

GEORGIA

1994-95 FRESHWATER AND SALTWATER SPORT FISHING REGULATIONS

License Year: April, 1, 1994 - March 31, 1995

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INTRODUCTION

This publication is to serve as a popular guide to Georgia sport fishing laws and regulations. The Game and Fish Code and Department of Natural Resources regulations are the final authority on questions of law. Please contact the Department if you have a legal question not adequately addressed in this publication. Check the "Guide to the Laws and Regulations on Commercial Freshwater Fishing" for information about commercial fishing.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICES

Headquarters	404/975-4230
Boating Safety	404/918-6408
Albany	912/430-4252
Brunswick	912/264-7237
Calhoun	706/629-8674
Demeris Crk	912/727-2111
Gainesville	404/535-5499
Macon	912/751-6415
Manchester	706/846-8448
Metter	912/685-2145
Social Circle	404/918-6414
Thomson	706/595-4211
Waycross	912/285-6093

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OFFICES

Headquarters	404/918-6400
Albany	912/430-4256
Calhoun	706/629-1259
Fort Valley	912/825-7841
Gainesville	404/535-5498
Savannah	912/727-2112
Social Circle	404/918-6418
Waycross	912/285-6094

MARINE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Brunswick	912/264-7218
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Georgia Recreational Saltwater Fishing

Definitions

"Cast Net" - a net which can be thrown or cast to drop over an area

"Gig" - any hand held shaft with single or multiple points, barbed or barbless

"Seine" - a section of non-metallic mesh webbing. The top edge buoyed upwards by a floatline and the bottom edge weighted.

Boating Safety Zones

Boating safety zones have been established off Jekyll Island, Tybee Island, St. Simons Island, and Sea Island. These zones consist of waters from the northernmost point to the southernmost point of each of these islands from the highwater mark to a distance of 1,000 feet seaward.

Power boats, personal water craft and other motorized craft are prohibited in these zones.

Landing Requirements

All species of saltwater finfish under state or federal regulation must be landed with head and fins intact. Fishermen fishing in state or federal waters must also make catches available for inspection by government officials.

Transfer Prohibition

Saltwater finfish subject to size and bag limits cannot be transferred to another person or vessel on the water.

Gigging

Only flounder may be taken with a gig in the salt waters of Georgia.

Offshore Artificial Reefs

Georgia has 8 artificial reefs located from 6 to 23 nautical miles offshore, most of which are designated Special Management Zones by the federal government. Within these zones, only hand-held hook-and-line gear and spearfishing gear may be used. Powerheads may not be used at Reef "T."

Many of the offshore artificial reefs are marked by yellow buoys. Any vessel tying to or damaging these buoys is subject to penalties.

Shrimp Baiting

It is unlawful to place, deposit, distribute, or scatter any bait of any kind in, on, or over any waters so as to lure, attract, or entice shrimp toward the bait or to cause shrimp to congregate in the area where bait is placed.

It is illegal to knowingly fish for shrimp in baited waters.

Wanton Waste

Sort or cull your catch on the water. Return undersized or unwanted wildlife to the water alive. When you throw away wildlife you are not only wasting valuable resources, you are also breaking the law.

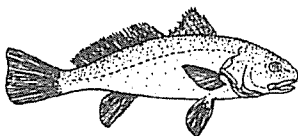
SALTWATER FISHING INFORMATION AVAILABLE

The Coastal Resources Division has a variety of publications available free of charge:

- *Boating, Fishing, and Diving: Sportmanship Guidelines*
- *Georgia's Non-Boating Saltwater Fishing Guide*
- *Cast Netting and Beach Seining*
- *Georgia's Red Drum*
- *Georgia's Offshore Fishing Guide*
- *How to Catch, Cook, and Clean a Blue Crab*
- *Spotted Seatrout: A Coastal Georgia Favorite*

Copies of these publications are available from:

Coastal Resources Division • Marine Fisheries Section
1 Conservation Way
Brunswick, Georgia 31523
(912) 264-7218

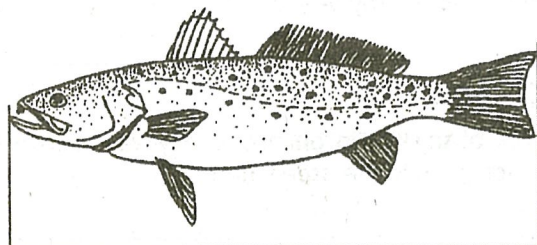


Finfish

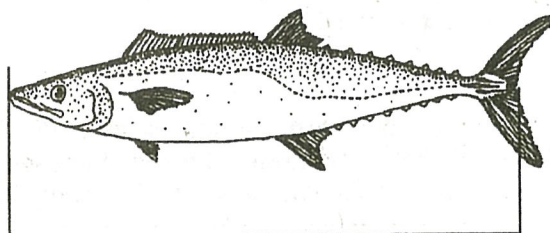
<u>Species</u>	<u>Open Season</u>	<u>Daily Creel Limit</u>	<u>Possession Limit</u>	<u>Minimum Size (in.)</u>
Blue marlin*	All year	1	1	86 FL
White marlin*	All year	1	1	62 FL
Sailfish*	All year	1	1	57 FL
Tarpon*	3/16-11/30	1	1	40 FL
Amberjack	3/16-12/31	3	3	28 FL
Cobia	3/16-11/30	2	2	33 FL
Dolphin	All year	15	15	18 FL
King mackerel	All year	5	5	20 FL
Spanish mackerel	3/16-11/30	10	10	12 FL
Sheepshead	All year	25	25	8 FL
Atlantic sturgeon	2/15-4/15	5	5	75 FL
Bluefish	3/16-11/30	15	15	12 FL
Black sea bass	All year	No limit	No limit	8 TL
Gag grouper	All year	5	5	20 TL
Red drum	All year	5	5	14 TL
(None greater than 27 inches)				
Red snapper	All year	2	2	20 TL
Spotted seatrout	All year	25	25	12 TL

NOTE: An asterisk denotes gamefish or no sale status. The letters FL denote fork length and TL denotes total length. For billfishes, length is from the tip of the lower jaw to fork of tail.

Measuring Saltwater Finfish



Total Length



Fork Length

With the increasing popularity of saltwater angling, length, creel, and seasonal limits are being used to manage finfish in state and Federal waters. However, many fishermen, particularly novices, find these regulations somewhat confusing. For instance, in freshwater, anglers measure most fish using a total length technique. However, in saltwater, fish are measured using a variety of techniques.

A spotted seatrout, which has a soft tail, is measured using the same technique you would use to measure a largemouth bass. A king mackerel, which has a deeply forked and rigid

tail, is measured using a fork length technique. A billfish, such as a sailfish, is measured using the fork length technique; however, the measurement is taken from the tip of the lower jaw to the fork of the tail.

In many cases finfish which have a rigid forked tail will suffer damage to their tails during transportation from offshore fishing grounds. Consequently, if all saltwater finfish were covered by total length measurements, the angler might find themselves in a situation where the fish they caught was legal, but when that same fish is measured at the dock it would not be legal.

Therefore fishery managers have formulated the length regulations based on specific characteristics of the different finfish.

FEDERAL SALTWATER FISHING REGULATIONS

Brochures containing recreational fishing regulations for South Atlantic federal waters (3-200 miles offshore) are available from the SAFMC, One Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407-4699.

Sport Bait Shrimping

License

A sport bait shrimping license is required when using a power-drawn net for the purpose of taking shrimp to be used as live bait in this state.

The cost of this license for a resident is \$5 and for a non-resident \$75.

When two or more persons are sport bait shrimping on a boat, only one person on board the boat is required to have a sport bait shrimping license.

It is unlawful for any person to sell or otherwise dispose of, for human consumption, any shrimp taken under a sport bait shrimping license. It is also unlawful for any person to possess such shrimp for the purpose of sale or other distribution for human consumption, or to personally consume such shrimp.

Each person taking bait shrimp with power-drawn nets is required to display an identification board with a background color of day-light fluores-

cent orange positioned on the bow or cabin of the boat. Identification numbers will be assigned by DNR and must be spaced so as to be readable from the air from right to left.

Areas and Seasons

A sport bait shrimper may take shrimp only in those rivers and creeks or portions thereof which have been specifically opened to bait shrimping by DNR. Rivers and creeks may only be opened or closed by DNR based on criteria set forth in law.

There is no specific season for sport bait shrimping. Notice of opening or closing of rivers and creeks is given by DNR. Maps of approved areas are available from Coastal Resources Division, 1 Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31523.

Sport bait shrimping is legal only between the hours of one-half hour before official sunrise and one-half hour after official sunset.

Catch Limits

A sport bait shrimper may not possess at any time more than 2 quarts of shrimp, no more than 1/2 pint of which may be dead, and may not take more than 4 quarts of shrimp within a 24-hour period.

When two or more persons occupy the same boat, there may be no more than 4 quarts of shrimp on board the boat at any time, no more than 1 pint of which may be dead, and no more than 8 quarts of shrimp may be taken in a 24-hour period.

Method of Gathering

Recreational fishermen may take shrimp for live bait with a power-drawn net 10 feet or smaller. Information on the specific dimensions of this net is available from the Commercial Fisheries Program, 1 Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31523

Seines and Cast Nets

License

No license is required to use a beach seine or cast net in saltwaters of this state for noncommercial purposes.

Size, Season and Area

There are no size, season or area restrictions for recreational use of cast nets in saltwaters of this state.

Seines equal to or smaller than 12

feet in length, with a maximum depth of 4 feet, and maximum stretch mesh of 1 inch, may be used at any time in salt waters.

The use of seines over 12 feet in any inlets or tidal sloughs is prohibited

Seines up to 100 feet in length, with a minimum stretch mesh size of 1 1/4 inches may be used on any sand beaches on any barrier island of this state.

Seines from 100 to 300 feet in

length, with a minimum stretch mesh size of 2 1/2 inches may be used on the ocean sides of beaches.

Seines over 300 feet in length are prohibited.

It is unlawful to use any seine in salt waters such that it blocks more than one-half of the entrance of a tidal river, creek, slough, or inlet to the ocean.

It is unlawful to use a beach seine as a gill net.

Crabs

License

No license is required to recreationally harvest crabs in the salt waters of this state.

Season and Area

Any or all of the salt waters may be open for the taking of crabs by trawl from January 1 to December 31 at the discretion of the Commissioner.

Size and Catch Limits

It is unlawful to take or possess any crab (other than a peeler or a mature

adult female crab) less than five (5") inches from spike to spike across the back. Peelers must measure at least three (3") inches from spike to spike across the back.

It is unlawful for any person, other than a licensed commercial saltwater fisherman, to take or possess more than one bushel of crabs during any 24-hour period.

Method of Gathering

Persons deploying commercial

traps from boats and public structures are required to have a commercial license.

No permit is required for the use of noncommercial crab traps, lines, or baskets. Individuals may use one trap which is 2' X 2' or smaller which is securely affixed to a privately-owned dock (with the dock owners permission) without a commercial license. Crabs caught in this trap cannot be sold.

Shellfish

License

No license is required to recreationally harvest oysters and clams in the saltwaters of this state.

Seasons and Areas

Any or all of the salt waters may be opened for the taking of shellfish or clams between January 1 and December 31 at the discretion of the Commissioner.

It shall be unlawful to recreationally harvest shellfish except in areas designated by the Commissioner. Private property owners wishing to harvest shellfish or grant permission for others to harvest shellfish should contact the Department of Natural Resources. Proof of ownership or permission must be in possession of harvesters taking shellfish from private property.

It is unlawful to take shellfish except between the hours of one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset.

No permit is required for recreational collection at DNR public picking harvest areas, with the exception of the Oyster Creek recreational harvest area (Chatham county). This area requires a daily permit which is available free from the National Park Service at Fort Pulaski National Monument.

Most DNR public harvest areas are posted with blue signs indicating the area is approved for the harvest of shellfish. The public is encouraged to look for the blue signs to insure the area is designated for public recreational harvest and the shellfish are clean and safe to consume.

Size and Catch Limits

An oyster which measures less than 3 inches from hinge to mouth may not be taken, unless it is attached to an oyster 3 inches or larger and cannot be removed from the larger oyster without destroying it. It is illegal to take or possess any clam which measures less than one inch thickness (maximum depth from one shell half to the other).

An individual may take two bushels or less of oysters or one bushel of clams per day with an maximum of six bushels of oysters or one bushel of clams per boat per day.

Method of Gathering

Oysters and clams may be taken for noncommercial purposes with handheld implements only.

Saltwater Demarcation Line

The line established in this state as the separation point between salt and fresh waters for fishing licenses, commercial fishing, and sport fishing is as follows:

a) The point at which US 17 crosses the following bodies of water and their tributaries shall be the line of demarcation for them: St. Marys River, Satilla River, South Altamaha River, Champney River, Butler River, Darien River, Little Ogeechee System (ex-

cept Salt Creek), North Newport River, Medway River, Big Ogeechee River and Savannah River. All water seaward of these points is considered salt water.

b) The following streams and their tributaries are designated as salt water for their entire length: Crooked River, Little Satilla River, South Brunswick River, Turtle River, Sapelo River, South Newport River, Salt Creek (Little Ogeechee System), and all oth-

er rivers, streams, and tributaries in the six coastal counties which are not enumerated above.

NOTE: Fresh water ponds on the seaward side of the demarcation line are not considered salt waters. The lines demarcating legal waters for crabbing, commercial eel fishing, and commercial catfishing vary from the saltwater demarcation line. Legal waters for these activities are outlined in the Saltwater Commercial Fishing Guide.



Kids and fishing just naturally go together! Many children today have not learned how to fish. Sponsoring a fishing event is a great way to introduce children to the wholesome sport of fishing.

Kids fishing event sponsors are needed throughout Georgia. Give the children in your community a gift that will last a lifetime! To find out how you or your organization can sponsor a Kids Fishing Event, call the nearest Fisheries Office.