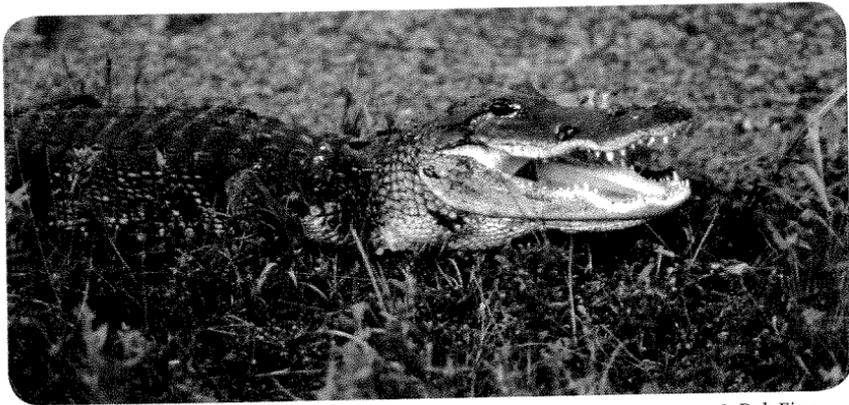


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A is for Alligator

The alligator is an amazing creature! A mother alligator lays about twenty to seventy eggs on high ground that she has made smooth. She covers them with a big pile of grass and other plants. Then she slips into nearby water and waits. She watches closely to see if any snake or raccoon comes to steal her eggs. Her sharp teeth will take care of any thief.

The mother alligator waits close by for about two months. The pile of grass gives off heat that keeps the eggs warm. Now is the time for the mother to take the pile off the eggs. Are the eggs ready to hatch? The mother makes a low **grunting** sound. She waits and listens. If there is no

noise, she goes back into the water for a couple of days. If she hears a sound, she knows the babies are ready. She must come at the right time or the babies will die. She helps them get out of their shells. Out crawl the eight-inch babies from their three-inch eggs! This is a **dangerous** time for the babies. Many animals would like to have them for lunch.

A young alligator can grow almost a foot longer each year. It can grow to be up to sixteen feet long. It may live for fifty-six years. **God** put its eyes on the top of its head. It is able to swim under water and sneak up on something to eat. It uses its tongue to close off its throat so water does not go into its stomach. The alligator cannot stick out its tongue.

The alligator eats all kinds of animals, such as pigs and turtles; it may also eat bottles, **chunks** of wood, and stones. Its teeth are for grabbing, not for chewing. It swallows its food whole. If one of its teeth wears out, another pushes its way up through the middle of the old tooth.

It is not safe to play near an alligator. A puppy or kitty would be a much better pet to have.