Caiman crocodilus **System:** Freshwater_terrestrial

Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family
Animalia	Chordata	Reptilia	Crocodilia	Alligatoridae

Common name

polulo (English, Mexico), tinga (Spanish), cocodrilo (English, Mexico), lagarto (Spanish), ocoroche (English, Mexico), punamnah (Palikur, Brazil), yacaré (English, Peru), baba (English, Venezuela), guajipal (English, Nicaragua), common caiman (English, Puerto Rico), tulisio (English, Mexico), spectacled caiman (English), jacaretinga (Portuguese, Brazil), cascarudo (Spanish), babilla (English, Colombia), caiman de Brasil (English, Brazil), babiche (Spanish), caimán de anteojos (Spanish, Venezuela, Spain), caimán sudamericano (Spanish), cachirré (English, Mexico), jacaré-tinga (Portuguese, Brazil), caiman blanco (English, French Guiana), lagarto blanco (English, Peru), caimán (Spanish), yacaré blanco (Spanish)

Synonym

Lacerta crocodilus , (Linnaeus, 1758)
Caiman sclerops , (Schneider, 1801)
Crocodilus sclerops , Schneider 1801 (fide Wwemuth & Mertens 1977)
Alligator sclerops , Dumeril & Bibron 1836: 79
Caiman crocodilus , Conant & Collins 1991: 40
Caiman crocodilus , Schwartz & Henderson 1991: 666
Caiman crocodilus , Gorzula & Senaris 1999
Caiman crocodylus , Lehr 2002: 69
Caiman crocodilus apaporiensis , Medem 1955
Caiman sclerops apaporiensis , Medem 1955
Caiman crocodilus apaporiensis , Nickel & Auliya 2004
Caiman crocodilus chiapasius , (Bocourt 1876)
Alligator (Jacare) chiapasius , Bocourt 1876
Caiman crocodilus fuscus , (Cope 1868)
Perosuchus fuscus , Cope 1868
Perosuchus fuscus , Gray 1869: 171
Caiman crocodilus fuscus , Nickel & Auliya 2004

Similar species

Caiman latirostris, Caiman yacare

Summary

The common caiman (*Caiman crocodilus*), is currently the most abundant crocodilian species and is the most harvested crocodile in the hide industry. Native to South and Central America, *C. crocodilus* has been introduced and has established in America, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. It poses a threat to native crocodilians through competition and is believed to be responsible for the introduction of the exotic parasite known as \"caiman tongueworm\" which infects local fish species in Puerto Rico.

view this species on IUCN Red List

Species Description
The common caiman is a relatively small to medium sized crocodilian. Males generally reach 2.0-2.5 m with the largest specimens reported to approaching 3 m. Females are smaller, reaching a mean maximum size of 1.4 m, with larger specimens reaching 1.8 m. The common caiman is also known as the spectacled caiman, due to a bony ridge present between the eyes (infra-orbital bridge) which appears to join the eyes like a pair of spectacles. Juveniles are brown-cream colored with black spots and bands on the body and tail. Adults are dull olive-green to black with black bands basically on the tail. The enlarged fourth tooth of the lower jaw is not visible when the jaws are closed, as it is in all true crocodiles species (Behler, 1979), but in the oldest individuals, the front teeth and the fourth tooth of the lower jaw can perforate the upper jaw and can be visible when the mouth is closed.

Notes
Four or five subspecies of *C. crocodilus* are recognized: *C. c. crocodilus* which is prevalent throughout Venezuela and the Amazon from Colombia to Brazil; *C. c. chiapasius* which inhabits most of Central America from south Mexico to the pacific coast of Colombia; *C. c. fuscus* which inhabits Atlantic coastal drainages of Colombia to western Venezuela; and *C. c. apoporiensis*, a narrower snouted form which is thought to only inhabit the upper Apaporis River in Colombia and is believed in need of conservation effort (CSG, 2008; Ross 1998). Some authorities believe that *C. yacare* is not a full species, but a subspecies (*C. c. yacare*) that occurs in southern Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and northern Argentina. All subspecies of *C. crocodilus* are in CITES Appendix II, except *C. c. apaporiensis* that is in Appendix I. \r\n
Please follow this link for its CITES: legal status

Lifecycle Stages
Sexual maturity may be reached from as young as four years to as old as seven years, since less dominant specimens grow slower and sometimes don't reproduce at all. Adult males are, on average, 30 to 40% larger than adult females.

Uses
Caiman crocodilus is a valuable species in the hide and pet trade industry. Their skins are the most popularly harvested product among crocodiles with over half a million traded legally each year. Since they were considered commercially inferior compared to non-ossified alligator and crocodile skins in the early 1900s, common caimans weren't hunted until the 1950s when other crocodilian populations diminished. For this reason, caimans have since remained resilient to overhunting because of harvest regulations and due to the fact that they reproduce at a relatively small size. Most countries within its native range set harvest regulations with licensing and inspection programs. Countries such as Colombia have developed captive breeding ranches to farm their hides (Ross, 1998; CSG, 2005; F. Grana, pers. comm., November 2007). Poaching for meat, and eventually for skins, is widespread throughout the Brazilian Amazonia since 1980s (Da Silveira *et al*., 1998; Da Silveira & Thorbjarnarson, 1999), but in only one locality is known where a *C. crocodilus* population is in danger due to subsistence hunting undertaken by indigenous people in the north of Amapa state (R. Da Silveira, pers. comm., January 2011).

Habitat Description
Caiman crocodilus basically occurs in all low wetland habitats in Central and South America except along small streams in the pristine terra firme (never flooded) Amazonian forests. It commonly inhabits flooded forests, swamps, large and small rivers, lakes and canals and can occur in disturbed and polluted water bodies.\r\n
It is known to occur in any of freshwater body, natural or man-made, as long as it is warm, above 28.5ºF, and deep enough to submerge itself completely. They can, on occasion, inhabit brackish waters and leave the water to warm in the sun on shores. In Puerto Rico, caimans have established in rural, suburban, and urban settings. In Manaus city, Central Amazonia, it is common and nesting along small urban polluted streams (R. \r\nDa Silveira, pers. Comm., January 2011). They are highly adaptable to new environments and readily colonize newly formed waters.

Reproduction
Wild *C. crocodilus* populations reproduce sexually. Courtship and copulation take place in the late rainy season/early dry season. Female build a mound-nest with leaves, branches or grass. The female lays from seven to 41 eggs. The incubation period lasts from 70 to 90 days, and the female can guard and open the nest for the hatchlings to emerge. Hatchlings measure, at birth, from 17 to 25 cm long. Young associate in sibling groups or pods (multiple hatchlings from different nests) and remain close to a female that can take on maternal duties for about a year and a half.

Nutrition
Caiman crocodilus are generalist and opportunistic, feeding upon a great variety of invertebrates and vertebrates. Juveniles consume mostly aquatic invertebrates such as insects, spiders, crustaceans and molluscs. Adults feed on larger prey as fish, and sometimes amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals (Da Silveira & Magnusson, 1999; CSG, 2002; Somma, 2008). In urban habitats of the Manaus city, the diet of the species is composed mainly of *Rattus* sp. (R. Da Silveira, pers.comm., January 2011).

General Impacts
Caiman crocodilus is a generalist and opportunistic predator, but due their relative small size and lack of aggressive behaviour they do not in general represent a danger for humans, pets and farm animals.

Management Info
Physical: Within some of its native range such as in Venezuela, Guyana, and Nicaragua *C. crocodilus* wild populations are cropped, or harvested. Venezuela which operates the largest management program allows private land owners to harvest up to 15% of adult males over 180 cm each year. The program includes a strict licensing and a centralized inspection agency, but independent surveys have indicated overexploitation in some areas. Such sustainable programs require substantial survey, study, and continued monitoring. In Puerto Rico, reported caimans are captured by government officials and taken to a retention center from which they are either exported or killed (Ross, 1998; Felix Grana, pers.comm., November 2007).

Pathway

Principal source: Somma, 2008. USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species (NAS): *Caiman crocodilus* (Linnaeus, 1758);
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) Non-Native Aquatic Species in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Regions: *Caiman crocodilus* (Linnaeus);
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Compiler: National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII), Felix A. Grana Raffucci, Technical Advisor, Puerto Rico Department of Natural & Environmental Resources & IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)

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ALIEN RANGE

[1] CUBA **[5]** PUERTO RICO

[1] THAILAND

[2] UNITED STATES

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