

Crabbing for blue swimmer crabs

West Coast Region



These rules are in place to ensure crab populations in the West Coast Region remain sustainable

Please note:

NEW Cockburn Sound now open to fishing from 1 December to 30 August.

⚠ Swan and Canning rivers to Minninup Beach (Rich Rd, 15 km south of Bunbury):
Closed to all crab fishing 1 September to 30 November. This includes Cockburn Sound, and all waters, rivers and estuaries in this area.

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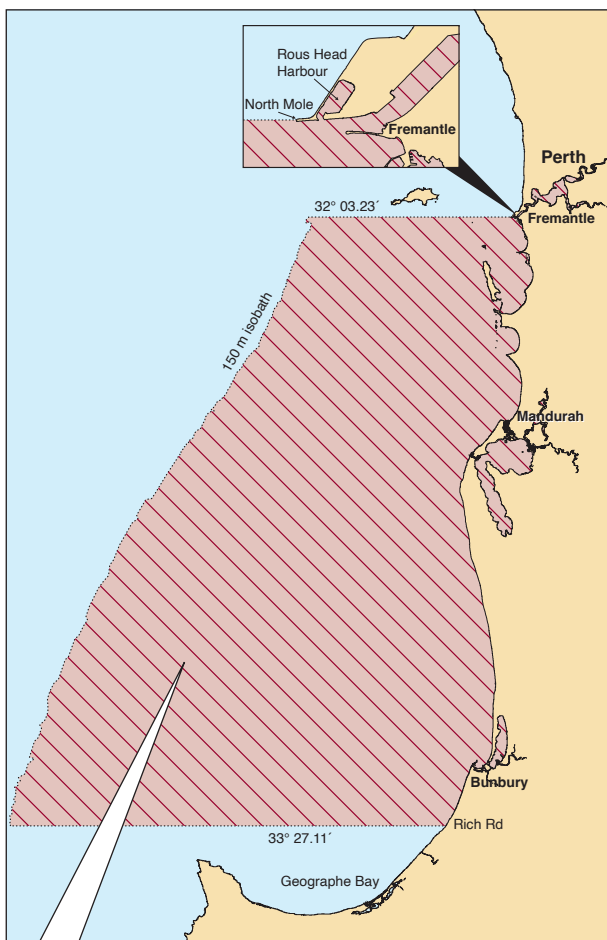
Important disclaimer

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This publication is to provide assistance or information. It is only a guide and does not replace the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* or the *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*. It cannot be used as a defence in a court of law. The information provided is current at the date of printing but may be subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on fishing and full details of legislation contact your local DPIRD office or visit **dpiird.wa.gov.au**

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West Coast region crab closures

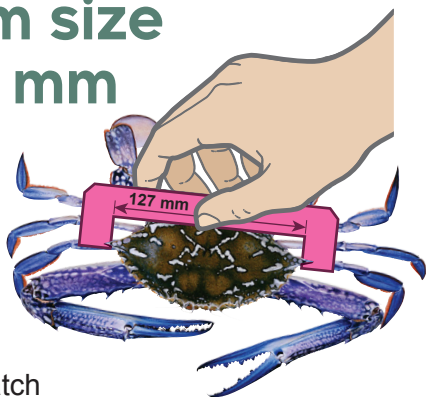


Swan and Canning rivers to Minninup Beach (Rich Rd, 15km south of Bunbury)

Closed to all crab fishing 1 September to 30 November. This includes Cockburn Sound, and all waters, rivers and estuaries in this area.

Minimum size limit 127 mm

Once a crab is in your catch bag, esky or tub it is considered your catch. Measure and count your catch immediately. Do not wait to get back to shore.



Measure each crab from the tips of the spikes across the widest part of the shell. Measure accurately using a crab gauge available from tackle shops. Using anything else to measure with, such as a drink can or ruler, can lead to mistakes.

Daily bag limit

Swan and Canning Rivers and Cockburn Sound: 5 crabs per person, per day.

Geographe Bay: A maximum of **5 female** crabs as part of a **10** crab bag limit per person, per day.

All other areas: **10** crabs per person, per day.

You must not catch crabs for anyone else. Carefully count your catch, the bag limit is strictly enforced to protect breeding stocks, so stop fishing once you reach your limit. High-grading (taking crabs and discarding them later) puts pressure on the crab stocks, as discarded animals will probably die.

Recreational Fishing from Boat Licence (RFBL)

If you use a powered boat to fish for crabs or to reach your fishing location, at least one person on board needs an RFBL. You can apply for an RFBL from our website or offices.

Boat limit (boat possession limit)

You are allowed a possession limit of 20 crabs per boat statewide.

Swan and Canning Rivers and Cockburn Sound: 20 crabs per boat when 4 or more licensed fishers are on board

Geographe Bay: 20 crabs per boat with a maximum of 10 female crabs when 2 or more licensed fishers are on board

All other areas: 20 crabs per boat when 2 or more licensed fishers are on board

Note: When crabbing from a boat, you may only take the bag limit for the number of licence holders on board, as per the region you are fishing in. For example, if you have 4 people on your boat in Cockburn Sound but only 2 have RFBLs, they may take up to 10 crabs (combined), as per the daily bag limit of 5 crabs per person, per day in this area.

Immediate release

Any undersize crabs or egg-carrying ('berried') females must be returned to the water carefully and immediately, before attempting to catch another crab.

Spawning females

Must be returned to the water



Berried (egg-carrying) females have a spongy mass of eggs underneath and must be returned to the water immediately.

To return crabs caught by scoop net, lower the scoop back into the water and let the crab release. If using drop nets, undersized or berried crabs must be returned before pulling the next drop net. Do not throw crabs, place them back into the water gently and quickly.

Keeping these crabs is illegal and could result in fines up to \$5,000 (plus mandatory penalties).



Scan to view our video on Mandurah Blue Swimmer Crabs, how to handle and measure.

Keeping crabs

All uncooked crabs must be kept in whole form, unless being prepared for immediate consumption.

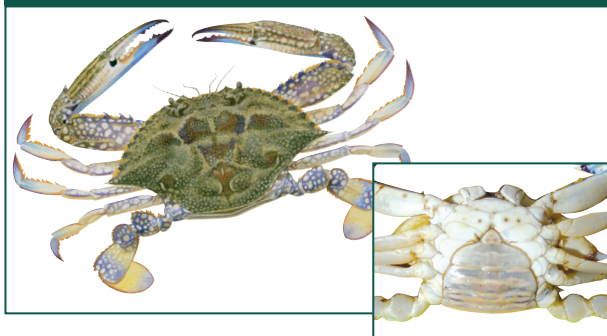
Identification

Male crabs are bigger and more colourful than females, with rich blue on the legs and claws. Female crabs are usually a mottled brown. There is also a difference on the underside - the V-shaped abdominal flap on the male is narrow and angular, while a female's flap is broad and rounded.

Male



Female



Approved crabbing gear

Crabs must only be caught by hand or using hand-held rigid (e.g. wire) scoop nets, drop nets or hand-held blunt wire hooks. Hooks must not be capable of piercing the crab.

Scoop nets must be bowl-shaped and made of rigid mesh not capable of entangling a crab, have an internal diameter no bigger than 375 mm, and a depth of no more than 210 mm.

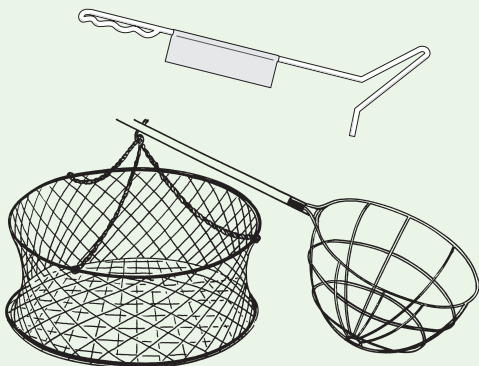
Drop nets must be no more than 1.5 m in diameter. There is a maximum limit of 10 drop nets per person or 10 drop nets per boat, regardless of how many people are on board.

Diving for crabs is also permitted.

Catching crabs by any other method including fishing nets or prawn trawls or dip nets is illegal – any crab caught this way must be released. The use of crab rakes is prohibited.

Legal:

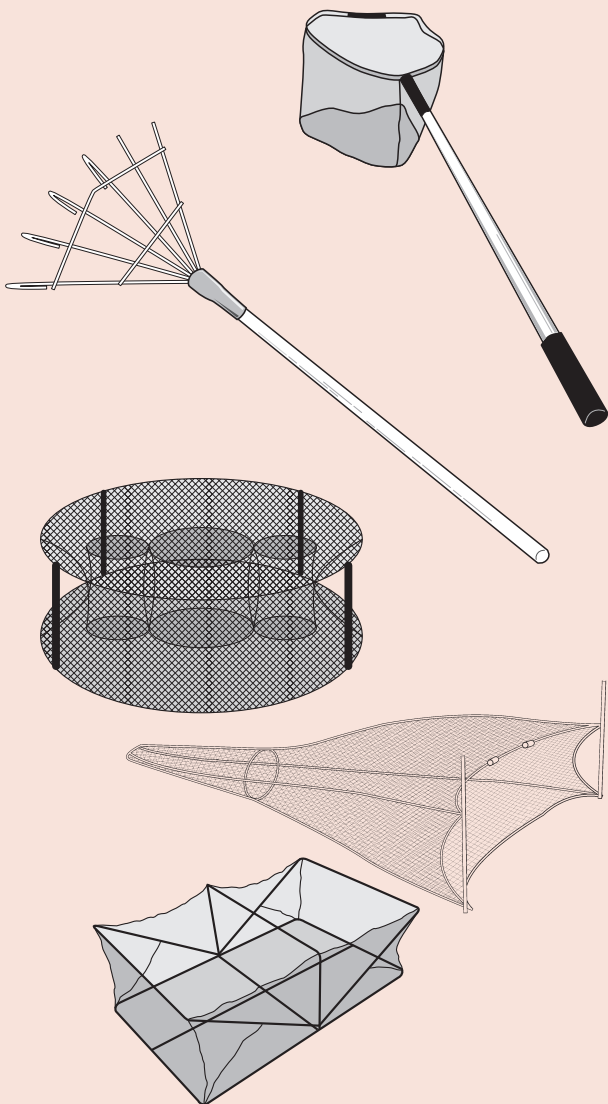
Wire hook, drop net or scoop net



Illegal:



Crabbing rake, landing net, commercial type round trap, fishing nets, prawn trawls or dip nets



Health warning



Alexandrium is a serious public health issue. It is recommended to remove the top shell, guts (mustard) and gills from **blue swimmer** crabs caught in the Swan and Canning rivers and Cockburn Sound before freezing, cooking or eating them. Scan the QR code to learn how to correctly clean crabs.



**For more information,
visit fish.wa.gov.au/alerts**

Toxic algal bloom events of *Alexandrium*, a type of alga, have been detected in the Swan and Canning rivers at elevated levels and could become an annual occurrence. *Alexandrium* can produce a type of Paralytic Shellfish Toxin (PST) that bioaccumulates in crustacea and mussels.

Cooking or freezing whole crabs does not destroy these PSTs. All crabs must still be landed and transported whole to your home*, unless you plan to eat them immediately.

* Home means your principal place of residence as per regulation 3 of the *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995*.





Scan the QR code for up-to-date crabbing rules (available in a number of languages).



Chinese simplified



Tagalog (Filipino)



Chinese traditional



Thai



Indonesian



Vietnamese



Karen



English

Contact us

1300 374 731 (1300 DPIRD1)

enquiries@dpird.wa.gov.au

For the most up-to-date information, including rules and licences, visit **fish.wa.gov.au/recfishing** or contact your local DPIRD office before going fishing.

dpird.wa.gov.au

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