***Crocs: Ancient Predators in a Modern World***

**May 18, 2019-Jan. 5, 2020**

**Major Themes and Components**

**Overview**

See the result of 200 million years of predatory evolution and learn about one of nature’s oldest and stealthiest hunters: crocodilians. This unique exhibition educates guests on the history and significance of these creatures using live reptiles and interactive activities. A life-size model tells the story of Gomek, the largest crocodile ever exhibited in North America, and how he became a symbol of crocodile conservation. A “digital curator” reveals the behavior and intricate social lives of these animals. See alligator fossils found at the Montbrook dig site in nearby Levy County, Florida, and the skull of one of the University of Florida’s last live mascots.

**Interactives**

The exhibit features four live crocodilian species, real fossils and a mini-theater! Visitors can see live crocodiles from Africa and Asia, caimans from South America and a nest of American alligator hatchlings. Guests can test their strength against a crocodilian’s and learn to speak “croc” while discovering their complex social lives. An animated map showcases where they live around the world while skull models explain the differences between alligators and crocodiles. Visitors can play the role of paleo-artists and create a 3D animation of long-extinct crocodiles. Discover how crocodiles make the water dance and how scientists calculate the size of giant crocodilians. Videos in the mini-theater showcase conservationists’ efforts to save these creatures in the wild. An iPad allows guests to interact with a 3D scan of an alligator skull found at the Montbrook fossil site in nearby Levy County, Florida.

**Highlights**

* **Living Dioramas**

Get face-to-face with some of these living reptiles from around the world.

**Siamese Crocodile:** Found in Asia, these are among the most endangered crocodilian species due to habitat loss and the construction of hydroelectric dams. Crocodile farms have crossed this species with the larger saltwater crocodile for the leather industry and conservation groups are trying to protect their wild populations.

**American Alligator nest:** A widespread species across the Southeast, American Alligators are excellent mothers who will build mound-like nests for their eggs and stand guard for two months until the babies hatch. The exhibit features a life-like model mother with a nest of live hatchlings.

**African Dwarf Crocodile:** Unlike most crocodiles, this species does much of its hunting on land, far from water. Due to their shy nature, not much is known about their status in the wild.

**Broad-Snouted Caimans:** Found in South America, these animals were once threatened as they were greatly valued for the smooth texture of their skin. Their population numbers recovered after most countries made hunting them illegal.

* **Model Dioramas**

Realistic life-size figures depict other crocodilians in their habitats.

**Australian Freshwater Crocodile:** Smaller cousins of the giant saltwater crocodiles, these ambush predators live in the inland waters of Northern Australia. Some populations have declined due to the invasive cane toads as the toads are toxic to the crocodiles.

**Cuvier’s Dwarf Caiman:** As the smallest living crocodilians, these animals are built for survival. They have dense, bony armor on their backs and bellies to protect against predators and the elements. Their hide also protects them from hunting as the leather isn’t considered valuable.

**Indian Gharial:** These strange-looking animals are recognizable by the cartilaginous growth on the males’ snouts which are thought to amplify the noises they make when defending their territories. They were once widespread across Southeast Asia but are now critically endangered.

**Saltwater Crocodile:** Growing to more than 18 feet in length and over 2,000 pounds, these giant creatures are the largest living crocodilians and the heaviest living reptiles.

* **The Social Gator**

Learn how these creatures communicate with sight, sound, smell and touch.

* **Bring a Fossil to Life**

Step into the shoes of a paleo-artist and create a 3D animation of an extinct crocodile.

* **Build a Crocodylomorph**

Meet the group of animals that includes modern crocodilians and see how diverse they once were.

* **Ask the Experts**

Videos of paleontologists, croc experts and conservation biologists answer questions about the past, present and future of these animals.

* **Crunch Capacity**

Crocodilians have the strongest bites of any animal measured. Test your strength against a croc while seeing how researchers measure real bites.

* **How Big Was It?**

Learn how scientists calculate the size of these animals and measure a giant skull to test your skill.

* **Croc Talk**

Activate real crocodile calls and learn to speak “croc” in less than five minutes.

* **Where in the World?**

Interact with an animated world map and discover where each species lives.

* **Alligator or Crocodile?**

Learn how to tell them apart using model skulls.

* **Make the Water Dance**

Alligators make the water around them splash and jump when they bellow. Learn the physics behind this phenomenon and try making the water dance.

* **Gomek**

The largest crocodile to be exhibited in North America, Gomek was caught in New Guinea in the 1960s and kept in Florida for the last eight years of his life. A life-size, 18-foot-long model tells his story and how he became a symbol for croc conservation.

* **Meet the Elders**

Learn about crocodylomorphs, the group that includes living crocodilians and their extinct relatives.

* **Dwarfs and Giants**

Extinct crocodylomorphs were animals that were much bigger and smaller than living species. See the range of these ancient crocs.

* **To Catch a Crocodile**

George Craig, the hunter who captured Gomek, explains the dangers and challenges of capturing giant crocodiles unharmed.

* **Conservation Theater**

Short videos reveal two situations of conservationists’ efforts to save these animals in the wild: Australia’s successful restoration of saltwater crocodiles and India’s struggle to make space for gharials.

* **The Sensory World of a Swamp Dweller**

Crocs are keenly aware of the world around them. Learn about their extremely sensitive sense of sight, smell and hearing as well as how they hunt in darkness.

* **Museum Specimens**

See alligator fossils found at the Montbrook dig site near Williston, Florida, and the skull of one of the University of Florida’s last live mascots. An iPad allows visitors to interact with a 3D scan of an alligator skull found at the fossil site.

* **Ruling Reptiles**

Learn about archosaurs, the group of animals that includes modern crocodilians and birds, and how they dominated life on Earth for more than 150 million years.

* **Let Us Prey**

Crocs eat whatever they can catch, from water beetles to buffalo. Informational panels explain their stealthy hunting strategies.

* **The Life Aquatic**

Learn how crocodilians have evolved to become living submarines who are totally at home in water.

* **Surviving Extremes**

See how crocs are equipped to face extreme weather like extended dry seasons and deep freezes.

* **Use ‘Em or Lose ‘Em**

Saving these animals requires legal protection that addresses the needs of local people. Text panels reveal how alligators were brought back from the brink of extinction and how ecotourism boosts local economies while saving crocs.

* **Croc Bytes**

Test your crocodilian IQ with fun facts and trivia.