

Croc roams popular picnic spot

By James O'Loan

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A 2m crocodile that has stalked a man is being allowed to roam a popular Cairns picnic spot as authorities continue their months-long debate over whether to remove it.

A croc expert has warned children's lives are at risk while the crocodile continues to live at Centenary Lakes in the heart of Cairns, which is also a popular tourist attraction.

Authorities have known about the croc for months but yesterday said they were still assessing whether it posed enough of a threat to be removed.

Big enough to attack

Johnstone River Crocodile Farm owner Mick Tabone said they should act immediately to trap the beast and warned it was big enough to attack a child.

"Control it now. If a kid stands in the water or close to the water it could take it," Mr Tabone said.

"The smaller ones (crocs) are like teenagers, they'll have a go at anything.

"It's going to come to a day when someone gets killed and then they'll start talking about having a big shoot-out."

Croc stalks man

Cairns Infosite Visitor Centre owner Vince O'Flaherty told *The Cairns Post* he was "stalked" by the croc last Sunday after he took photos of it at the water's edge.

He said the croc turned and started swimming towards him as he walked off as excited tourists rushed over.

Risk assessment continuing

Queensland Park and Wildlife crocodile scientist Mark Read said yesterday his team was "assessing" the croc's behaviour and size to determine whether removal was necessary.

If it was deemed a risk to public safety it would be harpooned or trapped using chicken bait before being taken from the area.

The Cairns Post reported in February that rangers were considering trapping the croc but were forced to wait until the weather cleared.

There have been repeated sightings of crocodiles in the lake during the past two years however it is unknown whether there is more than one reptile.

Mr Read said it was possible but he could not guarantee the croc was the same beast regularly spotted at Centenary

Lakes since late 2004.

Perfect habitat

The lakes are thought to provide the reptile with an abundance of food including prawns, fish and turtles.

Mr Read said the man-made outdoor drains and creekbeds in Cairns provided an ideal pathway for crocs to move about the city, most probably at night when they were at their most active.

Mr Read said he had "no idea" how many crocs were crawling through Cairns but thought numbers were probably low.

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