

## **ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL VISITORS' KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PRESENCE OF THE AMERICAN ALLIGATOR IN A PARK SETTING: A LESSON FOR NIGERIA'S NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE.**

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The Brazos Bend State Park is endowed with great habitat diversity and species richness. An appreciable population of the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) emerges as a significant feature of the park. A questionnaire survey was used to determine the knowledge and attitude of a potential park user-public as related to the presence of American alligator. The analysis of the dispersion of respondents' residence revealed that the respondent represent potential visitors for the park setting. Knowledge questions were sub-categorized under related areas: (1) Behavioural (2) Ecological and (3) Morphological features of the alligators. Vast majorities (70%) of the respondents were either without appreciable knowledge about the animal or possess inaccurate information. Negative attitudes towards the reptile were revealed for those attitude variable associated with personal and direct encounter with the alligator. Gender was the major demographic variable demonstrating significant association ( $P < .05$ ) with attitudes and knowledge shown by the respondents concerning the alligator. User-public information and educational activities (park resource interpretation) were prescribed as a management tool.