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Sighting of an American Crocodile at Collier-seminole State Park, Florida

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Sighting of an American crocodile at Collier-Seminole State Park, Florida.

—On November 23, 1983, I was in Collier-Seminole State Park, Collier County, Florida, canoeing the Blackwater River which meanders several kilometers through a mangrove forest. I was accompanied by Lt. Bob Rahberg and Rangers Pete Brockman and Hazel Padgett of the Florida Park Service. The tide was low as we rounded a bend at 1030 and we saw an American Crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*) sprawled full length on a sandbar. The animal was approximately 2.5 meters long. It offered a broadside view for several minutes with the sun behind us. The crocodile showed no fear as we slowly drifted by within 10 meters of it. The greenish-gray color, tapered snout, and prominent lower tooth were clearly visible. As we watched, the crocodile slowly opened its mouth, holding it open. On the return trip at 1045, we saw the reptile at the same location; this time with an alligator sunning nearby. The alligator went into the water as we approached. When our canoe trip ended, Rahberg, Brockman and I returned to the site by motorboat with our cameras. The crocodile had moved to another sandbar nearby where it lay at the water's edge (Fig. 1). We photographed it for approximately ten minutes and approached to within five meters before it slipped into the water and swam away.

Paul Moler of the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission viewed the slides that were taken of the animal. He identified the animal as a crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*).

Moore (1953, Copeia 1953: 54-59) concluded that there is no evidence that the American Crocodile occurs naturally on the west coast. However, LeBuff (1957, Herpetologica 3:25-78) provided second-hand reports of sightings and concluded that the crocodile occurs sparsely along the west coast. Kushlan and Mazzotti (in prep.) reported that crocodiles are infrequently, but regularly, observed along the west Florida coast including Naples, Collier County; Sanibel, Lee County and Osprey, Sarasota County. They reported several sightings near Collier-Seminole State Park, including one in 1980. Others were reported from Monroe County in Hurdles Creek, Turner River near Everglades City, and in Broad River.

Kushlan and Mazzotti (in prep.) concluded that the southwest Florida coast is part of the overall range of the crocodile in Florida, but not a part of

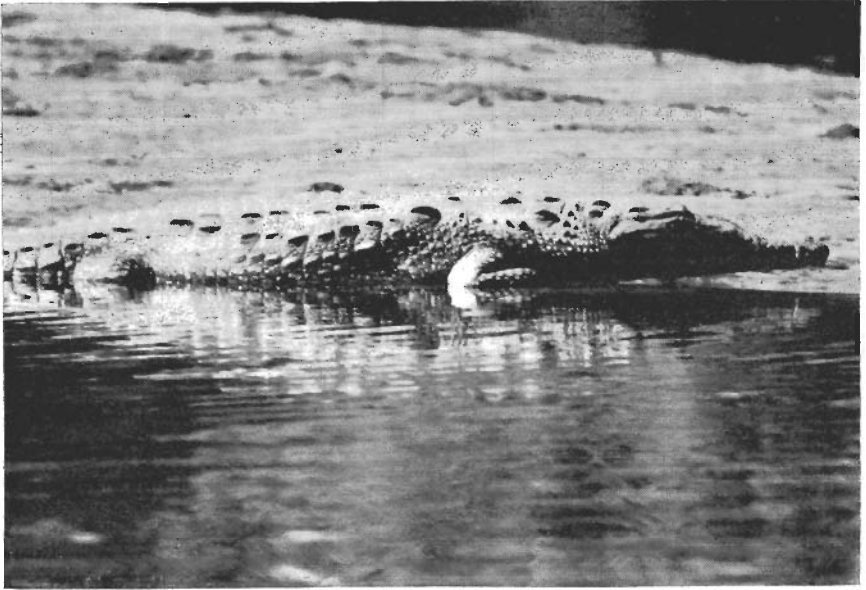


Fig. 1. American crocodile photographed in Collier County, Florida.

the breeding range. Our sighting suggests that observers should be aware of the possible occurrence, and need for documentation of crocodiles along the west coast of Florida.—Kenneth C. Alvarez, Florida Park Service, P.O. Box 398, Osprey, Florida, 33559.

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Three unusual waterfowl in north Florida phosphate mines.—Phosphate mining in Hamilton County, Florida, during the past decade has greatly increased the non-forested wetlands available to wildlife, and waterfowl are conspicuous components of these artificially created wetlands (Montalbano et al. 1978, King et al. 1980, Maehr 1980, Schnoes and Humphrey 1980). These habitats now cover over 1300 ha in north Florida. In addition to the expected wetland birds, several unusual waterfowl species have been observed at Occidental Chemical Company's Suwannee River and Swift Creek mines, located 12 km north of White Springs, Florida (Stafford 1979, Maehr 1981). We report in this note on the occurrence of the White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*), Oldsquaw (*Clangula hyemalis*), and Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*) from this northernmost Florida phosphate mine.

The White-winged Scoter can only be expected as an occasional wanderer in Florida (Sprunt 1954:83). It is primarily reported along both coasts in pairs or as single birds with concentrations along the northeast coast and Gulf coast south of Tallahassee (Robertson 1971). On 5 November 1979, an adult male White-winged Scoter was observed by R. Repenning and B. Barbour near shore in a settling pond, which was primarily open water. The bird submerged and resurfaced about 30 m away where it was observed for several minutes.