

GEORGIA

1998-99 FRESHWATER AND SALTWATER SPORT FISHING REGULATIONS

Zell Miller, 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.

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ABOUT THE COVER:

DNR would like to express gratitude to artist Corry DeSart, a senior majoring in Art Education at UGA, for donating this artwork. It is dedicated to the memory of Randy Paulsen.

For Licenses & Boat Registration: www.georgia.org/dnr/wild/

Anglers, boaters, and hunters are now able to purchase fishing and hunting licenses, and renew boat registrations through the Internet. Licenses are available on the Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division's world wide web site.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OFFICES, PUBLIC FISHING AREAS & HATCHERIES

See page 14 for telephone numbers and guidance on which office to contact for your county.

MARINE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Brunswick 912/264-7218

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICES

Boating Safety 770/918-6408
Albany 912/430-4252
Brunswick 912/264-7237
Calhoun (Atlanta) 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
Richmond Hill 912/727-2111
Social Circle (Atlanta) 770/918-6414
Social Circle 706/557-3034
Thomson 706/595-4211
Thomson (Augusta) 706/737-1480
Waycross 912/285-6093

1998-1999 FISHING LICENSE FEES

License Year: April 1, 1998 - March 31, 1999

RESIDENT LICENSES:

Sportsman's License \$60.00
Fishing License 9.00
One-Day Fishing License 3.50
Trout Stamp 5.00
Combination Hunting & Fishing License 18.00
Wildlife Management Area Stamp 19.00

NONRESIDENT LICENSES:

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

TURN IN POACHERS (TIP) AND POLLUTERS

Violators of Game and Fish laws are thieves who steal from you. Help insure the future of fishing and hunting. Turn in poachers and polluters. Anytime you see a suspicious activity such as keeping over the creel limit, keeping a fish under the size limit, using illegal baits or gear, polluting or dead/dying fish, please call one of the phone numbers listed below 7 days/week, 24 hours/day. Rewards are available to those who report violations if the perpetrator(s) are arrested.

Toll Free: 1-800-241-4113
Atlanta: (404) 656-4863

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Georgia Recreational Saltwater Fishing

At the time of printing, the General Assembly was considering several issues that would affect Georgia's recreational saltwater fishery. Specific legislation includes: 1) a statewide fishing license including saltwater, 2) size and creel limits for saltwater finfish, and 3) recreational shrimping. Contact Coastal Resources Division for current information at 912-264-7218.

Definitions

Cast Net - call the Coastal Resources Division for the current definition of cast net at 912-264-7218.

Gig - any handheld 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 watercraft 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 saltwaters of Georgia.

Offshore Artificial Reefs

Georgia has 15 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.

St. Marys River

Anglers who fish the saltwater portion of the St. Marys River can contact the Florida Marine Patrol for information at (904) 270-2500.

BE AN ETHICAL ANGLER

Ethical anglers fish responsibly and consider the rights of others. They portray a positive image and help protect and conserve our natural resources. Be an ethical angler; the future of fishing depends on it.

Ethical anglers:

- know and obey the fishing regulations.
- report violations and pollution.
- keep only the fish they can use and release all others properly so they will survive. Some fish species are threatened or endangered.
- don't transfer fish or plants between bodies of water. Non-native species can adversely affect existing populations.
- pass on the tradition by taking a child fishing.
- appreciate the environment by not littering; dispose of fishing line properly, and leave a place cleaner than they found it.
- show courtesy to others, lend a helping hand whenever possible and always ask permission before fishing on private property.

Species

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Amberja
Cobia ...
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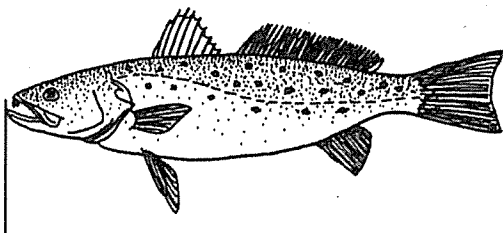
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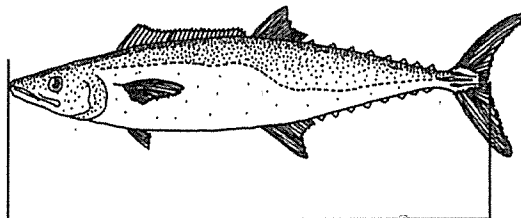
Species	Open Season	Daily Creel Limit	Possession Limit	Minimum Size (in.)
Blue marlin*	All year	1	1	86 FL
White marlin*	All year	1	1	62 FL
Sailfish*	All year	1	1	57 FL
Tarpon*	3/16-11/30	1	1	40 FL
Amberjack	3/16-12/31	3	3	28 FL
Cobia	3/16-11/30	2	2	33 FL
Dolphin	All year	15	15	18 FL
King mackerel	All year	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 greater than 27 inches)				
Red snapper	All year	2	2	20 TL
Spotted seatrout	All year	25	25	12 TL
Striped bass	All year	2	2	22TL

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 anglers, 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 nonresident \$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 daylight 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 left to right.

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, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31520-8687.

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, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31520-8687.

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 saltwaters.

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 saltwaters 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.

Catch Limits

No person taking shrimp with a cast net may possess more than 48 quarts of heads-on shrimp or 30 quarts of shrimp tails in any 24 hour period. 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 quantities above in any 24 hour period.

Crabs

License and Gear

No license is required to recreationally harvest crabs in the saltwaters of this state. Individuals not possessing a commercial crabbing license may use up to 6 standard size traps (2' x 2' or smaller). Each trap must be properly marked with a float bearing the owner's name and

address. Each trap is also required to have two unobstructed escapement rings (2 3/8" inside diameter) installed on an outside vertical wall of the trap. Recreational crabbers should adequately weight traps to prevent loss or movement in strong tidal currents. Disposal of crab traps in fresh and saltwaters is a violation of State and Federal law.

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. No more than two bushels may be taken or possessed by recreational means, during a 24 hour period, on a boat with more than one person aboard. It is unlawful to sell recreationally caught crabs.

Season and Area

Unless otherwise designated, the saltwaters of this state are open year-round for the recreational harvest of crabs. It is unlawful to place or set crab traps in the channel of a marked waterway.

Sea Turtles

It is unlawful for any person to sell or offer for sale any sea turtles or to offer for sale, sell, or destroy any sea turtle eggs. Sea turtles are also protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act.

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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 saltwaters 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. However, the public should obtain a chart from DNR which designates areas open to recreational harvest and safe for shellfish consumption.

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 freshwaters 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, North Newport River, Medway River, Big Ogeechee River, Little Ogeechee System (except Salt Creek), and Savannah River. All water seaward of these points is considered saltwater.

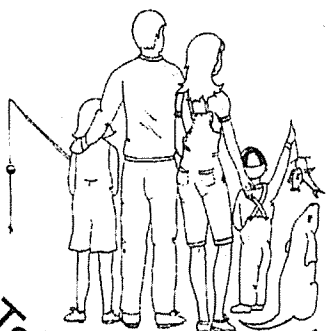
b) The following streams and their tributaries are designated as saltwater for their entire length: Crooked River, Little Satilla River, South Brunswick River, Turtle River, Sapelo River, South Newport River, Salt Creek (Little Ogeechee System), and all other rivers, streams, and tributaries in the six coastal counties which are not enumerated above. State waters extend from the freshwater/saltwater demarcation line to the 3 mile limit. Federal waters extend from the 3 mile limit to 200 miles offshore.

NOTE: Freshwater ponds on the seaward side of the demarcation line are not considered saltwaters. The lines demarcating legal waters for crab-

bing, 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.

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 bottlenose & spotted dolphin, manatee, and any species of whale. Report sightings of dead or injured marine mammals to 1-800-241-4113.



Take a Kid Fishing

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.