

# 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 two crabs. One crab is on the left, partially cut off by the edge of the frame. The other is on the right, facing right. The crabs are rendered in a simple, stylized manner with visible legs and claws. In the top right corner, there is a small, white circle with a thin black outline.

## 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 in shades of teal. A red horizontal line with vertical end caps spans across the crab's carapace, indicating a measurement. Two vertical dashed white lines extend from the ends of this red line down to a scale at the bottom. The scale is marked with numbers 1 through 5, with the red line ending exactly at the 5-inch mark. The text "THE LEGAL SIZE OF A BLUE CRAB IS 5 INCHES" is centered above the red line. A small brown circle is visible on the crab's 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).

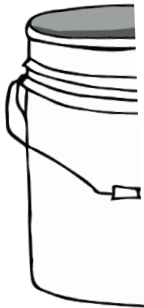
Peelers, or crabs that show signs of molting, **must measure at least 3 inches** from spike to spike across the back.





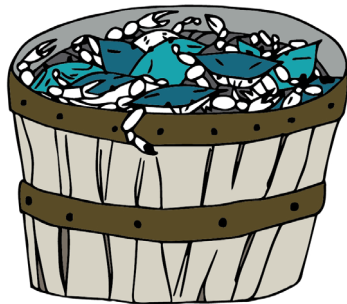
one 5-gallon bucket

+



half a 5-gallon bucket

=



roughly one bushel



## BLUE CRABBING REGULATIONS

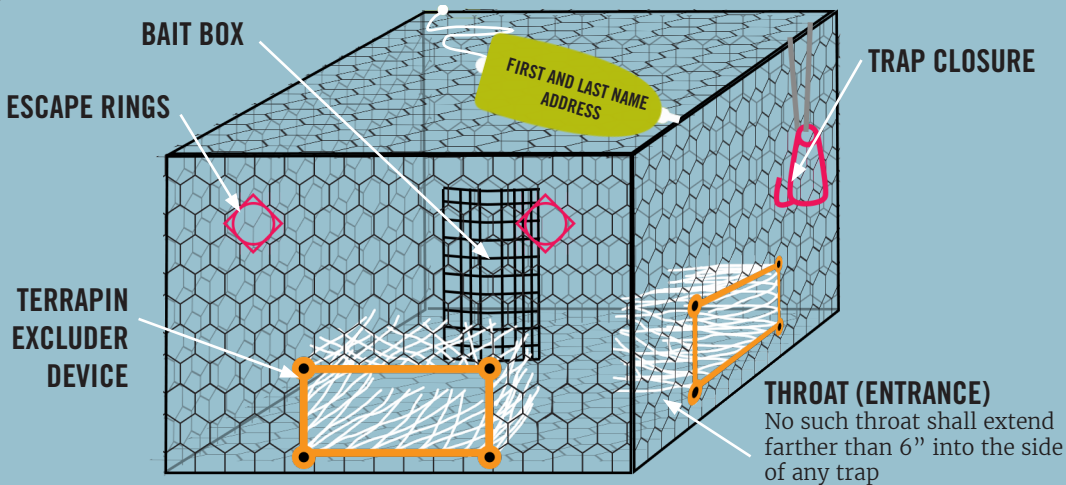
A fishing license and **Saltwater Information Program (SIP) permit** is required for those 16 years of age and older.

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

Georgia residents and their immediate family living on private docks **don't need a license** to use a crab trap on their property.

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. Although not legally required, 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.