

Crocodiles

Rodney Steel

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"Crocodiles" is an examination of the crocodile and its history which stretches back over 200 million years, linking the present day with the vanished age of dinosaurs. A succession of fossil forms traces the descent of modern crocodiles back almost to the beginning of the dinosaur age and demonstrates extinct groups that became, at one extreme, fully aquatic, converting their limbs into paddles (the metriorhynchids), or, at the other extreme, almost totally terrestrial, apparently seeking their prey entirely on land (the sebecids). The book looks at the arguments for conserving these still little-understood reptiles, to whom, it is estimated 2000 people fall prey. The author discusses the possiblity of crocodile farms and planned commercial exploitation as a means to preserve certain species. However, not all crocodiles are dangerous to man and these are also covered, including the American crocodile, the New Guinea fresh-water crocodile and the little broad-nosed West African crocodile. The alligators are today represented by only two species of alligator itself, one in North Africa which the author uses as a model for the habits of other crocodiles, living and extinct, and the other in China. The gavials of India and the caimans of South America are also discussed.





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