



NILE CROCODILES



This month our vet **Joe Inglis** heads to the world's longest river, the Nile, to find out about one of its most fearsome inhabitants.

Nile crocodiles are the second largest reptiles in the world (behind saltwater crocs, which are the biggest). They live in fresh water and can be found in most African countries, including in the river Nile, which runs through Egypt.

CROCO-DIET

Almost any animal can become part of a Nile crocodile's diet, from tiny insects to giant mammals, such as giraffe and rhinos. They are known as apex predators because they are at the top of the food chain – no other animals (apart from humans) eat them.

Time for lunch, and make it snappy!

1,090 kg

The weight of the largest Nile crocodile ever recorded. Most males weigh around half this much and measure between 3 and 5 metres from nose to tail. Females are usually smaller than the males.

STEALTH FIGHTERS

Nile crocodiles are masters of the ambush. They lurk near the edge of the water and leap out to grab any unfortunate animal who doesn't spot them. They have enormously powerful jaw muscles, which they use to hang on to their prey as they drag them back into the water.

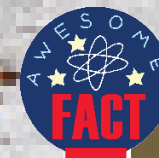
LYING IN WAIT...

Thanks to unusually high levels of a chemical called lactic acid in their blood, Nile crocodiles can lie completely still in water for up to two hours. They can also hold their breath for up to half an hour, as they wait patiently for a chance to pounce.



GREAT EGG-SPECTATIONS!

Like most reptiles, crocodiles lay eggs. They are kept warm in a hole in a sandy riverbank for three months, before the young emerge.



The sex of a Nile crocodile hatchling depends on the temperature of the egg – if it's cool or hot, it will be female, if it's warmish, it will be a boy!

HERE CROCKY CROC!

In ancient Egyptian times, a god with a crocodile's head called Sobek was believed to control the flow of the Nile river and keep people safe from crocodile attacks. As well as worshipping a crocodile god, some Egyptians also kept Nile crocs as pets, dressing them up in jewels and letting them roam around their houses!