

Crocodile populations

How many crocodiles are there in the Northern Territory?

There is estimated to be over 100 000 crocodiles in the wild in the Northern Territory at the moment.

What is happening with crocodile numbers?

- Still increasing in some areas and the average size of crocodiles is also increasing
- Expanding distribution in some areas (upstream rivers and coasts)
- Stabilising in some areas (density-dependence in habitat)

Why keep crocodiles in the wild?

The Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT is responsible for the protection and conservation of saltwater crocodiles, as well as the management of saltwater crocodiles to ensure public safety. Managing crocodile populations can be difficult and contentious as the following considerations must be addressed:

- Crocodiles are dangerous and capable of causing serious injury or death to humans.
- As the key predator, saltwater crocodiles are a critical part of aquatic ecosystems. If crocodiles are removed from these systems, the functioning of these systems will change considerably.
- Crocodiles are under threat as a result of habitat loss and illegal harvesting throughout much of its international range.
- Crocodiles were hunted almost to extinction but have now recovered in Australia.
- Crocodiles are protected under Northern Territory and Australian legislation.
- Crocodiles are of considerable scientific and human interest.
- Crocodiles have cultural and social significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Crocodiles are a valuable tourist attraction.
- Crocodiles are the basis for an important industry in the Northern Territory.

Why not cull all crocodiles that are in areas near people?

Crocodiles are able to blend into their surroundings. They are also able to move over extremely large distances on land and water. This means that culling or removal will never guarantee that any area within the likely range of the saltwater crocodile is 'crocodile-free'. Removing one crocodile may simply create more space for the other crocodiles that already live there or allow new crocodiles to move into the newly vacated area.

It is always safer to assume that a crocodile is present and to take precautions by not swimming or wading, and/or adopting safe fishing and safe boating practices.

Why not relocate problem crocodiles?

Saltwater crocodiles caught by trapping or harpooning by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT are transferred to crocodile farms or destroyed. Satellite tracking has shown that saltwater crocodiles can move hundreds of kilometres to return to locations from which they were removed. Therefore relocating crocodiles is not seen as an effective way of managing problem crocodiles, and as such saltwater crocodiles are not translocated and released in the wild.

For further information visit www.nt.gov.au/becrocwise