

# Please Don't Feed the Gators

**Subject:** Science, Reading

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Classroom

**Key Vocabulary:** Food chain, national park, habitat

**Related Activities:** Where Have Our Plants and Animals Gone?; Create A Food Chain; Habitat Hold-Up

**Florida Sunshine State Standards:** LA.A.2.2



**Objectives.** The student will be able to show two negative effects of human interference with an organism's natural environment.

**Method.** The students will listen to a short play which demonstrates the destructive nature of feeding wild animals.

**Background.** Animals in South Florida's national parks are accustomed to their natural environment. They are wild animals with the ability to exist without human intervention. It is detrimental to the organism for humans to feed and/or change their natural environment. In areas of South Florida where alligators are found, we occasionally hear about "problem gators" who have attacked dogs and sometimes people. In most of those cases, it is the people who fed the alligator that are the problem. The alligator soon begins to associate people with food. Explain to the students that by feeding the alligator they are actually doing it more harm than good. The alligator no longer gets the balanced diet it would if it were getting its own food in the natural environment. Also, once the alligator gets used to being fed by humans, it will no longer be able to find food on its own. It is a people problem and not an alligator problem.

## Suggested Procedure

1. With a colleague, act out the play on the blackline master for your students or have two of the students act it out using the props provided.
2. After reading the play, discuss the issues with your students.

## Evaluation

Ask students to give their opinions concerning these issues. Guide students in drawing appropriate conclusions concerning wildlife. Generalize this specific situation with all wildlife in South Florida's national parks.

## Materials

- Blackline master - "Please Don't Feed the Gators"
- Teachers may want to use props such as masks or puppets

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## PLEASE DON'T FEED THE GATORS

by Debbe Wade

Narrator: One day in Everglades National Park, Cecil Snake was slithering along the slough in search of supper (emphasis on the SSS's). Suddenly, he saw a small gator on the shore ...

Cecil Snake: SSSSSSSSSSSSS ..... Who are you?

Grover Gator: Uhh, Grover Gator uhh, moan.

Cecil: You look awful "down in the mouth," gator, what's wrong?

Grover: (Moan) Some nice children and their parents fed me a whole bag of marshmallows.... They were so good! But now I feel sick!!!!

Cecil: Silly gator, don't you know that marshmallows aren't alligator food? You're supposed to eat fish (to audience). What else do gators eat? Birds ..... turtles .....

\*\*\* (Grover gator moves closer to Cecil)

and SNAKES!!!!!!

\*\*\* (Grover lunges at Cecil and Cecil dodges Grover).

Grover : (Having just missed eating Cecil) Ohh... that's too hard. I think I'll just stay here near the picnic area and eat handouts. People are so nice and convenient!!!

Cecil: Those people aren't being nice to you by feeding you. They're getting you into deep trouble!

Grover: Why?????

Cecil: Because you'll be a bad gator! You might get their dog or their hand, and that'd be it!

Grover: (Protesting) No, No, I wouldn't hurt anyone.

Cecil: Yesssssss (hissing)

Grover: Oh, BOO HOO, BOO HOO. I don't want to be a bad gator, but look at their hands! (Grover looks around at the audience). They have such little hands, I might mistake them for a piece of sandwich. Oh Boo Hoo.....

Cecil: Don't cry, Grover, only crocodiles cry in public.

Grover: Well (sniff, sniff), what would the rangers do to me?

Cecil: That all depends. If they had caught you at this sort of business before, well ... well ... it would be

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....

Grover: Oh!!! No!!!! Kids, does he mean they would kill me? Dead? (Audience responds) Oh dear, woe is me!!!

Cecil: Of course, if it was the first time ...

Grover: (Waiting eagerly) Yeah? Yeah? The first time ???

Cecil: Why, then they'd move you far away to a new pond. There, you might get beaten up by some big gator who already lives there, or you might travel back and find your way home.

Grover: GOOD!!! GOOD!!!

Cecil: No, Bad! Because the rangers would see you hadn't learned your lesson and they'd have to ...

Grover: DON'T SAY THAT WORD!!!

Grover: (Crying) Cece, Cece, you gotta help me!

Cecil: (To audience) Kids, you've heard us talking about Grover's problem, what do you think we can do to help? (Cecil coaxes the kids to spread the word to all humans: DO NOT FEED THE GATORS.)

Cecil: Well, good-bye kids, good-bye Grove (He leaves.)

Grover: Is that snake gone? What a smarty pants! Is he gone? (Audience responds) Well, how about an oreo? HUH? HUH? PLEASE??? (Continues begging until Cecil pops on stage saying NO!!!)

**THE END!!!**

