



# ENDANGERED! The Gavial

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Visit [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com) and [www.worldwildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org) for more information on this organism and others threatened by extinction.



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Relative of a local favorite but the numbers are decreasing!

### Taxonomy:

Domain	Eukarya
Kingdom	Animal
Phylum	Chordate
Class	Reptile
Order	Crocodylian...
Species	<i>Gavialis gangeticus</i>

Though not seen in the marshes of Houston, the **endangered** gavial (or gharial) is a close relative of the American alligator and well known Aussie favorite, the crocodile, and is native to Asia.

A key difference in the gavial is the thinnest of its **snout**, a key **adaptation** that allows them to move quickly through the water and to snap at prey. They can grow to be very large (20+ feet). Gavials also move quickly in the water with the use of their **webbed** feet. Their life span? An average of 40 to 60 years!

Their diet is composed of fish and small mammals.

Nearly **extinct**, they are hunted for their skin and are at risk because of habitat reduction and being caught in fishermen's nets. Breeding programs in Nepal and India have been set up to increase their numbers.

Imaged accessed 06/04/2008 <http://www.wwf.be/fr/juniors/img/visual/doc/fiches/gavial.jpg>



### Vocabulary to Know:

- \* **Endangered**—a species in danger of extinction
- \* **Snout**—a long nose
- \* **Adaptation**—a modification of an organism that makes it more fit for its environment (EX a green lizard living in a green jungle)
- \* **Webbed**—areas of tissue between the fingers and toes of some animals; Image accessed 06/05/2008 <http://www.dkimages.com/discover/previews/979/50346257.JPG>
- \* **Extinct**—when all members of a species are no longer in existence; the species died out
- \* **Conservation**—the protection of natural resources; the environment and the living organisms and resources of the planet



The World Wildlife Fund, direct from their website, states their “mission is the **conservation** of nature. For more than 45 years, WWF has been protecting the future of nature. The largest multinational conservation organization in the world, WWF works in 100 countries and is supported by 1.2 million members in the United States and close to 5 million globally.”