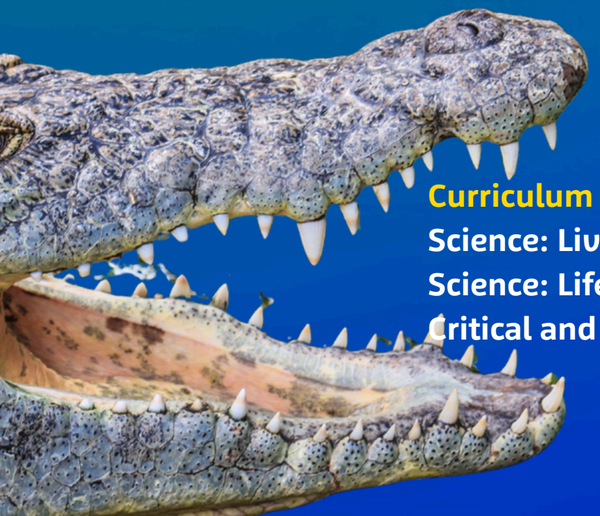
CROC ACADEMY
WITH COOWONGA



Curriculum Links

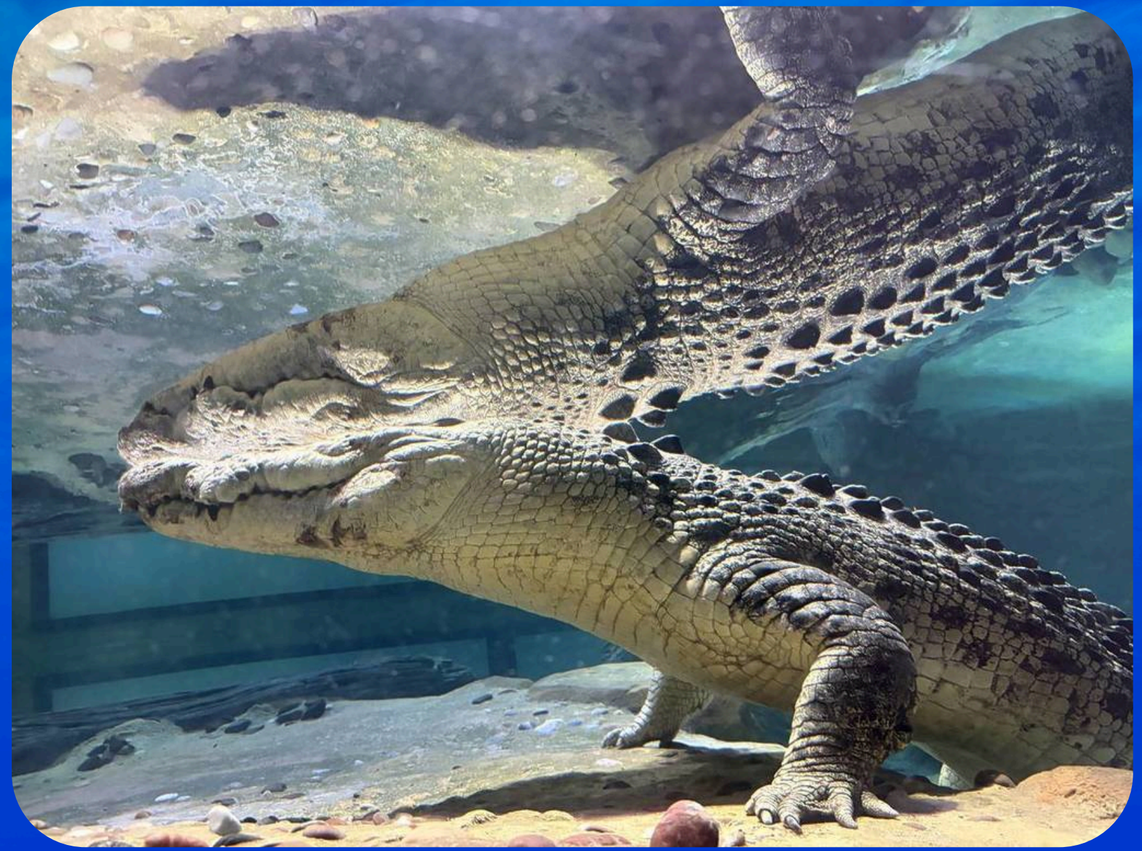
Science: Living things have structural features and adaptations that help them survive (Levels 1–4)

Science: Life cycles of living things (Levels 3–4)

Critical and Creative Thinking: Questioning and predicting (lifecycle, temperature-dependent sex determination)

INTRODUCTION

Coowonga is the newest addition to SEA LIFE Melbourne — and he's enrolling students! Before your class visits Croc Academy, use this guide to introduce the basics of saltwater crocodile biology, lifecycle and behaviour. Pair with the in-aquarium Croc Trail and Keeper Talks for a hands-on extension of classroom learning.



EGGS AND NESTING

Did you know?

Crocodile mums build large nest mounds from soil, leaves and vegetation, then lay around 40–60 eggs at a time. The temperature inside the nest determines whether the babies hatch as males or females.

Hot boys, cool girls

Eggs incubated at higher temperatures (around 34˚C and above) hatch as males. Cooler eggs (around 30˚C and below) hatch as females. This is called temperature-dependent sex determination.

Hatching out

Baby crocodiles use a sharp little "egg tooth" to break through their shell — then call out to mum, who helps dig them out of the nest.

Talking point for class:
What might happen to baby crocodiles if nest temperatures keep changing due to climate change?

SIZE, DIET & BITE STRENGTH

From tiny to terrifying

A newly hatched saltwater crocodile is small enough to fit in your hand — but adults can grow over 5 metres long.

What's on the menu?

Babies: insects, small fish, frogs
Adults: fish, birds, mammals — even buffalo

Built to bite

Saltwater crocodiles have one of the strongest bites of any living animal, powered by dense jaw muscles and rows of sharp, cone-shaped teeth designed for gripping rather than chewing.

Gastroliths — a crocodile's secret stones

Crocodiles swallow stones called gastroliths, which may help with digestion or balance in the water.

Talking point for class:
Why might a crocodile need help with balance underwater?

ANCIENT RELATIVES

Meet ‘Drop Croc’

Millions of years ago, Australia was home to Mekosuchinae — sometimes nicknamed "Drop Croc" — alongside Dinosuchus, a relative that could grow up to 10–12 metres long.

Why ‘drop croc’?

Meksuchinae lived between 55 million and 3 million years ago. Unlike modern crocodiles, which ambush prey from the water, scientists theorise that these bizarre reptiles were semi-arboreal, hunting like leopards by leaping onto unsuspecting animals from trees.

Class activity :

Measure out 10–12 metres in your playground or hallway. Could your class lie end-to-end across it?

CROCODILE SENSES & BODY

Heart rate

A crocodile's heart rate slows dramatically when it dives — sometimes to just 2–3 beats per minute, helping it conserve oxygen underwater.

Eyes on the sides

Crocodile eyes sit on the sides of their head, giving them a wide field of view to spot prey and predators.

Class activity :

How is a crocodile's eyesight different from yours? What are the advantages?