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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact consequences – don't feed alligators (or other wildlife) in Flagler County parks

May 8, 2024 – The temptation to engage with wildlife by feeding them is real – especially for children – but the consequences for the animals, and the public, can be dire.

“Feeding wildlife can reduce their fear of humans which may result in aggression and the need for the animal to be removed or killed in order to protect public safety,” according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission website. “In some cases, feeding wildlife is illegal in Florida. Species with [rules related to feeding](#) include bears, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, pelicans, **alligators**, crocodiles, sandhill cranes, and wild monkeys.”

Additionally, the Flagler County Code of Ordinances, Sec. 13-2(7) prohibits feeding wildlife on public land.

A Flagler Beach resident contacted the county on Tuesday (May 7) after seeing a social media post of children feeding an alligator at Wadsworth Park.

“The real issue is that people feel safe on the boardwalk over the pond, but the majority of the pond is open and accessible to people walking in Wadsworth Park,” said General Services Assistant Director Michael Lagasse. “People are naturally drawn to water features. We don't want them to approach the pond and end up with an unwelcome, potentially dangerous interaction.”

Flagler County Parks and Recreation staff are presently installing additional alligator warning signs (Wednesday, May 8).

Lagasse investigated on Tuesday (May 7) and reported that the 5-foot gator swam towards him – likely responding from “food conditioning” and probably won't leave the area on its own.

“Food conditioning is dangerous for animals because it can lead to serious consequences like getting sick, starving, or even having to be killed if they become too aggressive,” according to the National Park Service website. “Animals can lose their fear of people when they get used to eating our food.”

Andy Dance
District 1

Greg Hansen
District 2

David Sullivan
District 3

Leann Pennington
District 4

Donald O'Brien, Jr.
District 5

Seeing alligators at Wadsworth Park is not a one-off. The three visible reviews on [Tripadvisor](#) about the park talk about alligators.

The most recent one, posted four weeks ago, and titled “Ollie the alligator!” said in part, “Saw the alligator! So much fun. He hung out right in front of us going back and forth...”

For public safety reasons, the alligator that has been residing in the pond at Wadsworth Park will be removed by a licensed trapper.

“Flagler County residents know that wildlife and wildlands are an important part of our way of life here,” Lagasse said. “Most of us are aware to give wildlife space. When we don’t, animals can become dangerous to humans and a safety concern for the rest of the public.”

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