

# Saltwater Recreational Fishing in NSW

## Rules and Regulations Summary

February 2024



When fishing in NSW waters you are required to pay the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee (unless exempt) and to have the receipt for current payment in your immediate possession.

This also applies to spearfishing, hand gathering, bait collecting or when in possession of fishing gear in, on or adjacent to waters.

## Permitted and prohibited methods and activities

It is illegal to:

- sell, barter, exchange or supply for profit any recreational catch.
- use a firearm, a chemical or explosive device to take or assist to take fish.
- alter a fish (e.g. by filleting, removing the head or tail) until well away from the water. You may clean fish by gilling and gutting only. This rule does not apply at areas normally used for cleaning fish such as boat ramp cleaning tables; if the fish are for immediate consumption or immediate use as bait; or for fish that do not have a legal length. *Note: Any fish altered must comply with the listed legal size.*
- alter an invertebrate (e.g. by removing the shell, head, tail or meat) until well away from the water. This rule does not apply at areas normally used for cleaning fish such as boat ramp cleaning tables; if the invertebrate is for immediate consumption or immediate use as bait; or for invertebrates that do not have a legal length. Special rules apply to abalone, rocklobster, turban snails and intertidal invertebrates (see general rules section). *Note: Any invertebrate altered must comply with the listed legal size.*
- use, or be in possession of, a cast net in, on or adjacent to NSW waters.
- retain prohibited fish for any reason, including if they are to be used as bait, they must be returned to the water immediately, even if they are injured or dead.
- tranship fish from one boat to another (except specified bait species).

### Line fishing

- You may use 4 rods or lines with up to 3 hooks (or gangs of hooks) each. Each gang is limited to 5 hooks.
- One hand-held jigging line with 6 hook-lures is permitted.
- Drift lines are banned. Lines must be held in the hand or fixed to a boat or the shore.
- It is illegal to jag fish (hooking or attempting to hook fish other than through the mouth).

### Nets for catching prawns

The following nets can be used to catch prawns:

- 1 hand-hauled prawn net (max 6 m long, mesh 30–36 mm).
- 1 push or scissors net (lead-line to 2.75 m, mesh 30–36 mm).
- 1 dip or scoop net (mesh 20 mm min, 1.25 m drop max, diameter 0.6 m max).

Prawn nets must be hand-held and not staked, set, or towed by a boat. They cannot be joined or used with any other net.

### Nets and traps for catching crabs and lobster

- Up to 4 hoop or lift nets (mesh 13 mm min, 1–2 hoops per net). Not to be used in ocean waters.
- 1 spanner crab net (max 1.6 m long x 1 m wide). Only for use north of Korogoro Point (Hat Head).
- 1 lobster trap or pot (max 1.2 m x 1.2 m, buoy 100 mm min).
- 2 crab traps (up to 1.2 m x 1 m x 0.5 m, buoy 100 mm min, mesh 50 mm min, max 4 entrances – none on top).
- All floats/buoys must be labelled with initial and surname, year of birth and postcode of the person who sets, uses or lifts the fishing gear.
- Floats/buoys must measure not less than 100 mm in all dimensions.
- The minimum height of the float/buoy must be 50 mm above the water.
- All letters to be a minimum of 15 mm and in a colour contrasting to the buoy.
- An abbreviation of the type of gear to be marked on float/ buoy. 'CT' = crab trap, 'LT' = lobster trap, 'HN' = hoop or lift net, 'SN' = spanner crab net.
- All lobster traps, crab traps and spanner crab nets must have a 50 gm weight attached to the buoy at least 1 m below the surface so that no rope is floating on the surface of the water.
- Hoop nets or lift nets must not have any rope floating on the surface of the water.
- Check your crab net/trap regularly. Reducing set time for fishing gear reduces the chances of harm to accidentally caught aquatic animals e.g. platypus and turtles.

## Bait traps

- 1 bait trap (entrances 60 mm max not exceeding 45 cm long x 35 cm diameter).
- A tag must be attached to a part of the trap which is at or above water level with dimensions not less than 80 mm x 45 mm, labelled with initial and surname, year of birth and postcode of the person who sets, uses or lifts the trap and an abbreviation of the type of gear 'BT' = bait trap.
- All letters to be a minimum of 15 mm and in a colour contrasting to the tag.

## Diving and spearfishing

If you are diving and spearfishing:

- only use a snorkel when taking fish.
- you may use SCUBA gear for scallops and sea urchins.
- only use bare or gloved hands to take lobsters.

## Threatened or protected species

The following species are protected under law. If you catch them, they must be immediately returned to the water causing the least possible harm.

### Threatened species

- Black Rockcod
- Great Hammerhead Shark
- Green Sawfish
- White Shark
- Greynurse Shark
- Scalloped Hammerhead Shark
- Southern Bluefin Tuna\*\*

### Protected species

- Ballina Angelfish
- Eastern Blue Devil Fish
- Elegant Wrasse
- Goldspotted Rockcod (Estuary Cod)
- Queensland Groper
- Sandtiger Shark (Herbsts Nurse)
- All Syngnathiformes

\*\* (Limited recreational fishing allowed – see over)

For more information on the sightings of protected fish, visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries) or contact (02) 4916 3877.

## You can pay the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee:

- at most tackle outlets and also at some caravan parks, local shops and service stations.
- by phoning 1300 369 365.
- on the internet at [www.service.nsw.gov.au](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au)
- on the NSW DPI FishSmart app.

### How much is the fee?

- \$7 for 3 days
- \$14 for 1 month
- \$35 for 1 year
- \$85 for 3 years

Charter fishing vessels or fishing guides may hold an exemption certificate that covers you. Always check whether you need to pay the fee before going fishing.

By law, all fishing fees are placed into special trusts overseen by angler committees and can only be spent on improving recreational fishing in NSW.

## Further information

Some recreational bag and size limits may change during the life of this publication. It is the responsibility of fishers to ensure they are acting within the law at all times. Local fishing rules apply in some areas, such as marine parks, aquatic reserves and Greynurse Shark critical habitats.

For more information on rules, local restrictions or fee exemptions visit [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries). A freshwater rules and regulations summary is available in a similar format. Detailed recreational fishing guides are also available.

This is a summary of laws and regulations at the time of publication. This summary and ruler cannot be used as a defence in a court of law.



Download the **NSW DPI FishSmart App** for all the essential information you need to fish in NSW



# Invertebrates – bag and size limits

Fish Species	Minimum Legal Length	Bag limit
Abalone	11.7 cm	2
Balmain Bug	10 cm	20
Beach Worms	–	20 whole or part in total* 100 in total*
All other worm species	–	–
Cockles, Mussels, Pipsis	–	50 in total*, including a maximum of 20 cockles
Pipis for bait only, do not take beyond 50 m of high-tide mark.	–	–
Crab		
Blue Swimmer	6.5 cm	10
Mud (Black/Mangrove) Spanner	8.5 cm	20 in possession
Soldier	9.3 cm	5
All other crabs	–	10
Cunjevoi	–	100 in total*
Lobster		
Eastern Rock	10.4 cm min. - 18 cm max.	3 in total
Southern Rock (male)	11 cm min.	in any combination
Southern Rock (female)	10.5 cm min.	2 in total*
Tropical Rock (Painted, Ornate)	–	2
Slipper (flat)	–	2
Octopus	–	10 in total*
Oysters	–	50 in total*
Sydney Rock, Pacific, Native	–	–
Prawns	–	10 litres in total*
Saltwater Nippers	–	100 in total*
Scallops	–	50 in total*
Sea Urchins	–	10 in total*
Squid and Cuttlefish	–	20 in total*
Turban Snails and other Molluscs		
Sydney, Military	7.5 cm	20 in total*
All other molluscs including Turban Snails.	–	20 in total*

\* Bag limit comprised of any single species or a combination of listed grouped species. A maximum daily bag limit of 20 applies to any invertebrate (excluding molluscs) not listed above.



## General rules

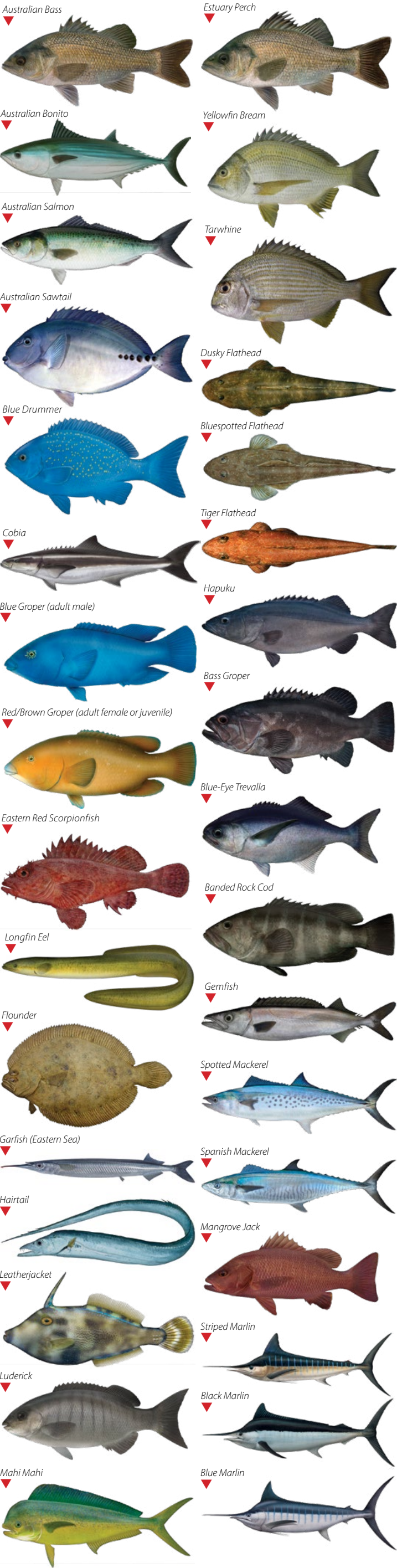
- Octopus cannot be taken from ocean rock platforms in NSW or rock platforms in Sydney Harbour.
- Lobsters, crabs and bugs carrying eggs must be returned immediately to the water. It is an offence to remove the eggs.
- Abalone, rocklobster and turban snails must not be shucked or mutilated in, on or adjacent to the water.
- Intertidal invertebrates or fish must not be shucked or mutilated in or adjacent to any waters except for immediate use as bait.
- Gathering invertebrates is banned in intertidal protected areas.

Food safety risks exist in shellfish such as oysters and mussels, which are controlled through regular monitoring. Specific programs are in place for commercially harvested shellfish areas, but not for recreational shellfish areas. Hence people should refrain from eating shellfish that they collect. For more information on recreational shellfish collection, refer to the NSW Food Authority's fact sheet at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au) or call 1300 552 406.



# Fish – Bag and size limits

**Legal length:** Minimum length of fish unless otherwise stated.  
**Bag limit:** The maximum number of fish or invertebrates per person per day. A maximum daily bag limit of 20 applies to any fish or invertebrates not listed.  
**Possession limit:** The maximum number of fish a person is allowed to have in their possession at any one time. This includes fish that are also stored elsewhere e.g. in fridge/freezer. For the following species or species groupings; Australian Bass and Estuary Perch, Bream and Tarwhine, Flathead species (except Dusky), Tailor, Luderick, Trevallies and Blue Swimmer Crab, the possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.



Species	Minimum Legal Length	Bag limit
Australian Bass and Estuary Perch Zero bag limit in rivers and estuaries from 1 May to 31 August	Only 1 over 35 cm	2 in total*, 4 in possession
Australian Bonito	–	10
Australian Salmon	–	5
Australian Sawtail (Surgeonfish)	–	5
Blue Drummer (Bluefish)	–	0 – Release only, Lord Howe Island Marine Park 5
Bream and Tarwhine Black, Yellowfin Bream Tarwhine	25 cm 20 cm }	10 in total* 20 in possession
Cobia	–	5
Deep-sea fish Hapuku, Banded Rockcod, Bass Groper, Blue-Eye Trevalla, Gemfish	–	5 in total* including a maximum of 2 Gemfish. Boat limit: 10 Gemfish per boat.
Dogfish Harrisons Southern All other	– – –	0 0 2 in total*
Eastern Blue Groper (also known as Blue, Red or Brown Groper)	–	0 – Release only
Eastern Red Scorpionfish (Red Rock Cod)	–	5
Eels Southern Shortfin Longfin	30 cm 58 cm	10 10
Flathead Dusky (Common)  All other	36 cm – 70 cm  33 cm Bluespotted and Tiger only }	5 10 in possession 10 in total* 20 in possession
Flounders and soles Flounder Sole	25 cm – }	20 in total*
Garfish Eastern Sea	–	20
Hairtail	–	10
Leatherjackets	–	20 in total*
Luderick	27 cm	10 20 in possession
Mackerel Spanish Spotted	75 cm 60 cm }	5 in total*
Mahi Mahi (Dolphinfish)	60 cm, only 1 over 110 cm	10
Mangrove Jack	–	5
Marlin Striped, Black or Blue	–	1 of each species
Morwong Jackass Grey (Rubberlip) Red Banded	30 cm 30 cm 30 cm –	10 10 5 5
Moses Snapper (Perch)	–	5
Mullet Poddy  All others	Under 15 cm  30 cm Sea (Bully) only	20 in total* for live bait only 20 in total*
Mulloway (Jewfish)	70 cm	1 Boat limit of 2 per boat per day (if 2 or more fishers are onboard) Charter Boat limit of 3 per boat per day
Pearl Perch	30 cm	5
Rock Blackfish (Black Drummer)	30 cm	10
Sailfish	–	1
Samsonfish and Amberjack	–	5 in total*
Sharks and Rays	91 cm School Shark only	5 in total*, only 1 Tiger, Mako, Smooth Hammerhead or Whaler/ Blue Shark 0 for Wobbegong
Snapper	30 cm	10
Spearfish	–	1
Swordfish	–	1
Tailor	30 cm	10 20 in possession
Teraglin	38 cm	5
Trevallies	30 cm Silver Trevally only	10 in total* 20 in possession
Tuna Albacore, Big-Eye, Longtail, Southern Bluefin, Yellowfin	90 cm or above less than 90 cm	2 in total* 5 in total* } only 1 Southern Bluefin Tuna
Wahoo	–	5
Whiting	27 cm Sand only	20 in total*
Yellowtail Kingfish	65 cm	5
* Bag limit comprised of any single species or a combination of listed grouped species.		
Baitfish bag limits (excluding charter boat operators)		
A bag limit of 100 for each of the following:		
Australian Anchovy	Maray (Round Herring)	Southern Herring
Australian Sardine (Pilchard)	Blue Sprat (Bluebait)	Sandy Sprat (Whitebait)
A bag limit of 50 for each species or species grouping:		
Garfish (other than Eastern Sea Garfish)	Jack Mackerel and Yellowtail Scad	Hardyhead and Silverfish
Blue Mackerel (Slimy Mackerel)		

