [www.outdooralabama.com](http://www.outdooralabama.com) beginning at 8 a.m. on the first Tuesday in June. There is no charge for each Management Area application submitted. Registration ends at 8 a.m. on the second Tuesday of July. Drawing for permits occurs on the Wednesday immediately following the second Tuesday in July. Applicants will be able to check results on the same website that they used for registration.

Selected applicants must complete the Mandatory Training Course (Study Guide and Test) and purchase the Alligator Harvest Permit before accepting their hunter status. Selected applicants must accept their hunt by the deadline at 8 a.m. on July 23rd. If a permit is not accepted by the deadline the applicant loses the opportunity to hunt, the next applicant on the list of alternate applicants is notified and provided 24 hours to respond. These notifications will continue until all permit vacancies have been filled. ONLY one (1) application shall be allowed per person per AMA. The application process shall be in accordance with the procedures outlined at [www.outdooralabama.com/seasons-and-bag-limits/alligator-season](http://www.outdooralabama.com/seasons-and-bag-limits/alligator-season).

A preference point system is utilized in the selection process. This system increases the likelihood of repeat applicants being selected for an Alligator Harvest Permit if the applicant continues to apply. If an applicant ceases to apply for an Alligator Harvest Permit continuously each year or is selected and accepts a tag for an AMA hunt, their preference point status is forfeited.



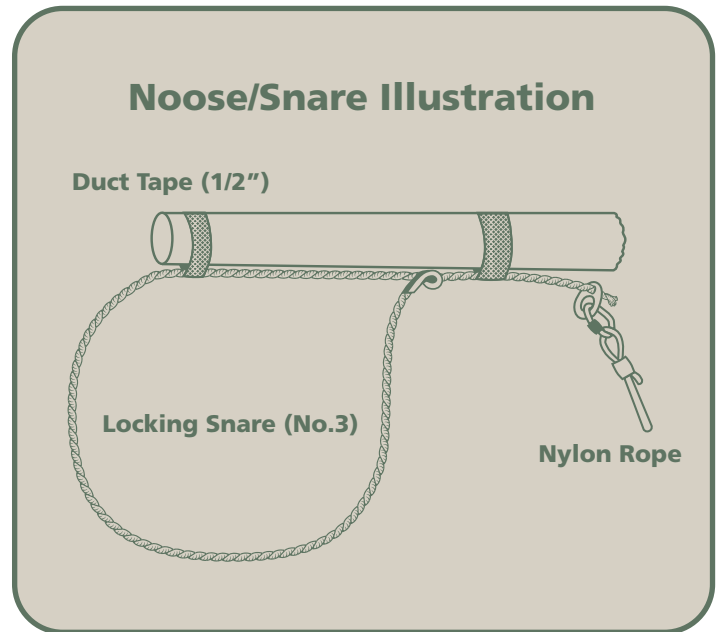
# Hunting Methods

Alligators must be restrained with a noose or snare around the neck or leg in a manner that the alligator is controlled prior to dispatch. It is unlawful to shoot at or kill an unrestrained alligator. Alligators must be captured and brought adjacent to the boat, dock, or bank prior to dispatching the animal. Once dispatched and in the boat, it is highly recommended that the mouth be secured shut with multiple wraps of electrical or duct tape.

All alligators must be captured and dispatched from the Alligator Permit holder's boat with the permit holder and permit aboard, but any properly licensed individual in the permit holder's boat is allowed to hook up and/or dispatch the alligator. No capture or dispatch equipment is allowed in assisting boats. Assisting boats are allowed to aid in scouting and locating alligators.

Legal firearms used for dispatching alligators include shotguns with shot size no larger than #4 and bangsticks chambered in .38 caliber or larger as well as #4 shot or smaller. Both shotguns and bangsticks must be cased and unloaded until a restraining line has been attached and the alligator is ready to be dispatched. No firearm may be discharged within 100 yards of any residence, building, boat ramp, or occupied campsite in Mobile/Baldwin Counties and on the Alabama River, Claiborne Lake, William "Bill" Dannelly Reservoir, and Walter F. George Reservoir (Lake Eufaula).

Any alligator of legal length must be dispatched immediately once boatside and restrained. Culling is prohibited. Releasing an alligator that does NOT meet the required regulation length is not considered culling. No alligators can be captured for photographic or any other purposes and released.



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## Check Station Requirements

All successful permit holders must bring their harvested alligators from the Southwest, Coastal, West Central, and Lake Eufaula AMAs to a designated mandatory check station on scheduled dates of the designated AMA season. Check Station location and dates will be posted to the website:

**[www.outdooralabama.com/seasons-and-bag-limits/alligator-season](http://www.outdooralabama.com/seasons-and-bag-limits/alligator-season)**.

A permanent CITES tag will be affixed to the alligator by WFF personnel at the check station. The CITES tag number must be displayed on ALL parts of the harvested alligator that are used (skull, feet, scutes, packs of meat, etc.).

Successful permit holders in the Southeast AMA must present their harvested alligator hide(s) with the temporary tag attached and completed Alligator Harvest Form to a WFF District Office within 10 business days of their harvest. The Alligator Harvest Form should be completed and sent

to the provided address, even if no harvest is made. Upon validation of the alligator harvest data by WFF personnel, a permanent Federal CITES Alligator Possession Tag will be attached to the alligator.



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## License Requirements

All holders of an Alligator Harvest Permit (resident or non-resident) must be in possession of a government-issued picture identification and a valid (resident or non-resident) all-game or small-game Hunting License as required by Alabama law. Permit(s) and licenses must be in possession during the season while hunting and possessing alligator(s). The permittee and temporary tag must be present in the capture boat.

All assistants, either resident or non-resident, in the hunting party 16 years of age or older are required to be in possession of a valid Alabama all-game or small-game Hunting License as required by Alabama law. ALL persons in the boat or assisting boats that are not the Alligator Harvest Permittee are considered Hunting Assistants.

Nothing in the regulation prohibits the possession of a handgun by lawfully authorized persons for personal protection, provided handguns are not utilized as a means of dispatch.

All Alabama boating laws and hunting regulations must be followed including the use of bow and stern lights while out at night. A life vest for each boat member is required by law. Maximum boat weight capacity must be observed, with everything in the boat counting toward the limit (including harvested alligators).