

RECREATIONAL BLUE CRABBING GUIDELINES



Marine Extension and
Georgia Sea Grant
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



This guide aims to provide quick and easy reference for recreational blue crabbers to maintain legal and sustainable practices. Please note that this guide is only a reference. For the most up-to-date saltwater fishing and crabbing regulations visit <https://coastalgadnr.org/RecreationalFishing>.

SPONGE CRAB

Illegal to harvest



MATURE
MALE/JIMMY



MATURE
FEMALE/SOOK



IMMATURE
FEMALE/SALLY



The background features a light blue, semi-transparent illustration of a crab, showing its legs, claws, and body. The crab is positioned diagonally across the page, with its head towards the top right and its legs extending towards the bottom left. In the top right corner, there is a small, empty white circle.

LEGAL CRAB HARVEST

You can distinguish male blue crabs from female blue crabs by looking at the shape of their abdomen or “apron.”

Mature male blue crabs, or “Jimmies,” have a strongly tapered apron that resembles an inverted T or the Washington Monument.

Mature female blue crabs, or “Sooks,” have a broad, rounded apron, similar to the Capital dome.

Immature females, also known as “she-crabs” or “Sallies,” have a triangular shaped apron.

It is unlawful to harvest female sponge (egg-bearing) crabs. Sponge crabs have a mass of eggs on their underside. As the eggs develop, the sponge goes from **orange** to **black** in color. Eggs of any color are alive and the sponge crab should be returned to the water.

A top-down illustration of a blue crab. A red horizontal line spans the width of the crab's carapace. Below the crab is a scale bar with markings from 1 to 5 inches. The crab's width is shown to be exactly 5 inches. A small brown circle is on the left antenna.

THE LEGAL SIZE OF A BLUE CRAB IS 5 INCHES

inches

1

2

3

4

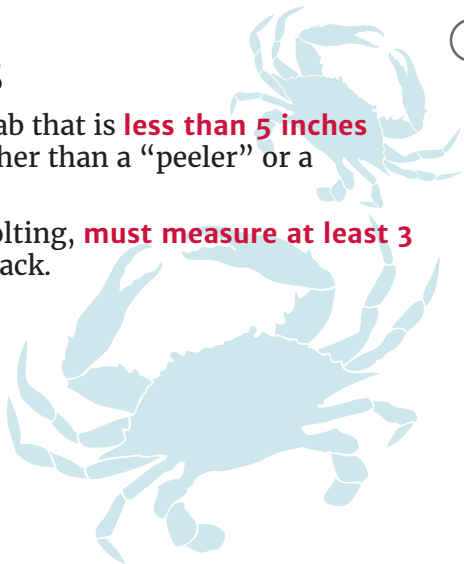
5



LEGAL SIZE OF BLUE CRABS

It is unlawful to take or possess any crab that is **less than 5 inches** from spike to spike across the back (other than a “peeler” or a mature adult female crab).

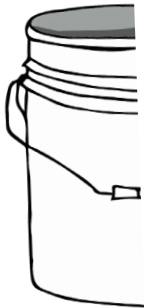
Peelers, or crabs that show signs of molting, **must measure at least 3 inches** from spike to spike across the back.





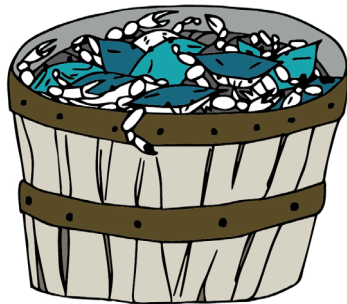
one 5-gallon bucket

+



half a 5-gallon bucket

=



roughly one bushel



BLUE CRABBING REGULATIONS

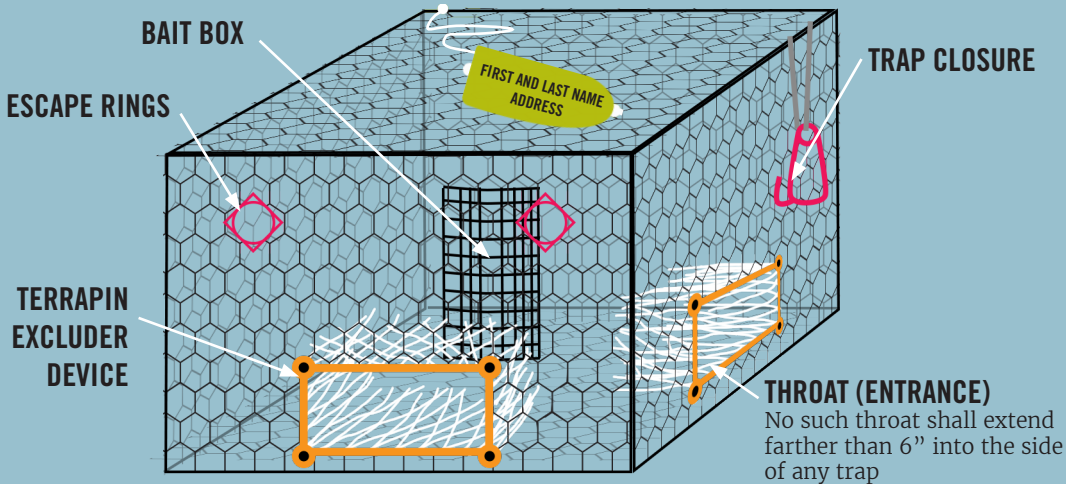
A fishing license and **Saltwater Information Permit (SIP)** is required for those 16 years of age and older.

A recreational crabber may possess up to **six standard size crab traps** (2 feet by 2 feet) with **two escape rings** on each trap.

Recreational crabbers may take no more than one bushel of crabs during any 24-hour period. No more than two bushels may be taken recreationally or possessed during a 24-hour period on a boat with more than one person on board.

One and a half 5-gallon buckets full of Jimmy-size (5 to 7 inch) blue crabs is approximately the same as **one bushel** of blue crabs.

Unless otherwise designated, the saltwaters of Georgia are open year-round for recreational crabbing at any time of day.





CRABBING WITH A CRAB POT

Crab traps or pots can be used by licensed recreational crabbers at private docks.

A recreational crabber may possess up to **six standard size crab traps** (2 feet by 2 feet) with **two escape rings** on each trap.

Diamondback terrapin excluder devices, or “TEDs,” fit on the outer entrance funnels on crab traps. These devices prevent terrapins from getting caught in the traps and drowning.

Recreational crabbers are required to mark their traps with **a fluorescent green buoy** bearing the owner's name and address in one-inch letters.