

FLAMINGO GARDENS ANNOUNCES NEW CROCODILIAN HABITAT



DAVIE, FL- Flamingo Gardens is planning a new American Crocodilian Habitat scheduled to open in 2018.

Alligators and crocodiles are an important part of the Everglades ecosystem and are considered keystone species. Of the 23 different species of crocodilians in the world, only 2 species- the American Crocodile and American Alligator- are native to the United States, and south Florida is the only place in the world where both of these species coexist.

As a keystone species, many animals are affected by the existence of alligators and crocodiles. Young crocodilians are prey for wading birds, turtles, snakes, mammals, and larger alligators. Once crocodilians reach four feet, they are at the top of their food chain, and as top predators, are important in controlling their prey populations. Crocodilians construct and maintain “gator holes” which retain water during the dry season. These water holes are an important means of survival for many other Everglades animals.

American alligator and crocodile conservation is a success story of the community's capacity to care for wild animals and effect change. Dwindling populations of alligators and crocodiles were the result of hunting and loss

of habitat. After nearly disappearing from Florida decades ago, both alligators and crocodiles are now flourishing in Florida and no longer need the protection of the Endangered Species Act. While there are many dangers that still face them, the incredibly successful recovery over the last several decades is an endangered species conservation success to champion -- and one to instill hope for other endangered species whose recovery is still underway.

Flamingo Gardens is seeking funds to build a new habitat for these majestic reptiles so that the public can learn the differences between alligators and crocodiles and learn about the success of crocodylian conservation; and by doing so, we will help inspire visitors to effect change by protecting so many other threatened bird and animal populations.

Flamingo Gardens plans to renovate the former River Otter Habitat into a Crocodylian Habitat which can house smaller alligators and crocodiles which have been rescued and/or rehabilitated. The exhibit's fencing will be replaced with 11.5 gauge wire, and an elevated walkway and expanded overlook will be added to provide additional and improved viewing. The existing waterfall will remain, but the pool will be filled slightly to make it shallower, and the "stream" widened. If enough funds are raised, the existing otter night house will be renovated to house an ozone water filtration system with UV to reduce algae and purify the water.

Flamingo Gardens has been gifted \$10,000 from the Friends of the Flamingo Gardens toward the anticipated cost of \$85,000. Gifts of \$100 or more will be recognized on the donor recognition plaque near the exhibit. Completion of the habitat is expected by the end of 2018.