



Park Employee for a Day Geocache #2



Who You Are

As a ranger for the National Park Service, your distinctive uniform casts you as a paragon of park knowledge. Visitors from all parts of the globe seek your advice on how to best spend their time exploring the park. On park trails, you are sought out as the authority on the flora, fauna, and history of this amazing landscape. You also have an important responsibility to try and ensure visitors have a safe experience on the trail. But where natural hazards are all around, doing so requires some thought and finesse...

The Issue

The Anhinga Trail is one of the most popular visitor areas in the park. On winter days, thousands of people flock here to marvel at the congregation of wildlife that is drawn to the nearby lakes and canals. Alligators, in particular, appear in great numbers and present a potentially serious hazard.

Because they are unconstrained, alligators freely move about the area. Accustomed to visitors, they often bask, feed, fight, and nest in close proximity to people. Visitors, in turn, often prove too comfortable around alligators. They attempt to feed them illegally, or get in really close for a picture. In the past, they've even illegally caught alligator babies, introduced alligators to the family dog—and have even gone for a swim with them!



Female alligators aggressively defend their young, and have been known to build nests right alongside the Anhinga Trail.
NPS Photo

The Hard Decision

Alligator attacks—though relatively rare—do occur on occasion in Florida. And when these encounters happen, they often result in serious injury. Luckily, no attack has ever occurred on the Anhinga Trail. But given the number of alligators and visitors mingling at this particular location, precautionary measures seem in order.

How would you—as a ranger working along the Anhinga Trail—try to minimize the chances of an encounter? Are there suggestions, strategies, or rules you would put in place to help maintain a safe distance between the area's year-round residents and daily visitors?



Alligators move freely about the Anhinga Trail, as do visitors. How would you minimize the chance the two might tangle?
NPS Photo by Rodney Cammauf

When you log your find, be sure to tell us:

What would YOU do to help prevent encounters on the Anhinga Trail?



And then, if you're curious... here's how the park is currently addressing this issue!