



Providing a home for the American crocodile

A fact sheet about American crocodiles at Turkey Point

The American crocodile once existed in Florida from Lake Worth, on the east coast, south through the upper keys and west through Florida Bay. Today, crocodile nesting is focused around Florida Bay, particularly northeast Florida Bay to Turkey Point and northern Key Largo.

There has been a reduction in crocodile nesting areas in Florida primarily caused by the loss of nesting habitat due to human development. The Turkey Point power plant site is the main exception with increased nesting because the 5,900-acre manmade cooling canal system offers ideal nesting conditions for the American crocodile.

This critical nesting habitat in the cooling canal system has been responsible for virtually the entire increase in population of the American crocodile noted in the past two to three decades.

FPL's American crocodile monitoring program (1981 to present)

FPL initiated an extensive, formal, comprehensive crocodile monitoring program in the early 1980's consisting of:

- intensive night time surveys of the entire 150 miles of cooling canals during nesting season
- tagging and marking hatchlings using AviChip technology
- day time surveys during the beginning of nesting season for evidence of nesting activity
- off-season crocodile surveys to document use and activity both in the cooling canals and the surrounding area
- monitoring and managing crocodile mortality.

American crocodile preservation and habitat enhancement efforts at Turkey Point

- The American crocodile is thriving at Turkey Point. A significant increase in the number of crocodile nests and hatchlings in the Turkey Point cooling canal system has been observed (from one or two nests and 30 hatchlings in the late 1970's to 17 known nests and over 300 hatchlings in 2003).

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- To date, over 3,000 hatchling crocodiles have been documented at the Turkey Point site.
- FPL has undertaken several important activities at the Turkey Point power plant site to further enhance nesting opportunities and to promote survival of young crocodile hatchlings, including:
 - construction of fresh water refugia in the cooling canal system at known nesting sites
 - removal of exotic vegetation (such as Australian pines) from nesting areas
 - preservation of native vegetation near nesting areas
 - relocation of hatchlings to more suitable habitat and to further protect them from predators
 - careful coordination of maintenance activities to ensure safety of the crocodiles
 - establishment of exclusion zones for known nesting sites
 - hiring of on-staff crocodilian expert to manage the program
- Additionally, maintenance of FPL's 13,000-acre Everglades Mitigation Bank (EMB), located immediately south and west of the Turkey Point site continues to provide protection for the crocodile, as well as enhanced nesting habitat.

The proposed expansion project and the American crocodile

- The proposed expansion project for the site will not result in any changes of the cooling canal configuration or design.
- A revised Crocodile Management Plan is under development to address activities during the pre-construction, construction and post-construction phases of the project aimed at protecting the American crocodile. FPL will seek input from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in the development of this plan.