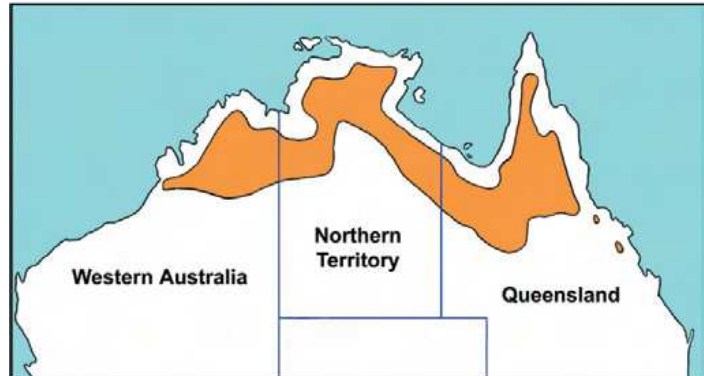


Australian Freshwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus johnstoni*)

The Australian Freshwater Crocodile or Johnston's River crocodile is endemic to mainland Australia. It is a small species, seldom exceeding 3 m, with a narrow snout resembling that of false gharials. The species was hunted for its skin up to the early 1970s, but has now largely recovered from the effects of past hunting. The full impact of introduced cane toads (*Bufo marinus*) on wild *C. johnstoni* populations is not known, but adult and juvenile mortalities as high as 77% have been reported in areas once the toads arrive. The species is known to be more susceptible to cane toad toxin than the Saltwater Crocodile (*C. porosus*).



Nesting occurs during the dry season (August-September), with clutch sizes averaging 13 eggs. Eggs are laid in a hole nest dug in friable substrates, and females do not guard their nests/eggs. Hatching occurs in November-December, before wet season rains begin. Prior to colonisation by cane toads, egg mortality was high (<90-95%), mainly the result of predation by goannas (monitor lizards). In one area where data are available, egg mortality has now decreased to <50%, and hatchling recruitment has increased by 400% or more, as goanna numbers were greatly reduced by toads.



Like other crocodylians, individual growth rates vary considerably. During the dry season “freshies” eat little, and annual growth takes place during the wet season when food is more plentiful. Diet consists mainly of fish, although other prey is also taken (eg mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects). Australian Freshwater Crocodiles inhabit a variety of freshwater habitats, and may occur in very high densities in isolated billabongs (pools) during the dry season.

In many rivers *C. johnstoni* are sympatric with the larger Saltwater Crocodiles.