



Living near water in South Carolina means sharing the habitat with some fascinating creatures, including the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*).

Litchfield-by-the-Sea has a robust system of wetlands and ecosystems, which means alligator encounters are always possible, and being aware of that is essential. While there are many local opportunities to learn about our wildlife, we'd like to offer a few pieces of information.

Alligator Basics

- The American alligator is the only native crocodylian species in South Carolina. Once federally endangered, their populations have rebounded and are now considered threatened.
- These reptiles can live over 60 years and grow to lengths exceeding 13 feet.

Safety Tips

- Maintain a minimum of 10 feet from the water's edge.
- Be Vigilant: Keep an eye on your pets and closely supervise children near water bodies, especially in areas inhabited by alligators.
- Keep your pets leashed, close, and always under your control. Alligators cannot differentiate between their typical prey and your cherished pet.
- Swim Smart: Stick to designated swimming areas during daylight hours. Avoid swimming at night or dawn and dusk when alligators are most active.
- Be aware that alligators are skilled at ambush tactics. They can see you even when you can't see them.
- Don't Feed Them: Feeding alligators is illegal and dangerous. It makes them lose their natural shyness and associate humans with food. Plus, provoked alligators can bite!
- Fish Scraps: Dispose of fish scraps properly—use garbage cans at boat ramps or fish camps. Don't toss them into the water where alligators live.
- View from a Distance: Enjoy observing and photographing wild alligators but maintain a safe distance. They're essential for South Carolina's ecosystems.

Remember

- Alligators are part of South Carolina's natural history. Respect their role in wetland ecosystems.
- Don't throw things at alligators – not only is it illegal, but it also corners them. As a reminder, there is no swimming or boating in any of the bodies of water on either campus (Oceanside and River Club).
- Never remove them from their habitat or consider them as pets. Handling even small alligators can lead to bites, and mama alligators fiercely protect their young.
- Never attempt to remove them from the road. They are most mobile in spring and summer during the breeding season.
- If an alligator approaches, back away slowly and remember that an alligator can reach speeds of up to 35 mph.

Stay gator-safe!