



BE GATOR SAFE!

Don't feed the alligators
Don't get close to them
Don't swim or wade where they are
Don't let pets near them
Don't agitate or tease them
Don't try to catch one
Don't approach an alligator's nest

Do observe from a safe distance
Do discourage others from feeding them
Do treat them with respect as important to nature
Do get additional information about alligators for the Texas Parks and Wildlife web site.

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/wild/reptiles/americanAlligator/>

For Information about Snakes, visit this page on the Texas Parks and Wildlife web site.

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expltx/jrnat/snakefaq.htm>

URBAN ALLIGATORS

Alligators have been around here for a long, long time and still are. They are relatively harmless creatures unless cornered or provoked. Growing up in Sugar Land, many years ago, we would swim in Oyster Creek and other area waters without giving 'gators a second thought. Maybe not too smart but, nonetheless, we never had a problem. We'd see them while swimming and get out of their way if they came too close. We'd also see snakes, turtles, nutria and many other critters naturally drawn to water. Alligators were a part of our life and we accepted the fact that we were in their environment.

From time to time, because of all the water around the Greater Houston area as well as the many acres still undeveloped, alligators will appear on the scene. They are opportunistic looking for food and, during spring, looking for love. Due to urbanization, sometimes they're looking for love in all the wrong places. Countless horror stories and theories abound as to their love for small dogs and children. Yes, alligators can be aggressive. Yes, big alligators could eat small dogs and children. Yes, you could be struck by lightening. The point is that when we see alligators "intruding" into "our" world, common sense dictates that you stay out of their way. Don't try to pet or feed them. Keep your small dogs and children away from them. Call your local authorities.

Alligators are inherent to lakes, ponds, creeks, rivers and streams just as are many other creatures. When you live on or around their habitat, you are going to encounter them from time to time. As more and more development occurs, the amount of their natural habitat decreases and tends to force them into view more often. Sometimes, they can be caught and relocated. Sometimes, the alligators are not so lucky.

This is a way of life in southeast Texas. Always has been and always will be. Remember, you live around water, not swimming pools!

Mac McCune