This is a Nocturnal species that lives along the Amazon, Orinoco, and Paraguay River. They can also live in flooded forest. They can also travel pretty far on land, and tend to hide in burrows along the river banks during the day. Caiman tend to have a long lifespan, around 30-40 years.

**DO NOT GET** if you are not capable of housing an adult of this species. Although they are called “dwarf” this species still can produce a very nasty bite. Dwarf Caiman should not be handled alone or kept in a house with children. They also **MUST HAVE UVB** lighting, which can be hard and expensive to provide for an appropriate sized habitat. Make sure you are financially and mentally prepared before getting this animal, and please be responsible. That all being said, most responsible keepers report this as a very rewarding animal to keep.

**Housing**

Hatchlings can be kept in a 55 gallon tank, with a water and a land area. Caiman needs lots of roughage and hiding places. A single adult needs AT LEAST 6ftX8ft of land and 8ftX10ft of water. Besides the caging, the enrichment can also be costly. This species needs day lamps, UVB lighting, ceramic heaters, water heaters, a water filtration system, plants, and hides.

**Substrate**

The land portion of the habitat should be a mix of jungle bedding, sand, mulch, moss, and rocks to bask on. This species also need plenty of “hide” areas, they can be extremely shy. Obviously there needs to be a good area for them to swim. The water area must have a filtration system, caiman tend to defecate in water; and fish can be messy in stagnant water.

**Temp/Lighting/Humidity**

The ambient daytime temperature should be kept around 88-92 degrees fahrenheit, with nightly temperatures around 75 degrees fahrenheit. The water should be kept at 75-80 degrees fahrenheit.

**Food**

Hatchlings can have crickets, small minnows, small frogs, and roaches. Adults diet consist of feeder mice/rats, roaches, and frogs. You can put fresh meat (with calcium powder), but do not let this be the staple diet of your caiman. This species needs a variety of food offered, and hatchlings can be especially difficult refusing to eat at all. If this happens, try adding more places to hide, and up the temperature. If refusal to eat continues after this, schedule an appointment to take your caiman to the vet (make sure they are familiar with the species).
Dwarf Caiman Care Sheet

Handling

As with all animals and even humans temperament can differ depending on the individual's personality and environment. But as a rule of thumb caiman are flighty, nervous, and as with all wild animals unpredictable.

With species that are large or need special care I ALWAYS recommend doing an extensive amount of research. This is not an animal you want to buy on a whim. You need to understand its behaviors, mindset, medical needs, proper environments, and most of all you need to know you are absolutely ready to take on a project such as this species. Please keep responsibly, too often these animals are bought as adorable hatchlings and either abandoned in the wild, sold back to pet stores (where it is very hard to get rid of an adult, and hard to keep in a small environment), or euthanized. This is not fair to responsible keepers, and most of all not fair to the animal. If you are seeking a small version of a crocodilian, but cannot house one; please check out crocodile skinks or Arboreal Alligator Lizards which are croc-like lizards that are easier to maintain.

Web Links to visit for more information:
Chicago Exotic Veterinarian Caiman Care Sheet
http://www.exoticpetvet.com/caiman-care.html
Captive Care Sheet
http://crocodilian.com/paleosuchus/captivecare.html
How to Build a Caiman Habitat
http://www.reptilesmagazine.com/Reptile-Health/Habitats-Care/How-to-Build-a-Caiman-Cage/
New England Reptile Distributor Caiman Care Video
https://www.facebook.com/newenglandreptile/videos/10155143717058877/

*Above is a picture of a spectacled caiman enclosure.