

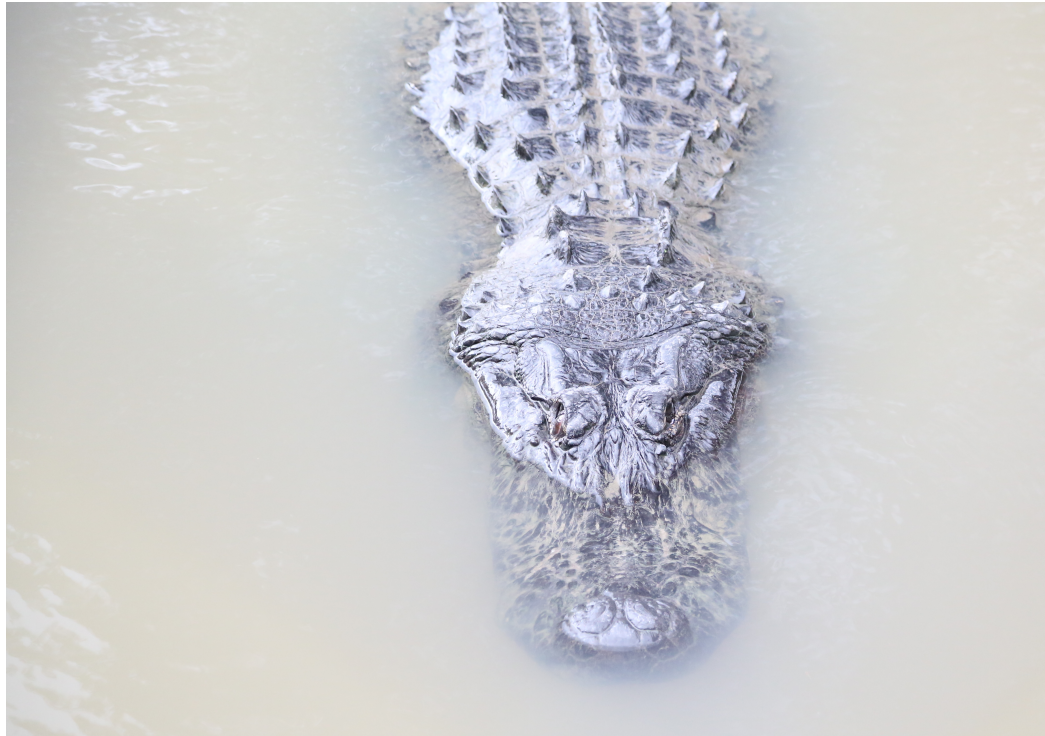
Alligators

in Reason and Rhyme



A Reason and Rhyme Book™
Science concepts in poetic verse
By K. Lee Lerner

The Alligator
in haiku, using tankas
A form of haiku
with two additional lines
each with seven syllables



Unless noted, all photos American alligators. (*A. mississippiensis*) located in Baldwin County, Alabama.
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As evolved as you
evolution never stops
So well adapted
since Paleocene era
little changes over time



Crocodylian
in genus Alligator
In America
A. mississippiensis
In China, *A. sinensis*



My Chinese cousins
near Yangtze River valley
are more endangered
They are smaller in the wild
and now most are found in zoos



American Alligator. Baldwin County, Alabama. Content and photos by K. Lee Lerner. ©LMG. All rights reserved.

Thrive in freshwater
rivers, lakes, wetlands and swamps
Some salt is also okay
I'm found in brackish waters
even oceans for a bit



Territorial
Large male gators guard their space
some large females too.
Smaller gators congregate,
peer group does not agitate.



I swim and slither
Locomotion is a sprawl
when my belly drags
If my legs are extended
My "high walk" can outrun you



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With decaying plants
females build nests then lay eggs
During first three weeks
temperature determines
if hatchlings male or female



Five girls to each boy
Baby's egg tooth breaks the egg
Hatchlings seek water
But about half are eaten
each year by larger gators



Tremendous pressure
Gator teeth are for gripping
Gators do not chew
Smaller prey are swallowed whole
Larger prey get a death roll



Gators breathe like birds
No tidal air in and out
Air moves just one way
Flowing past parabronchi
Exits lung through inner branch



Vocalizations
Gators can bellow and hiss
Bellowing chorus
may sing just after sunrise
and head slaps are signals too.



Tiny black speckles
found near gator's head and jaw
sense pressure changes
Dermal Pressure Receptors
to detect and locate prey



Strong jaws crush my prey
With powerful closing bite
Yet hands can hold shut
My mouth when already closed
Beware by powerful tail



Apex predator
I sustain ecology
My holes hold water
promote plant diversity
feast on destructive species



Crocs have V-shaped snouts
Sharper teeth and toothy grin
Found around the world
Crocs tolerate saltwater
excrete salt through lingual glands



Crocodile. Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya. Content and photo by K. Lee Lerner. ©LMG. All rights reserved.

The End