

## LIVING WITH ALLIGATORS

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission advises that if you encounter an alligator longer than 4 feet posing a threat to humans or property call 1-866-FWC-GATOR (392-4286). The FWC will evaluate your complaint and, if necessary, send a contracted trapper to remove the animal.

■ **Be aware** of the possibility of alligator attacks when in or near fresh or brackish water. Many attacks occur when people do not pay attention in such surroundings.

■ **Closely supervise** children when they are playing in or around water. Never allow small children to play by themselves near water.

■ **Do not swim** outside of posted swimming areas or in waters that might be inhabited by large alligators.

■ **Alligators are most active**

between dusk and dawn. Therefore, swim only during daylight hours.

■ **Leave alligators alone.** State law prohibits killing, harassing or possession of alligators.

■ **Never feed** or entice alligators — it is dangerous and illegal. When fed, alligators overcome their natural wariness and learn to associate people with food.

■ **Inform others** that feeding alligators is illegal and creates problems for others who want to use the water for recreational purposes.

■ **Dispose of fish** scraps in garbage cans at boat ramps or fish camps. Do not throw them in the water. Although you are not intentionally feeding alligators when you do this, the end result can be the same as feeding.

■ **Do not allow** pets to swim, exer-

cise or drink in waters that may contain alligators or in designated swimming areas with humans. Dogs are more susceptible to being attacked than humans because dogs resemble the natural prey of alligators.

■ **Never remove** an alligator from its natural habitat or accept one as a pet. It is illegal and very dangerous to do so. Alligators cannot become tame in captivity, and handling even small ones can result in injury.

■ **Observe and** photograph alligators only from a distance. Remember they are an important part of Florida's natural history as well as an integral component of freshwater ecosystems.

■ **Seek immediate** medical attention if bitten by an alligator. Alligator bites often result in serious infection.