Shut the gate . . . it’s raining crocs in the big wet

Brian Williams
Peter Morley

FLOODS have washed crocodiles down local streets in towns from Karumba and Normanton in the Gulf to Townsville and Cairns on the east coast.

At least four crocs ranging from babies to about 2m have been seen around Townsville.

At Floraville, a Gulf station near Burketown which has had a record 1000mm of rain this wet season, the flooded Leichhardt River has brought crocs right to the homestead, prompting owner Ernie Camp to shut the gate near the house to keep them out.

His wife Kylie said: “We have heard them more than seen them. Ernie saw something floating out of a shed and he was going to retrieve it until he heard a big bark. He decided to retreat.”

While the sight of crocs is making some people nervous, an expert says the floods will kill thousands of the animals.

University of Queensland scientist Craig Franklin said yesterday smaller crocs could not hold on against raging flood waters and were often washed out of streams into built-up areas.

Large crocodiles were generally strong enough to maintain their territory.

Carpentaria Shire Council chief executive Mark Kelleher said yesterday two crocs from 2m to 3.5m had been seen swimming around Normanton, prompting him to have warning signs erected.

“In a place like this you’ve got to learn to live with crocs. People say if you go for a walk always take your dog so the croc will hopefully go for it instead of you,” Mr Kelleher said.

Dr Franklin said the floods would drown nests, killing many eggs and hatchlings.

“The simple advice for people is keep your distance,” he said.

“Everything depends on education. Even a small croc can give a nasty bite.”

Dr Franklin said Queensland had few crocodiles when compared with the Northern Territory and trying to shoot them out was wrong and pointless.