

# Smooth-fronted Caiman

*Paleosuchus trigonatus*

Reptile

## Scientific Name

*Paleosuchus trigonatus*

## Other Names

Schneider's Dwarf Caiman

## Range

Amazon Basin of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela

## Habitat

Forested, freshwater rivers and streams with fast-moving water.

## Description

A small, dark brown crocodylian with a thick hide, long snout and a short tail covered with two rows of sharp scutes. The infra-orbital ridge between the eyes is absent.

## Average Size

Length: 4 – 5.5 ft.  
Weight: 20 – 45 lbs.

## Lifespan

In the wild: Unknown  
In captivity: 25 + years

## Diet

In the wild: Fish, invertebrates, small mammals, birds and eggs  
In captivity: Fish, prepared gator chow

## Incubation

Up to 115 days

## Sexual Maturity

Four feet in length and roughly 10 – 20 years

## Clutch Size

10 to 20 eggs

## Predators

Large carnivores

## Population Status

Vulnerable



## Behavior

The Smooth-fronted Caiman is primarily nocturnal (active at night) and terrestrial, spending most of its time on land as opposed to in the water. Research shows that the adults spend much of the day in burrows, coming out at night to patrol their territories and feed. This species is relatively solitary outside the breeding season and can maintain territories as large as several kilometers.

The diet of a Smooth-fronted Caiman varies with size, habitat and prey availability. This species not only hunts in water and along riverbanks, but will also forage in the surrounding forest. Compared to other caimans, juvenile Smooth-fronted Caimans eat a lot of terrestrial vertebrates (mainly snakes and large rodents) with the adults including a larger proportion in their diet.

## Reproduction and Breeding

Females begin to construct mound nests at the end of the dry season, often in close proximity to or even on top of termite mounds. The vented heat from the termite colonies helps maintain of a high incubation temperature. It is not known whether the incubation temperature affects the sex of the offspring in this species as with most other crocodylians.

After hatching, the juveniles disperse throughout the surrounding forest. The adults provide little to no parental care to the offspring, but may remain nearby, thus reducing the chance of predators in the general area. Females breed every two to three years.

## Conservation

This species is listed as Least Concern on IUCN (International Union on the Conservation of Nature), it is listed on Cites appendix II (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species) and is protected from hunting and capture for the pet trade.

Major current and future threats include habitat destruction and pollution associated with gold mining activities. The long-term effects of the environmental pollution from gold mining need to be examined for this and other South American Crocodylian populations to be successful.

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Fortunately for this species, the osteoderm-laden nature of their skin causes their hide to be of little use and they have escaped significant hunting pressure. Subsistence hunting has been of sufficiently low intensity to avoid damaging populations.

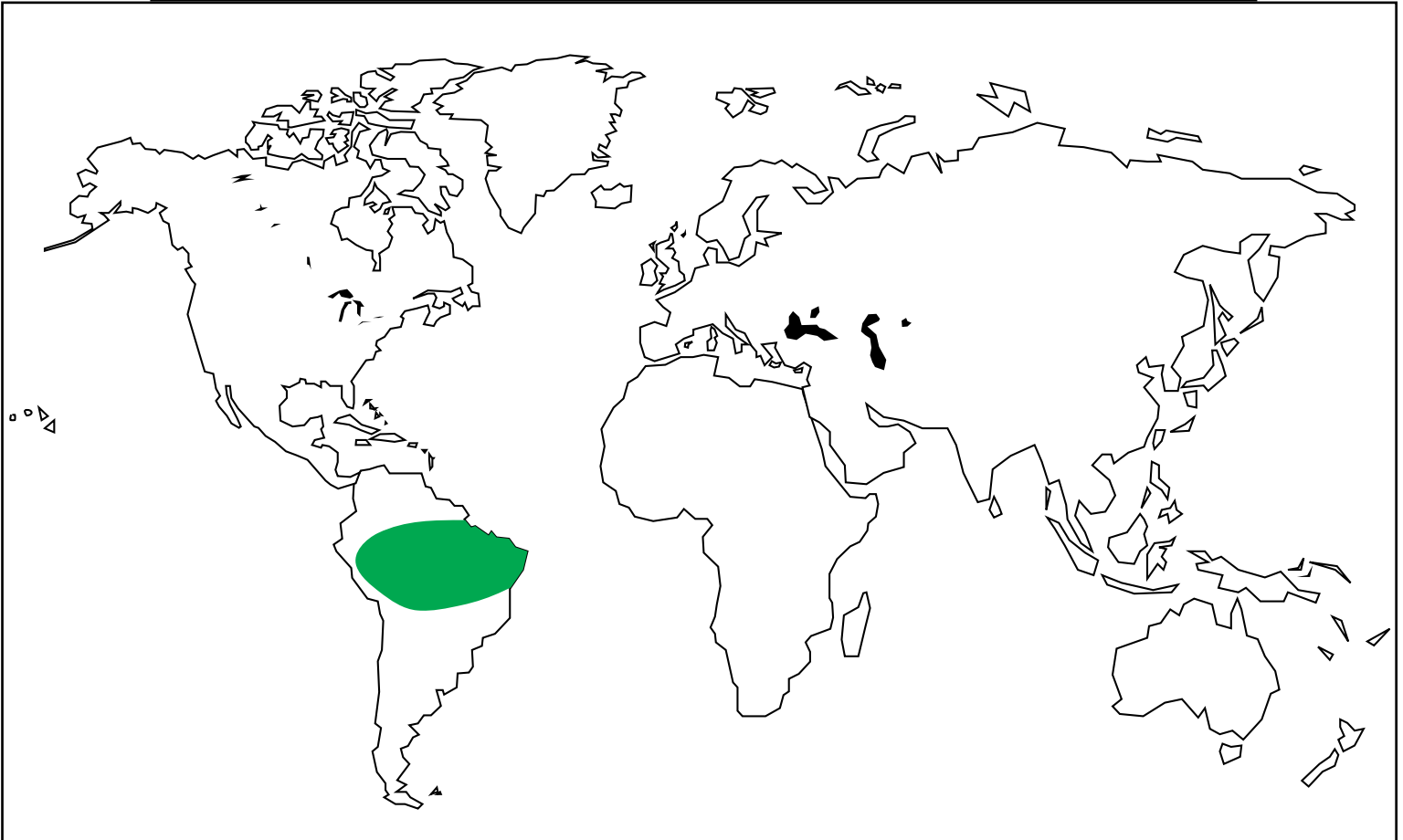
### Amazing Facts

This is the second smallest species of the Alligatoridae family. Cuvier's Dwarf Caiman (*P. palpebrosus*), whose range overlaps with it, is slightly smaller.

Smooth-fronted Caiman prefer colder, more rapidly moving water than their close relatives, Cuvier's Dwarf Caiman.

This animal has 78 to 82 teeth.

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