

## SHELL SHOCKED

### Crisis in alligator land

By Art Stevens

A year and a half has gone by since Hurricane Ian and Sanibel's alligators are still in a state of shock. Many have been literally blown away and don't even know where they presently are. Some were carried by Ian all the way to Cape Coral and beyond. Others are still digging their way out of landfills and new terrain created by tree branches, water surges and airborne dining room tables.

The Sanibel Alligators Association leadership was frantic. Many of their members that had involuntarily left their swamp confines on Sanibel because of Ian have yet to be accounted for. The association has historically relied on alligator population explosions on Sanibel to battle the often unpredictable whims of humans.

Ally Alligator, the executive director of the Sanibel Alligators Association, convened an emergency meeting of his executive committee.

Ally: I've called this meeting because we alligators are in crisis mode. Many of us have been relocated by wind and not by humans. We don't know where they are or how to reach them. Most of them don't know how to use Zoom so we can't have virtual meetings. Let's face it, we alligators aren't as advanced in technology as humans. We may have lots of teeth, but we don't know how to send emails.

Vice President: I concur, my leader, but there's still action we can take against humans for poisoning the atmosphere and ignoring climate change. We can resume our annual demonstrations in front of City Hall or simply dine as a group without a reservation at Cielo. And watch the humans panic in the process.

Ally: But will this achieve our goals of reuniting with our lost brothers and sisters? I hear that one of our brothers was taken by the wind into a bathtub of a Cape Coral house. When the homeowner entered the room, she mistakenly took our alligator brother for her husband and asked him to use

a moisturizer. Our alligator brother was so insulted for being mistaken for a human that he bit the bathtub faucet off and created a massive flood. You can guess how upset the homeowner was when her house flew off its hinges and relocated to the exact part of the Sanibel swamp where our missing lost brother had made his home.

VP: We have a far worse crisis than that. Humans have taken up arms after Hurricane Ian because they claimed to be even more endangered by the unknown whereabouts of missing alligators. We've sent patrols to round up the missing alligators, but the patrols went missing too.

Ally: What we have here is a case of total breakdown. I've been executive director of our association for twenty-five years and have never experienced such a crisis. I think I've lost my edge and am thinking of retiring to Miami Beach.

VP: Don't say such things. You founded this association and it's the best thing that's ever happened to Sanibel alligators. You've fought for our rights. You prevented alligator shoes from ever being sold on Sanibel. And you've succeeded in granting alligators the right to vote. It's only a matter of time before one of us will be elected to the Sanibel City Council. Please stay on.

Ally: Very well, you've convinced me. But be careful of those human politicians who claim to understand alligators and campaign for our votes. They fear us as they should and are only trying to whittle down our animal instincts. Let's face it, biting humans is what we do best, and no one should take that away from us. Otherwise, we might as well become household pets.

VP: Then we agree on our priorities for 2024. Relocate all lost and abandoned alligators to their rightful homes on Sanibel. Maintain our distance from humans. Continue to demonstrate when we have been wronged. And keep looking for the perfect bite victim.

Ally: I agree with all but would add one more priority. Let's mess with the 2024 election ballots for humans as we've done in the previous ten elections.

