

2010 CHANGES

LICENSING CHANGES

- Effective July 1, 2009 Georgia anglers are now offered a variety of fishing licenses or combinations. Non-resident anglers prices and options have changed. Please see page 13 for the full list of options.
- Georgia anglers and hunters who have lost their GA recreational hunting/fishing license can reprint them at no cost at www.gofishgeorgia.com. Georgia anglers and boaters are able to take advantage of improved license and boat registration services online at this address, by phone, and participating license dealers.

SALTWATER REGULATION CHANGES

At the time of printing, legislative and/or regulations changes were pending that may affect some species and licensing issues.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Enjoy your Georgia fishing trip, but be sure that you know the freshwater and saltwater rules before you go. Regulations may vary on different bodies of water so be sure to consult the necessary pages. To use this guide follow these steps:

1. Be familiar with fishing **license requirements** and know who needs a license. See page 12 for freshwater and saltwater license requirements.
2. Know the **daily limits** and **seasons** on page 14 (freshwater) and page 40 (saltwater) and note any exceptions. See freshwater fish length limits on page 15 and legal freshwater fishing methods on pages 16–17.
3. Are you **trout fishing** or fishing on **Public Fishing Areas**? See pages 22–25 (trout) and pages 18–19 (PFAs).
4. Are you from **out of state** or **fishing border waters**? See **Agreements with Bordering States** on pages 20–21. Be aware that each states rules and laws may differ so know license requirements and possession limits.

It is your responsibility to know what regulations apply where you are fishing.

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430 Main Street, Suite 5
Williamstown, MA 01267
www.JFGriffin.com
413.884.1001

Senior Designer: Erin Murphy

Associate Designer: Evelyn Haddad

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Please call us to inquire about advertising in this publication.

Definitions

ARTIFICIAL LURE

Any lure which is made completely of natural or colored wood, cork, feathers, hair, rubber, metal, plastic, tinsel, styrofoam, sponge, or string, or any combination of such materials, in imitation of or as a substitute for natural bait. This does not include any item sprayed with or containing scented or chemical attractants.

DAILY LIMIT

The number of fish that may be taken, caught, or killed during any one day.

FISHING

Catching, capturing, taking, or killing fish, mussels and all seafood and includes all lesser acts such as attempting to catch, capture, or kill by any device or method and directly assisting any person in catching or attempting to catch fish or seafood.

GAME FISH

Fish that are listed under Daily Limits (see page 14).

IMMEDIATE FAMILY

All persons living in one household under one head of household and bearing a blood or dependent relationship to the head of household.

NON-GAME FISH

Any fish not designated as game fish under Daily Limits (see page 14).

PUBLIC FISHING AREA

Designated areas owned and/or operated by the Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division, Fisheries Section for the primary purpose of fishing and are open to the public. These are listed on pages 18–19.

RESIDENT

Any citizen of the United States who has maintained a legal residence in Georgia for a period of at least three months prior to purchasing a fishing license.



System Available NOW!

Hunting and Fishing Licenses:

*Online: gofishgeorgia.com

*Phone: 1-800-366-2661

*Participating License Vendors

Boat Registrations:

*Online: goboatgeorgia.com

*Phone: 1-800-366-2661

*Mail-in: Print application from website (goboatgeorgia.com)

GEORGIA RECREATIONAL SALTWATER FISHING

Fishing Licenses: See page 12 for information on license requirements.

- Licenses are required for hook and line fishing, castnetting, seining, crabbing, gigging, sport bait trawling, and harvesting shellfish.
- A Georgia Fishing license is required for anglers returning to Georgia ports or transiting Georgia waters with recreational catches from federal waters beyond the state's 3-mile territorial sea.
- Reciprocal agreements with Alabama, South Carolina, and Florida currently do not apply to saltwaters.

- Georgia saltwater fishing guides have the option of purchasing a blanket fishing license to cover their customers. Anglers booking a trip with a Georgia saltwater fishing guide should inquire if they will need a Georgia fishing license or whether they will be covered by the guide's license. Persons interested in purchasing a Saltwater Guides License should call the DNR Coastal Regional License Office at 912-264-7237.

SALTWATER FISHING INFORMATION

GEORGIA SALTWATER FISHING REGULATIONS

For information and updates on licenses, regulations, and fishing in Georgia's inshore and offshore saltwaters contact:

Georgia DNR Coastal Law Enforcement

One Conservation Way, Suite 201
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687
912-264-7237 or fax 912-262-3166

Coastal Resources Division

Marine Fisheries Section
One Conservation Way, Suite 300
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687
912-264-7218 or fax 912-262-2318
www.CoastalGADNR.org

FEDERAL SALTWATER FISHING REGULATIONS

For information and updates on recreational fishing regulations in federal waters (3–200 miles offshore), contact:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

4055 Faber Place Dr., Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
843-571-4366 or 866-SAFMC-10
www.safmc.net

For information and updates on federal regulations and required permitting for tunas, billfish, and sharks, contact:

National Marine Fisheries Service

HMS Management Division
1315 East-West Hwy
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-713-2347
www.nmfspermits.com

For information on the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary contact:

Gray's Reef Sanctuary Program

10 Ocean Science Circle
Savannah, GA 31411
912-598-2345
www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov

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, but you are also breaking the law!

ARTIFICIAL REEFS

Georgia maintains 15 inshore and 22 offshore artificial reefs located from inside the estuary to 80 miles offshore. Most are designated as Special Management Zones (SMZ) by the Federal Government. Within SMZs, only handheld hook-and-line and spear fishing gear may be used. For more information, coordinates and updates go to www.CoastalGADNR.org.

BOATING SAFETY ZONES

Boating safety zones have been established off Jekyll, Tybee, St. Simons, and Sea islands. These zones extend from the northernmost point to the southernmost point of each of these islands and from the highwater mark to a distance 1,000 feet seaward. From May 1 through September 30, power boats, jet skis, and other motorized craft are prohibited in these zones.

SALTWATER FINFISH

LANDING REQUIREMENTS/TRANSFER PROHIBITION

All saltwater finfish (including sharks) under state or federal regulation must be landed with head and fins intact. Anglers must make catches available for inspection by government officials. Saltwater finfish subject to size and bag limits cannot be transferred to another person or vessel on the water. Commercial licenses are required to sell recreationally caught finfish.

GEAR

A seine may not be used as a gill net (a net constructed of single webbing attached to a float line and lead line and fished in a stationary manner to ensnare or entangle fish in the meshes). Only flounder may be taken with a gig (any handheld shaft with single or multiple points, barbed or barbless). **All seasons, hours, creel limits, minimum size limits, and other regulations applicable to saltwater finfish apply regardless of the gear used.**

Sharks: (Change pending in 2010)

Recreational harvest of sharks is limited to hook and line gear only.

RELATED DEFINITIONS

Minimum Size: the specific size in length below which it is unlawful to take that finfish species.

Open Season: that specified period of time during which one may take certain finfish species from any waters of the state.

Daily Creel Limit: the lawful amount of a species of finfish that a person may take in one day.

Possession Limit: the lawful amount of a species of finfish that a person can legally have at any one time.

SALTWATER DEMARCATION LINE

This line is established in this state as the separation point between saltwaters and freshwaters for commercial fishing and sport fishing. The saltwater demarcation line is defined below:

- The point at which U.S. Highway 17 crosses the following bodies of water and their tributaries shall be the line of demarcation for them: St. Mary's River, Satilla River, South Altamaha River, Champney River, Butler River, Darien River, Little Ogeechee System (except Salt Creek), North Newport River, Medway River, Big Ogeechee River, and the point at which Georgia Highway 25/South Carolina 170 crosses the Savannah River and its tributaries. All water seaward of these points shall be considered saltwater.
- 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 other rivers, streams, and tributaries in the six coastal counties which are not enumerated in this subsection.
- For purposes of crabbing, that portion of the St. Mary's River and the Satilla River System (including the Satilla River and White Oak Creek) which is seaward of the points at which the Seaboard Coastline Railroad crosses such streams and that portion of the Altamaha River System which is seaward of the points at which U.S. Highway I-95 crosses the streams of that system shall be considered salt water. It shall be unlawful to place any crab trap in the waters of this state other than that described as salt water in Code Section 27-4-1 or by this subsection.

SALTWATER FINFISH: SEASONS, LIMITS, SIZES

All limits per person unless specified. **FL** = fork length, **TL** = total length (see page 15)

SPECIES	OPEN SEASON	DAILY LIMIT and POSSESSION LIMIT	MINIMUM SIZE (inches)
Amberjack (no sale 4/1–4/30) ³	3/16–12/31	1	28 FL
Atlantic croaker	All year	25	8 TL
Atlantic sturgeon	No Harvest		
Billfish (Blue marlin, White marlin, Sailfish) ³	Catch and Release Only		
Black drum	All year	15	10 TL
Black sea bass ³	All year	15	12 TL
Bluefish	3/16–11/30	15	12 FL
Cobia ³	3/16–11/30	2	33 FL
Dolphin ³	All year	10 (Not to exceed 60 per boat, except for headboats which are allowed 10 per paying customer.	20 FL
Flounder	All year	15	12 TL
Gag grouper (no sale 3/1–4/30) ³	All year	2	24 TL
King mackerel ³	All year	3	24 FL
Red drum (Channel bass, Spottail bass, Redfish)	All year	5	14 TL (23 TL maximum)
Red porgy (no sale 1/1–4/30) ³	All year	3	14 TL
Red snapper ³	All year	2	20 TL
Sharks (all sharks other than the SSC and Prohibited Sharks) ^{2, 3}	All Year	1 per angler or boat, whichever is less	54 FL
Small shark composite (SSC) ^{2, 3} (Atlantic sharpnose, Bonnethead, Spiny dogfish)	All Year	1	30 FL
Prohibited Sharks (NO HARVEST)	Sand tiger, Sandbar, Silky, Bigeye sand tiger, Whale, Basking, White, Dusky, Bignose, Galapagos, Night, Reef, Narrowtooth, Caribbean sharpnose, Smalltail, Atlantic angel, Longfin mako, Bigeye thresher, Sharpnose sevengill, Bluntnose sixgill, and Bigeye sixgill		
Sheepshead ³	All year	15	10 FL
Spanish mackerel ³	3/16–11/30	15	12 FL
Spot	All year	25	8 TL
Spotted seatrout	All year	15	13 TL
Striped bass (see Savannah River information on page 14)	All year	2	22 TL
Tarpon (no sale)	3/16–11/30	1	68 FL
Tripletail	All year	2	18 TL
Weakfish ¹	All year	6'	13 TL
Whiting	All year	No Creel or Possession Limit	10 TL

Proposed changes for 2010:

¹ Weakfish Daily Limit reduced to 1

² SSC and Sharks recreational harvest by hook and line gear only

³ These species are also federally managed from 3 to 200 miles offshore. Go to www.safmc.net for federal regulations.

Sea Turtles and Marine Mammals

It is unlawful to harm, harass, or disturb any sea turtle adult, hatchling, eggs, nest, carcass, or skeletal remains under both State and Federal law. It is also unlawful to offer for sale, sell, or possess any sea turtle, or sea turtle parts. If any accidental capture occurs, release immediately either by direct release or by cutting any hook and line as close to the turtle as possible. Report any dead or injured sea turtles to the Georgia DNR Nongame Conservation Section, Endangered Wildlife Program 1-800-2-SAVE-ME.

It is unlawful for any person to display, feed, net, trap, harpoon, molest or otherwise interfere with the well-being or normal activity of marine mammals including bottle-nose and spotted dolphin, manatee, and any species of whale. Report sightings of dead or injured marine mammals to 1-800-2-SAVE-ME.



A Georgia Fishing license is required to recreationally fish for any seafood, whether for personal consumption or bait. **The sale of recreationally harvested seafood or bait is prohibited.**

SHRIMP

“BAITING” SHRIMP

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.

FOOD SHRIMPING SEASON

The season for the recreational harvest of food shrimp is the same as that established for commercial shrimping. The Commissioner of DNR may open the season from May 15 through the end of February; however, it is generally opened mid-June through mid-January. The opening and closing of the food shrimping season is announced via coastal media outlets, posted at marinas, and at www.CoastalGADNR.org (click on Coastal Resources.)

SPORT BAIT SHRIMPING WITH POWER-DRAWN NETS

Gear: Power-drawn nets 10 feet or smaller may be used in saltwaters to harvest shrimp for bait. Information on the specific net dimensions is available from DNR offices in Brunswick and Demeris Creek (Richmond Hill).

Bait Zones: A 10-foot sport bait trawl may be used to take shrimp only in rivers and creeks or portions thereof that have been opened to bait shrimping by DNR. Charts of established “Bait Zones” are also available at DNR offices in Brunswick and Demeris Creek.

Seasons and Hours: Unless otherwise designated, bait zones are open year-round for sport bait shrimping. Sport bait shrimping is legal only between the hours of ½ hour before official sunrise to ½ hour after official sunset.

Harvest Limit: A sport bait shrimper may not possess at any time more than two (2) quarts of shrimp, no more than ½ pint of which may be dead, and may not take more than four (4) quarts of shrimp within a 24-hour period. When two or more persons occupy the same boat, there may be no more than four (4) quarts of shrimp on board the boat at any time; no more than one pint of which may be dead, and no more than eight (8) quarts of shrimp may be taken within a 24-hour period.

SEINING FOR SHRIMP

Gear and Areas: Seines equal to or smaller than 12 feet long, with a maximum depth

of four feet, and a maximum stretch mesh of one (1) inch may be used throughout the year and throughout Georgia's saltwaters. Seines up to 100 feet long and with a minimum stretch mesh of 1¼ inch may be used on sand beaches of any barrier island in Georgia. Seines from 100 to 300 feet long and with a minimum mesh size of 2½ inches may be used only on the oceanfront sides of beaches. The use of seines over 12 feet long in any inlet or tidal slough is prohibited. Seines over 300 feet long are also prohibited. It is unlawful to use any seine in saltwaters such that it blocks more than ½ of the entrance of any tidal river, creek, slough, or inlet to the ocean.

Hours: During the open season, seines may be used at any time of day.

Harvest Limits: No one person taking shrimp solely by means of a seine, whether such person is acting alone or in a group of persons, may possess more than 24 quarts of shrimp with heads on or 15 quarts of tails taken by such seine in any 24-hour period. If any person or group of persons occupying the same boat is in possession of a cast net and a seine, such person or persons shall be subject to the limits imposed for shrimp taken by cast net.

CAST NETTING FOR SHRIMP

It is unlawful for any person to sell or otherwise dispose of, for human consumption, any shrimp taken as bait.

Gear: Georgia law defines a cast net as a cone shaped net with a weighted circumference thrown and retrieved by hand without mechanical assistance. Two types of cast nets are further defined: a “Bait shrimp cast net” having a minimum bar mesh of ¾ inch and a “Food shrimp cast net” having a minimum bar mesh of 5/8 inch. Bait shrimp cast nets cannot be used to take shrimp for personal consumption; however, food shrimp cast nets may be used to take bait. **There are no restrictions on the length of a bait or food shrimp cast net. Bait and food shrimp cast nets can be modified with the addition of duct tape or other materials to enhance performance.**

FOOD SHRIMP

Hours and Areas: During the open season, cast netting for personal consumption may be conducted at any time of day in all the state's saltwaters.

Harvest Limits: No person taking shrimp for personal consumption with a cast net may possess more than 48 quarts of heads-on shrimp or 30 quarts of shrimp tails in any day. When one or more persons occupy the same boat, there may be no more than 48 quarts of heads-on shrimp or 30 quarts of shrimp tails on board at any time. No vessel owner shall allow the vessel to be used to take more than the allowable catch limits in any day.

BAIT SHRIMP

Season, Hours and Areas: There is no closed season for cast netting for bait. Cast netting for bait may be conducted at any time of day in all of Georgia's saltwaters.

Harvest Limits: Recreational cast netters collecting bait shrimp are limited to two quarts per person at any time, provided that person may take a maximum of four quarts of bait shrimp per day. When two or more persons occupy the same boat, there may be no more than four quarts of bait on board the boat at any time, and the persons occupying the boat may take no more than eight quarts of bait shrimp per day. Bait shrimp taken with a cast net may be live or dead.

CRABS

AREAS, SEASONS, HOURS

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

GEAR

Traps: Up to six standard size crab traps (2 x 2 feet or smaller) may be used recreationally. Two unobstructed escapement rings (2 3/8 inch inside diameter) must be installed on an outside vertical wall. Each trap must be marked with a fluorescent green or lime green float bearing the owner's name and address in one-inch letters. Traps should be sufficiently weighted to prevent loss in strong tidal currents. It is unlawful to place or set crab traps in the channel of any stream with a lawfully established system of waterway markers. Disposal of crab traps in public waters is a violation of State and Federal laws.

Other Gear: Subject to other restrictions outlined in these regulations, legal crabs may be taken with other legal fishing gear such as seines, cast nets, hand-lines, and lift rings.

SIZE AND HARVEST LIMITS

It is unlawful to take or possess any crab less than 5 inches from spike to spike across the back (other than a “peeler” or a “mature adult female” crab). Peelers must measure at least 3 inches from spike to spike across the back. **No sponge (egg-bearing) crabs are allowed.** 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 aboard.

Terrapins in Crab Traps: Recent studies have investigated the effectiveness of excluder devices for preventing the capture of diamond-back terrapins in commercial-style crab traps. Terrapins that enter crab traps cannot escape and often drown. Experimental excluder devices are available for any recreational crabber interested in installing them in their traps. Go to www.gadnr.org and click on Coastal Resources to find out where to pick them up.

SHELLFISH

SEASON AND HOURS

Saltwaters may be opened for taking shellfish between January 1 and December 31. Prior to harvesting any shellfish, check with the DNR-Coastal Resources Division (www.CoastalGADNR.org) for any seasonal closures that may be in effect during the calendar year. Shellfish must be harvested between the hours of ½ hour before official sunrise and ½ hour after official sunset.

GEAR

Shellfish may only be taken with handheld implements.

AREAS

Updated charts of approved public picking areas for shellfish should be obtained from Coastal Resources Division's Ecological Services Section or at www.CoastalGADNR.org (click on [Coastal Resources](#)). It is illegal to recreationally harvest shellfish except in designated public picking areas, unless authorized in writing by a private property owner with legal harvest rights to an area. Private property owners wishing to harvest recreational quantities of shellfish or to issue permission to others must notify and provide DNR with specific information. It is unlawful to give permission to take shellfish from a closed area. Harvesters taking shellfish from private property must have on their person proof of ownership or permission.

SIZE AND HARVEST LIMITS

Oysters must measure no less than three inches from hinge to mouth, unless the oyster cannot be removed from a legal-sized

oyster without destroying it. For clams, the maximum depth from one shell half to the other must be at least ¾ inch thick. Recreational quantity limits are up to two bushels of oysters and one bushel of clams per person per day, with a maximum limit of six bushels of oysters and one bushel of clams per boat per day.

BAIT MINNOWS

SEASON, HOURS AND AREAS

Bait minnows may be harvested year-round. **Bait minnows may not be trapped in freshwater.**

GEAR

No more than two traps may be used recreationally, except that a licensed saltwater fishing guide may use a maximum of four traps. Maximum dimensions for rectangular traps may not exceed 24" x 8" x 9". Cylindrical traps may not exceed 24" in length and 30" in circumference. Recreational bait minnow traps shall have a mesh size of no smaller than ¼ inch bar mesh. The throat opening of the funnel shall not exceed ¾ inch in diameter. Each trap must have attached a tag or float bearing the name and address of the person using the trap. Subject to specific gear design criteria, sizes, time of day, and area restrictions outlined in these regulations, bait minnows may also be taken recreationally year-round in seines and cast nets.

POSSESSION LIMITS

No individual recreationally harvesting bait minnows may possess more than two quarts of bait minnows at any given time. A licensed saltwater fishing guide may possess not more than 10 quarts at any given time.

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