



## Be Croc Aware:

- 1. Crocs are common:** In Top End waters you are in 'Croc Country'
- 2. Crocs move around:** They can move large distances and throughout the year.
- 3. Crocs are deadly:** Crocodiles are dangerous and attacks can be fatal.
- 4. Be Crocwise:** Don't become complacent. Populations of humans and crocodiles are higher than ever - leading to more frequent encounters.

## Be CROCWISE: Enjoy Top End waterways safely

Read and remember this advice about crocodiles before swimming, camping, fishing or boating in the Top End.

It is very important that you remain vigilant and take the necessary precautions to stay safe AT ALL TIMES. Never take unnecessary risks in crocodile habitat. Crocodiles are formidable ambush predators and it only takes one wrong move to put yourself at risk of serious injury or death.

Your personal safety is your responsibility. Please follow these guidelines and be croc wise in croc country.

### Recreating and camping in croc country

- Crocodiles inhabit a wide variety of inland and coastal waterways and water bodies across northern Australia, both fresh and salt water, including estuaries, tidal rivers, river pools and the waters around offshore islands. Assume all water bodies in the Top End

contain dangerous crocodiles. If in doubt do not swim, canoe or use small boats where crocodiles may live.

- Always read and obey warning signs. They are there for your protection. Some locations where crocodiles live may have warning signs but most do not, therefore do not assume the absence of signs means that it is safe to stand near or in the water or swim. If you don't know, then don't go.
- Avoid the water's edge wherever possible. Children and pets, which represent smaller prey that is easier to take, are at particular risk.
- Always keep a lookout for crocodiles. But be aware that a crocodile can remain hidden underwater for long periods. They move with great stealth and camouflage, so you won't always see them.
- Camp at least 2 metres above the high water mark and at least 50 metres from the water's edge.
- Avoid returning regularly to the same spot at the water's edge. Avoid places where native animals and domestic stock drink.
- Don't paddle, clean fish, prepare food or wash at the water's edge or adjacent to sloping banks. Do your chores at least 50 metres away.
- Stay away from areas of crocodile activity - look for slide marks, drag marks, flattened vegetation and nest mounds. These are signs that a crocodile may regularly use a particular area and there is a good chance that the croc is not far away and you may not spot it.
- Never dispose of food scraps or fish offal in the water, around campsites or boat ramps. Use bins or bury at least 2 metres from the water's edge.
- Don't feed, harass, encourage or try to interact with crocodiles - even small ones. It is extremely dangerous and against the law.
- Be extra vigilant during the breeding season (November to April) when crocodiles may become more aggressive defending a territory or nest mound.
- Don't interfere with crocodile traps. They are set where there is an identified nuisance crocodile.
- Always report problem or aggressive crocodiles.

### **Fishing from the shore in croc country**

- When fishing from the bank - fish where there is an area of shallow water in front of you and stand at least 5 metres back from the water's edge. If possible fish with an obstacle such as a rock in front of you.
- Don't stand on logs overhanging the water while fishing or attempting to retrieve lures.
- Be extra vigilant when fishing alone or where a croc can approach you from behind.
- Don't take dogs with you while fishing - they are a favourite prey of crocodiles and their presence may attract crocs.

## Boating in croc country

- Be vigilant when launching or retrieving your boat. Activity and noise can attract crocodile's attention.
- Crocodiles can attack and take people from boats. The smaller your boat the greater the risk. Don't use or sleep in boats with low sides.
- Rubber duckies, small dinghies and paddling craft such as kayaks are too small and not suitable as tenders in Top End waterways.
- Don't ever hang arms, legs or any part of your body out of or lean over the edge of a boat when on the water. This includes boats near or at the shoreline.
- Don't ever lean over the edge of a boat or enter the water to retrieve snagged lures.
- Crocodiles can and will lunge at and may follow fish onto your boat. Always use landing nets when landing fish.
- During the day wear polarizing sunglasses to help spot crocodiles near the surface of the water.
- Be extra vigilant at night. Illuminate the outside of your boat while night fishing to help you see what is around you.
- Don't illuminate the inside of your boat while night fishing, which effectively limits your night vision and attracts crocs. They can see you but you can't see them.
- Don't allow crocs to associate crab traps and fishers with a food source. Use wire crab traps instead of mesh - making it more difficult for crocodiles to access your crab bait and catch.

## Estuarine (Saltwater) Crocodile Myths

- **Estuarine crocodiles only live in salt water. FALSE ...** They can be found over 200km from the coast in freshwater habitats (rivers and billabongs).
- **Estuarine crocodiles don't like fast flowing water. FALSE ...** Crocodiles have often been seen in fast flowing water and they move through rapids to reach different parts of their territory. They have also been seen in surf.
- **Estuarine crocodiles don't like beaches and you are safe to swim in these areas. FALSE ...** Crocodiles are often seen around beaches in the Kimberley.
- **Crocodiles do not travel up waterfalls. FALSE ...** They have been seen climbing the rock faces of waterfalls. They will often go around a vertical obstacle like a waterfall to make it to the next pool upstream. The main reason is that young male crocodiles will be trying to establish their own territories.
- **Crocodiles will not stay long in small waterholes. FALSE ...** They can stay for extended periods in very small waterholes and mud holes if they have to.
- **Crocodiles don't move around on land very much. FALSE ...** Crocodiles have been known to travel on land up to one kilometre.

- **Estuarine crocodiles have never been seen here in the past so they obviously don't live here. FALSE** ... Crocodile numbers are increasing and therefore are spreading and repopulating areas they would have occupied before nearly being wiped out in the late 60s and early 70s.
- **Crocodiles are less active in the dry season so you are less likely to be attacked. FALSE** ... Crocodiles are opportunistic hunters and will take advantage of an easy feed if presented with one.
- **Crocodiles can't open their mouth underwater therefore can't attack underwater. FALSE** ... Crocodiles have a palatal valve at the back of their mouth, which closes and allows them to open their mouth underwater. However, crocodiles need to have their head above water or be on land to swallow food without taking in water.
- **Crocodiles in the Kimberley are too well fed to take humans. FALSE** ... Once again, crocodiles are opportunistic feeders.
- **You can outwit a crocodile by running from them in a zigzag pattern. FALSE** ... Run as fast as you can in a straight line as crocodiles can only manage short bursts of speed when coming out of the water but cannot sustain this for long.
- **Crocodiles can swim up to 60km/hour. FALSE** ... Crocodiles can swim about 10-15km/h on average.
- **Crocodiles are sluggish creatures. FALSE** ... When charging from the water crocodiles have been measured moving at 12 metres per second.
- **You're safe to camp beside the river if you have a fire. FALSE** ... There is no scientific evidence to support this. Always camp more than 50 metres away from the water and at least 2 metres above the high water mark.
- **If you can see the bottom, it's safe to swim. FALSE** ... All bodies of water in the Kimberley may have crocodiles present no matter what the depth may be.
- **You're safe in the water when launching a boat because boat noise frightens crocodiles. FALSE** ... Crocodiles are extremely sensitive to sound and vibration, which in most cases will attract them.
- **It's OK to swim if you don't stay in too long. FALSE** ... It takes less than a second to be attacked by a crocodile.
- **If you keep a lookout, you will be able to tell if a crocodile is near. FALSE** ... A crocodile can hold its breath and remain hidden underwater for long periods. They are formidable ambush predators that move with great stealth and camouflage so you won't always see them.

For more information on Be CROCWISE visit [www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au](http://www.parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au)



Department of  
Parks and Wildlife



**BE CROCWISE** 