

Refuge.

The American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) is a conservation success story. Due to loss of habitat and unregulated market hunting, alligators were reduced to low numbers by the early 1900s, which contributed to their being listed as endangered in 1967. This protected status, combined with proactive management and law enforcement efforts by wildlife professionals, allowed alligator populations to rebound and they now flourish over most of their historic range. Alligator populations increased to the point that their protected status was down-listed in 1987 allowing greater flexibility to manage populations. The alligator now has a status of “threatened due to similarity of appearance” because of its likeness to other crocodylians worldwide that still receive protection.

In 2013, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began annual alligator surveys on Banks Lake NWR, water levels permitting. These surveys are conducted annually on two separate nights. The following table summarizes the results of these surveys.

<b>Year</b>	2013	2013	2014	2014	2015	2015	2016	2016	2017	2017
<b>Survey Night</b>	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
<b>Length Class (ft)</b>										
0-2	4	12	2	2	9	4	5	5	1	2
2-4	7	11	6	7	8	5	7	8	15	7
4-6	18	11	13	16	7	6	12	13	11	13
6-8	12	11	8	9	6	11	9	8	14	9
8-10	0	1	5	0	0	1	6	2	6	2
10-12	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Unknown	30	18	25	13	8	11	17	26	26	13
<b>Total</b>	71	64	60	47	38	38	56	62	75	46
<b>Total known legal harvest size</b>	30	23	27	25	13	18	27	23	33	24
<b>Avg total nightly count = 56</b>		<b>Avg known legal nightly count = 24</b>								

Due to increased information from alligator surveys and monitoring from Georgia DNR, the