

# Saltwater

## Recreational Fishing in NSW

### Rules and Regulations Summary

October 2025



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 660 436.
- on the internet at [www.service.nsw.gov.au](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au)
- on the NSW DPIRD 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 DPIRD 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*<br>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 in total*<br>10 in total*                    |
| Cunjevoi                                                        | –                         | 20 in total*                                    |
| Lobster                                                         |                           |                                                 |
| Eastern Rock                                                    | 10.4 cm min. - 18 cm max. | 3 in total in any combination                   |
| Southern Rock (male)                                            | 11 cm min.                |                                                 |
| Southern Rock (female)                                          | 10.5 cm min.              |                                                 |
| Tropical Rock (Painted, Ornate)                                 | –                         |                                                 |
| Slipper (flat)                                                  | –                         | 2 in total*<br>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

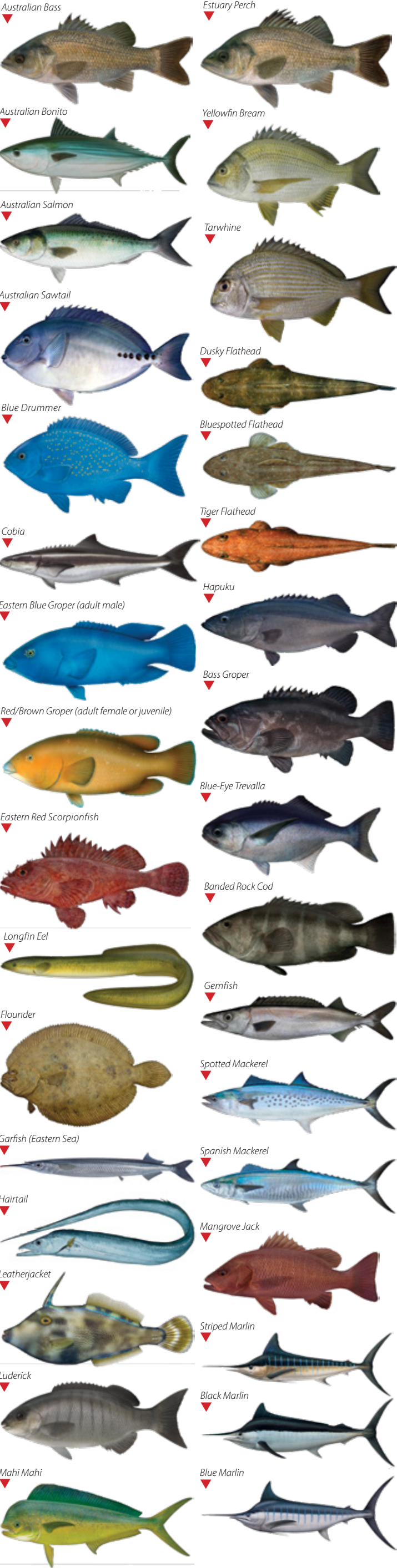
- Octopus cannot be taken from ocean rock platforms in NSW or rock platforms in Sydney Harbour.
- Lobsters, crabs and bugs carrying eggs must be returned immediately to the water. It is an offence to remove the eggs.
- Abalone, rocklobster and turban snails must not be shucked or mutilated in, on or 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.  
**Fish shrinkage:** Please note that some fish shrinkage may occur after a fish has been harvested, and minor changes in length should be taken into consideration when taking fish that are right on, or very close to the minimum size limit to ensure compliance with legal length rules.



| Species                                                                                             | Minimum Legal Length                                   | Bag limit                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Australian Bass and Estuary Perch<br>Zero bag limit in rivers and estuaries from 1 May to 31 August | Only 1 over 35 cm                                      | 2 in total*,<br>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<br>Black, Yellowfin Bream<br>Tarwhine                                            | 25 cm<br>20 cm }                                       | 10 in total*<br>20 in possession                                                                                     |
| Cobia                                                                                               | –                                                      | 5                                                                                                                    |
| Deep-sea fish<br>Hapuku, Banded Rockcod, Bass<br>Groper, Blue-Eye Trevalla, Gemfish                 | –                                                      | 5 in total* including a maximum of 2 Gemfish.<br>Boat limit: 10 Gemfish per boat.                                    |
| Dogfish<br>Harrisons<br>Southern<br>All other                                                       | –<br>–<br>–                                            | 0<br>0<br>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<br>Southern Shortfin<br>Longfin                                                                | 30 cm<br>58 cm                                         | 10<br>10                                                                                                             |
| Flathead<br>Dusky (Common)<br><br>All other                                                         | 36 cm –70 cm<br><br>33 cm Bluespotted and Tiger only } | 5<br>10 in possession<br>10 in total*<br>20 in possession                                                            |
| Flounders and soles<br>Flounder<br>Sole                                                             | 25 cm<br>– }                                           | 20 in total*                                                                                                         |
| Garfish<br>Eastern Sea                                                                              | –                                                      | 20                                                                                                                   |
| Hairtail                                                                                            | –                                                      | 10                                                                                                                   |
| Leatherjackets                                                                                      | –                                                      | 20 in total*                                                                                                         |
| Luderick                                                                                            | 27 cm                                                  | 10<br>20 in possession                                                                                               |
| Mackerel<br>Spanish<br>Spotted                                                                      | 75 cm<br>60 cm }                                       | 5 in total*                                                                                                          |
| Mahi Mahi (Dolphinfish)                                                                             | 60 cm, only 1 over 110 cm                              | 10                                                                                                                   |
| Mangrove Jack                                                                                       | –                                                      | 5                                                                                                                    |
| Marlin<br>Striped, Black or Blue                                                                    | –                                                      | 1 of each species                                                                                                    |
| Morwong<br>Jackass<br>Grey (Rubberlip)<br>Red<br>Banded                                             | 30 cm<br>30 cm<br>30 cm<br>–                           | 10<br>10<br>5<br>5                                                                                                   |
| Moses Snapper (Perch)                                                                               | –                                                      | 5                                                                                                                    |
| Mullet<br>Poddy<br><br>All others                                                                   | Under 15 cm<br><br>30 cm Sea (Bully) only              | 20 in total* for live bait only<br>20 in total*                                                                      |
| Mulloway (Jewfish)                                                                                  | 70 cm                                                  | 1<br>Boat limit of 2 per boat per day (if 2 or more fishers are onboard)<br>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/<br>Blue Shark<br>0 for Wobbegong                       |
| Snapper                                                                                             | 30 cm                                                  | 10                                                                                                                   |
| Spearfish                                                                                           | –                                                      | 1                                                                                                                    |
| Swordfish                                                                                           | –                                                      | 1                                                                                                                    |
| Tailor                                                                                              | 30 cm                                                  | 10<br>20 in possession                                                                                               |
| Teraglin                                                                                            | 38 cm                                                  | 5                                                                                                                    |
| Trevallies                                                                                          | 30 cm<br>Silver Trevally only                          | 10 in total*<br>20 in possession                                                                                     |
| Tuna<br>Albacore, Big-Eye, Longtail, Southern Bluefin, Yellowfin                                    | 90 cm or above less than 90 cm                         | 2 in total* } only 1 Southern Bluefin Tuna<br>5 in total* }                                                          |
| 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)                          |                                   |                          |

