



# GATOR WATCH

*Magnolia*

- (1) Constanica
- (2) Olympic
- (1) Blackstone

I'm Becky Hinson, a resident on one of the larger community lakes in Magnolia Point. I regularly photograph wildlife throughout our neighborhood and all of Clay County.

Alligators are one of my favorite subjects. An adult male can weigh up to 500 pounds and a female up to 200 pounds. They have a bite force of over 2000 pounds per square inch and can swim up to 20 mph and run up to 30 mph on land.

April is the start of the mating season. During this time, gators are more aggressive and more prone to attack. They rarely attack humans, however, dogs and cats resemble prey and they will attack your pet as a food source. Gators move from pond to pond, including those right in our backyards at Magnolia Point, in search of a mate. After mating, the female vigorously protects her eggs. Hatching occurs from mid August to early September.

Living next to a community lake on Olympic Drive I often observe dogs swimming and playing in the water. Last year we had a

young mom and small child spread a blanket, within 4 feet of the area where a large gator that calls our pond 'home' frequently hides. My husband approached her and explained the danger. She thanked him for the concern but didn't move away from the edge. The alligator could have easily mistaken the small child for prey and attacked before the mother could react. During the warm months, always assume our ponds could be home to one or more gators. Never let your dog swim, play near, or drink from the lakes.

If you see a gator, keep your distance and never feed them. We live in Florida, where alligators have thrived for millions of years. They can live up to 50 years in the wild; a few that you might have seen treading that pond in your backyard could have been here when the first bulldozer arrived at Magnolia Point. They're part of our ecosystem and we must learn to live with them. It's important to protect your pets and small children by keeping them away from and out of our ponds. Over the next few months we'll be tracking the movement of the gators in the neighborhood. You can contact me on Nextdoor (Rebecca and Don Hinson) if you see one in your lake and I'll come by and photograph it.



*Photos Becky Hinson*

