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1999-2000 FRESHWATER AND SALTWATER SPORT FISHING REGULATIONS

Roy Barnes, Governor • Lonice C. Barrett, Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources
 David Waller, Director - Wildlife Resources Division • Duane Harris, Director - Coastal Resources Division

INTRODUCTION

The Wildlife Resources Division designed this guide to help you quickly find and understand regulations for fishing in Georgia. Fishing regulations are set by the Board of Natural Resources acting on the recommendations of DNR's fishery biologists and other field personnel. Laws are set by the General Assembly. The Game and Fish Code and Department of Natural Resources rules are the final authority on questions of law. Recent law changes are in light blue.

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FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OFFICES, PUBLIC FISHING AREAS & HATCHERIES

See page 16 for telephone numbers.

MARINE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Brunswick 912/264-7218

COVER PHOTO - PASS ON THE TRADITION! Todd Holbrook, and daughter Sara, share a memorable day of fishing together.
Photo courtesy of Les Ager.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICES

Boating Safety	770/918-6408
Albany	912/430-4252
Brunswick	912/264-7237
Calhoun	770/769-9680
Calhoun	706/624-1367
Gainesville	770/535-5499
Macon	912/751-6415
Manchester	706/846-8448
Manchester(Columbus) ...	706/649-7438
Metter	912/685-2145
Social Circle	770/918-6414
Social Circle	706/557-3034
Thomson	706/595-4211
Thomson (Augusta) ..	706/737-1480

1999-2000 RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENSE FEES

License Year: April 1, 1999 - March 31, 2000

RESIDENT LICENSES:

Sportsman's	\$60.00
Fishing	9.00
One-Day Fishing	3.50
Trout	5.00
Combination Hunting and Fishing	17.00
Wildlife Management Area ..	19.00

NONRESIDENT LICENSES:

Season Fishing	\$24.00
One-Day Fishing	3.50
7-Day Fishing	7.00
Trout	13.00
Wildlife Management Area ..	73.00

LIFETIME LICENSE

Lifetime licenses are new and available for sportsmen and women of all ages! Infant (under 2 yrs) \$200; Youth (2-15 yrs) \$350; Adult (16-65 yrs) \$500; Senior (65+) no charge. Call the Wildlife Resources Division for more details.

Georgia Recreational Saltwater Fishing

Fishing License

Resident and non-resident anglers (age 16 & older) who fish in fresh or saltwaters of Georgia must possess a Georgia Fishing license. This license is required for hook & line fishing, cast-netting, seining, crabbing, gigging, sportbait 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. Charter captains may or may not choose to purchase an annual license that covers all of their clients. For this reason, anglers booking a charter should inquire whether they will need a Georgia Fishing license or if they will be covered under the charter fishing license. See page 5 for information on license requirements.

Saltwater Fishing Information

Information and updates on licenses, regulations, and fishing in Georgia's inshore and offshore saltwaters may be obtained by contacting:

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.ganet.org/dnr/crd

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

One Southpark Circle, Suite 306,
Charleston, SC 29407
(843) 769-4520

www.safmc.nmfs.gov

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

1999-2000 Sport Fishing Regulations

National Marine Fisheries Service HMS Management Division

1315 East-West Hwy
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 713-2347
www.nmfs.gov

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.skio.peachnet.edu/noaa/grnms

Offshore Artificial Reefs

Georgia has 19 artificial reefs located from 6-80 miles offshore. Many are designated as Special Management Zones (SMZ) by the federal government. Within these zones, only handheld hook-and-line and spearfishing gear may be used. For further information, coordinates, and updates on Georgia's offshore artificial reefs, contact the Coastal Resources Division.

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.

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!

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SALTWATER FINFISH

Landing Requirements/Transfer Prohibition

All saltwater finfish 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). A modified castnet or castnet with greater than 8 feet radius is allowed for taking fish for bait. 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.

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.

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Saltwater 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	90 LJFL
White marlin*	All year	1	1	66 LJFL
Sailfish*	All year	1	1	57 LJFL
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	3	3	20 FL
Spanish mackerel	3/16-11/30	10	10	12 FL
Sheepshead	All year	25	25	8 FL
Atlantic sturgeon	no harvest allowed	no harvest allowed		
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 longer than 27 in.)
Black drum	All year	15	15	10 TL
Weakfish	All year	6	6	13 TL
Flounder	All year	15	15	12 TL
Whiting	All year	35	35	10 TL
Spot	All year	25	25	8 TL
Atlantic croaker	All year	25	25	8 TL
Tripletail	All year	5	5	18 TL
Red snapper	All year	2	2	20 TL
Spotted seatrout	All year	15	15	13 TL
Striped bass ^a	All year	2	2	22 TL
Sand tiger shark	no harvest allowed	no harvest allowed		
Small shark composite**	All year	2	2	30 TL
Sharks***	All year	2****	2****	48 TL
				(limit may include only one longer than 84 in.)

* Gamefish or no sale status ** Consists of Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, & spiny dogfish

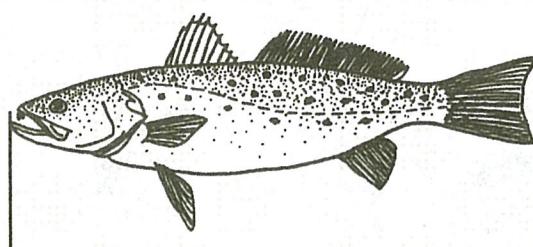
*** Consists of all sharks other than sand tiger shark & small shark composite

**** Two per person or boat, whichever is less

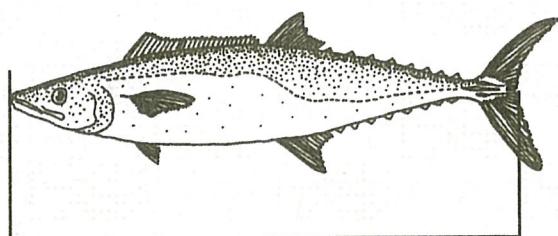
FL = fork length TL = total length. For billfishes, LJFL = from the tip of the lower jaw to fork of tail.

a = See Seasons Closure in Savannah River page 4.

Measuring Saltwater Finfish



Total Length



Fork Length

Minimum sizes for saltwater finfish are measured in three ways: Total Length (TL) is the overall length of the fish and is measured in the same

manner as a largemouth bass; Fork Length (FL) is used to measure fish with deeply forked tails and is the distance from the tip of the snout to the

fork of the tail; Lower-Jaw Fork Length (LJFL) applies to billfish, such as marlins, and is the distance from the tip of the lower jaw to the fork of the tail.

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.

Disposition and Sale of Shrimp

It is unlawful for any person to sell or otherwise dispose of, for human consumption, any shrimp taken as bait. Shrimp recreationally harvested for personal consumption may not be sold.

SPORT BAIT SHRIMPING with POWER-DRAWN NETS

A Georgia Fishing license is required for taking shrimp for live bait with power-drawn nets 10 feet or smaller. Information on the specific net dimensions is available from DNR offices in Brunswick and Demeris Creek.

Areas, Seasons, and Hours

A 10 foot sport bait trawl may be used to take shrimp only in rivers and creeks or portions thereof which have been opened to bait shrimping by DNR. Charts of established "Bait Zones" are available at DNR offices in Brunswick and Demeris Creek (Richmond Hill). Unless otherwise designated, bait zones are open year-round for sportbait shrimping. Sportbaitshrimping is legal only between the hours of 1/2 hour before official sunrise to 1/2 hour after official sunset.

Catch Limits - Sport Bait Trawls

A sport bait shrimper may not possess at any time more than two (2) quarts of shrimp, no more than 1/2 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 quarts of shrimp may be taken within a 24-hour period.

SEINES

A Georgia Fishing license is required to use a seine for non-commercial purposes in the state's saltwaters. The

shrimping season for seines is the same as that established for other food shrimping season. The Commissioner of DNR can open the food shrimping season from May 15 through the end of February. During the open season, seines may be used at any time of day in authorized areas.

Seine Sizes & Areas

Seines equal to or smaller than 12 feet long, with a maximum depth of four feet, and a maximum stretch mesh of 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 1 1/4 inches may be used on sand beaches of any barrier island in Georgia. Seines from 100-300 feet long and with a minimum mesh size of 2 1/2 inches may be used only on the ocean-front sides of beaches. The use of seines over 12 feet long in any inlets or tidal sloughs 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 1/2 of the entrance of any tidal river, creek, slough, or inlet to the ocean.

Seine Catch 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 are in possession of a castnet and a seine, such person or persons shall be subject to the limits imposed for shrimp taken by castnet.

CASTNETTING FOR FOOD SHRIMP

A Georgia Fishing license is required to use castnets non-commercially to take shrimp for personal consumption. The season for castnetting for food shrimp is the same as that established for other commercial shrimping seasons. The Commissioner of DNR can open the season from May 15 through the end of February. During the open season, castnetting for personal consumption may be conducted at any time of day in all the state's saltwaters.

Castnet Construction

Castnets used recreationally to take food shrimp are restricted to a maximum net size of eight feet in radius with a minimum 1/2 inch bar-mesh webbing and shall be constructed of uniform material from horn (thimble) to the lead line. All modifications, including duct tape, lawnchair webbing, and bubble wrap are prohibited. The lead line must have a minimum of 3/4 pound of weight per radius-foot attached.

Food Shrimp Catch Limits

No person taking shrimp for personal consumption with a castnet 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.

CASTNETTING FOR BAIT SHRIMP

A Georgia Fishing license is required to use castnets non-commercially to take shrimp for bait. There is no closed season for castnetting for bait. Castnetting for bait may be conducted at any time of day in all of Georgia's saltwaters.

Castnet Construction

Bait shrimp castnets must be constructed of a minimum of 3/8 inch mesh webbing with a radius not greater than eight feet. Modifications are prohibited in castnets intended for taking bait shrimp. Bait shrimp castnets cannot be used to take shrimp for personal consumption. Castnets constructed to take shrimp for personal consumption may be used to take bait. However, at no time shall there be both a bait shrimp castnet and a food shrimp castnet aboard the same vessel.

Bait Shrimp Castnet Limits

Recreational castnetters 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 castnet may be live or dead.

CRABS

A Georgia Fishing license is required to harvest crabs for non-commercial purposes. Unless otherwise designated, saltwaters are open year-round for recreational crabbing. Recreationally caught crabs may not be sold.

Gear

Up to six standard size crab traps (2X2 feet or smaller) may be used recreationally. Two unobstructed escape-mesh rings (2 3/8 inch inside diameter) must be installed on an outside vertical wall. Each trap must be marked with a float bearing the owner's name and address. 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.

Subject to specific gear design criteria, sizes, time-of-day, and area restrictions outlined in these regulations, legal crabs may be taken recreationally year-round in seines and castnets.

Crab Catch 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.

Other than licensed commercial crabbers, no person may take or possess 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.

SHELLFISH

A Georgia Fishing license is required to take shellfish (oysters, clams) for non-commercial purposes. Saltwaters may be opened for taking oysters or clams between January 1 and December 31. Shellfish must be harvested between the hours of 1/2 hour before official sunrise and 1/2 hour after official sunset. Shellfish may only be taken with handheld implements. Recreationally harvested shellfish may not be sold.

Areas

Updated charts of approved public picking areas for shellfish should be obtained from Coastal Resources Division's Ecological Services Section. 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.

Shellfish 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 one 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.

REPORTING VIOLATIONS

To report violations, contact DNR Law Enforcement offices in Brunswick (912) 264-7237 or call the **Toll-Free 24-hour Hot Line 800-241-4113**. To report violations in federal waters contact United States Coast Guard stations in Brunswick (912) 267-7999 and Tybee Island (912) 786-5440, NOAA's toll-free, 24-hour Fisheries Enforcement hotline 800-853-1964, or DNR LE 800-241-4113.

Sea Turtles

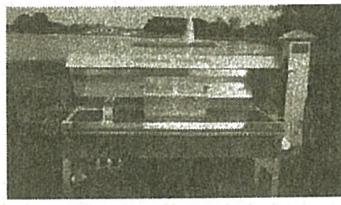
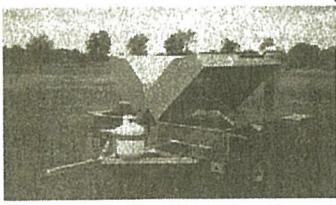
It is unlawful to harm, harass, or disturb any sea turtle adult, hatchling, eggs, nest, carcass, or skeletal remains under both State and Federal law. It is also unlawful to offer for sale, sell, or possess any sea turtle, or sea turtle parts. If any accidental capture occurs, release immediately either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

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Marine Mammals

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 & spotted dolphin, manatee, and any species of whale. Report sightings of dead or injured marine mammals to 800-241-4113.