

Chapter-5

Bhitarkanika: Salt water crocodile

Salt water crocodile, an introduction

The **Saltwater** or **Estuarine Crocodile** (*Crocodylus porosus*) is the largest of all living reptiles. It is found in suitable habitat throughout S.E. Asia and northern Australasia.



Anatomy and Morphology

A healthy adult male saltwater crocodile is typically 4.8 to 5 metres (15.75 to 16.6 ft) long, and weighs roughly 770 kg (1697 lb), with very rare exceptions being larger than this.^[1] The largest confirmed saltwater crocodile on record was 20.6 feet (6.3 meters) long, and probably weighed well over 1,900 kg.^[2] Many larger sizes have been reported,^{[1][2]} but these have generally been discredited as exaggerations. Examinations of incomplete remains have never suggested a length greater than 23 feet (7 meters).^[2] Females are much smaller than males, with typical female body lengths in the range of 2.5–3 metres.

Distribution

Saltwater crocodiles are severely depleted in numbers throughout the vast majority of their range, with sightings in areas such as Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam becoming extremely rare and the species may in fact even be extinct in one or more of these countries. With that said, it is also the least likely of crocodylians to become globally extinct due to its wide distribution and almost pre-colonial population sizes in Northern Australia and New Guinea. In India this crocodile is extremely rare in most areas but is very common in the north eastern part of the country (mainly Orissa and the Sunderbans). The population is sporadic in Indonesia and Malaysia with some areas harboring large populations (Borneo for example) and others with very small, "at risk" populations (the Philippines). The saltwater crocodile is also present in very limited portions of the South Pacific, with an average population in the Solomon Islands, a very small & soon to be extinct population in Vanuatu (where the population officially only stands at three) and a decent but at-risk population in Palau (possibly rebounding).

