



GATOR WATCH

BECKY'S COUNT: 20

Love is in the air. June is mating season for alligators and they're on the move in Magnolia Point.

According to Florida Fish and Wildlife our state is home to approximately 1.3 million alligators. **Magnolia Point is home to at least 20 of them.** The majority of our alligators are in the 3 to 4-foot range but just a few years ago I walked up on one that was close to **10** feet. He was eventually removed by a trapper. Another was removed, just last year, from my backyard on Olympic Drive, that had become aggressive. That particular gator had been caught by children fishing in our pond. They attempted to pull him on shore by pulling on the line with bare hands. He violently rolled trying to get away. This was a situation that could easily have spiralled out of control. Months later, I photographed him with multiple fishing hooks in his mouth and a line wrapped around his snout. If your children fish in our ponds you should be sure they carry a tool to cut their line in the event that they accidentally hook a gator.

Several years ago, we had a gator enter a resident's home on Blackstone Court when he left his front door open. Imagine walking into your foyer to find an alligator staring back at you! Richard laughed as he told the story of sweeping him out of his house with a broom. I would not recommend this method of alligator

removal. There have recently been multiple reports here in Florida of alligators showing up on front porches, under cars, in pools and inside homes. They've even been videoed climbing fences. If you live near a body of water, you could have a gator show up in your yard.

Keep in mind, alligators are very territorial and aggressive during the next few months. Keep your dog on a leash, away from the water's edge. Never allow them to play or swim in our ponds. Don't allow small children unsupervised near the water. In Florida, it's against the law to feed or harass an alligator. Discard fish scraps in garbage cans at boat ramps or fish camps, never throw them in your pond. When gators are fed, they overcome their natural wariness and associate people with food. Attempting to capture or keep a gator or its eggs is a third degree felony. Never handle an alligator, even a small one. A bite can cause a serious infection. While it is unusual to be attacked, according to Florida Fish and Wildlife as of 2021, there are 16 documented fatal alligator /human encounters. Most bites aren't due to aggression, but rather the gator going after what they consider to be prey. Use extra caution in the morning or evening while fishing.

We are fortunate to live in a community that is home to so much wildlife. Enjoy these modern day dinosaurs from a distance.

- Becky Hinson



His and Hers: two very large residents owning one of our ponds. She (*left*) appears to be guarding a nest on the bank. He's nearby, somewhat larger, approaching 10 feet.

- Photos Becky Hinson