

## ORINOCO CROCODILE FACT SHEET



### Taxonomy

Kingdom: Animalia  
 Phylum: Chordata  
 Class: Reptilia  
 Order: Crocodylia  
 Family: Crocodylidae  
 Genus: Crocodylus  
 Species: Intermedius

### At Adventure Aquarium

- The aquarium is home to a pair of female Orinoco crocodiles born on March 25, 2008.
- They arrived from Dallas World Aquarium in October of 2013 and were each about 7 feet long and 70 lbs.
- They came from a clutch of 30 eggs hatched from eggs that were artificially incubated, so they have 28 siblings!
- The rest of the siblings of these two females were sent to different institutions to begin a captive population for the species.
- In the near future, some pre-adult males will be imported from Venezuela to continue the captivity conservation program for this species.

### Fun Facts

- The Orinoco crocodile is one of 14 living species of crocodile and the largest species of crocodylian in both North and South America.
- They are the largest predator in South America.
- They are related to alligators and caimans. Crocodiles, unlike alligators and caimans, have a V-shaped snout and their many teeth are visible when their mouth is closed.
- They live in or near the freshwater Orinoco River, the third largest in South America and one of the most important river systems on the planet.
- To date, scientists have recorded over 17,000 species of plants, 1,300 species of birds, more than 1,000 species of fish, 250 mammals, and 119 reptiles living within the Orinoco river basin.



For more information, visit [AdventureAquarium.com](http://AdventureAquarium.com)  
 Call 800.616.JAWS to make a group reservation

- Other species found here are the Amazon River dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis*), green anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*), giant river otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), scarlet ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*), jaguar (*Panthera onca*), electric eel (*Electrophorus electricus*), and red-bellied piranha (*Pygocentrus nattereri*)

### **Physical Characteristics**

- Although there have been past reports of 22 foot long adult males, they are more likely to be closer to 17 feet in length. Adult females are smaller at 10 feet.
- Males can weigh as much as 950 lbs., while females are closer to 450 lbs.
- Their snout is relatively long and narrow.
- They have pale green eyes with an additional transparent eyelid called a nictitating membrane, which protects their eyes when underwater.
- Three different color variations exist with the most common being 'Amarillo': a light tan body and scattered dark areas. Less common are 'Mariposo' with greyish green body with dark black patches and 'Negro' which is a more uniformly dark grey.

### **Geographical Range**

- Severely fragmented populations are found in the lower reaches of the freshwater Orinoco River in Venezuela and Colombia in South America.
- They are now found almost exclusively in a region called the Llanos savannah.
- The Orinoco River, one of the longest in South America, forms part of the border between Venezuela and Colombia, and is the major river system of Venezuela, eventually flowing to the Atlantic Ocean.

### **Habitat**

- They live along freshwater river banks within a tropical grasslands plain.
- Waterlogged savannah during the rainy season creates temporary seasonal rivers.
- They were once found in a wider variety of habitats (e.g. tropical evergreen forest, streams) throughout the Andes' foothills.
- They will retreat into burrows during dryer periods.

### **Breeding Behavior**

- During the annual dry season, in January and February, the females will dig a hole/nest on exposed sand banks.
- They will lay 15 to 70 eggs and remain close to the nest to protect against predators.
- Eggs will hatch in about 3 months, coinciding with the rainy season and rising water levels.
- Females protect the young pod of juveniles for up to three years.

### **Diet**

- *In the Wild:* Juveniles eat small fish and invertebrates. Adults eat mostly fish but will readily take mammals, birds and other reptiles approaching or entering the water's edge.
- *At Adventure Aquarium:* Fish, rats and mice

### **Conservation Status**

- IUCN Red List: CR A1c, C2a (CRITICALLY ENDANGERED) Facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future.
- CITES: Appendix I Trade in specimens of this species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
- Estimated wild population is 250 – 1500 individuals.

### **Conservation Concerns**

- The Orinoco crocodile is one of the most endangered crocodylian species on the planet.
- Excessive hunting brought them to the brink of extinction. Literally thousands of these animals were hunted for their skin, which is used to make leather products.
- Environmental laws help protect them, but their numbers are still quite low.
- Other threats include illegal hunting, harvest of hatchlings for the pet trade, pollution, competition for fish by the smaller but more numerous spectacled caiman and habitat destruction for agriculture and industry.
- As part of a restocking program, 54 females hatched at Dallas World Aquarium were sent to Venezuela and released in 2009 in three different protected areas.

### **Sources**

- [http://crocodylian.com/cnhc/csp\\_cint.htm](http://crocodylian.com/cnhc/csp_cint.htm)
- <http://www.arkive.org/orinoco-crocodile/crocodylus-intermedius/>
- [http://www.theanimalfiles.com/reptiles/crocodiles\\_alligators/orinoco\\_crocodile.html](http://www.theanimalfiles.com/reptiles/crocodiles_alligators/orinoco_crocodile.html)
- <http://www.iucnredlist.org>
- <http://www.cites.org>