

ANIMAL OF THE MONTH

Gavial

Stephenson Natural History Museum, Department of Zoology



Gavials are one of the longest crocodylians. They are survivors from great reptilian age and are ecologically important organisms. They are recognized as **keystone species** in their environment (Keystone species are those which maintain structure and organization of the community). They are also called as *Gharial* because of the bulbous nasal that resemble the pot *Ghara*. Stephenson Natural History Museum houses few small and two full grown adult specimens.

Distribution

They were once widely spread in rivers of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar. But now their habitat is greatly narrowed.

Size

The average size of an adult gavial is between 11-15 ft, some are recorded to be over 20 ft. They may weight up to 350 pounds.

What do they eat?

Despite their enormous body they have a narrow snout, so they cannot eat large prey. Their food mainly comprises of fresh water fishes. That is why they mistakenly referred as “fish-eating crocodiles” by natives.

IUCN status

Their population has decreased over 98% in the previous century, because of habitat destruction and hunting. Now they are listed as “**Critically Endangered Species**” in IUCN red list.

