

# Study shows life near the golf course isn't easy for alligators

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Is it an eagle? A birdie? No, it's a gator.

The Rosenblatt Lab at the University of North Florida has recently published a study finding that living on a golf course dramatically changes alligator feeding habits. The work, titled "[Golf course living leads to a diet shift for American alligators](#)," is published in *Ecology and Evolution*.

The study suggests that land use changes can significantly alter the feeding habits of large predators. Changes in habitat and prey availability caused gators living on [golf courses](#) to have different dietary patterns and access to different prey communities compared to those living in [natural habitats](#). As a result, the health and behaviors of the animals could be impacted by various conditions including exposure to human-made chemicals.

The researchers conducted their study on two neighboring islands located along the southeast coast of Georgia, focusing on the feeding habits of young gators from Jekyll Island, which has several golf courses and a significant amount of human activity; and Sapelo Island, which has no golf courses and much less [human activity](#). In addition to shifting their feeding patterns, the Jekyll Island gators ate some unusual things, like canned corn, a cat, a fishing lure and a cheeseburger with fries.

Field assistants and UNF students worked with the Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) to help collect the data. The study was led by Dr. Adam Rosenblatt, UNF biology assistant professor, with assistance from Robert Greco and Eli Beal, UNF graduate students; Yank Moore, JIA director of conservation; Joseph Colbert, JIA wildlife biologist; Victoria Baglin, UNF Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) intern; and Dr. James Nifong, an alligator expert.

**More information:** Adam E. Rosenblatt et al, Golf course living leads to a diet shift for American alligators, *Ecology and Evolution* (2023).  
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