



Northern
Territory
Government



Know your limits

NORTHERN TERRITORY RECREATIONAL FISHING CONTROLS

A handy reference to the regulations for
recreational fishing in the Northern Territory

Personal possession limits

What it means

A personal possession limit is the maximum number of fish a person may have in their possession at any time, other than in their place of permanent residence.

You may have a maximum of 30 fish in your possession. Included within the 30 fish limit you may only have a maximum of the following specified fish as shown below.

Species	Personal possession limits	Special controls and key information	Minimum size limits
Barramundi	5	3 per person possession limit in the Mary and Daly River Fish Management Zones. (see page 8)	55cm overall length. Headed length 39cm. Fillet length 27cm.
Golden snapper	5	Not suitable for catch and release in water 10 m+ in depth, susceptible to barotrauma. (see page 10)	NA
Sharks	3	Sawfish, northern river shark and speartooth sharks are protected and must not be taken. (see page 11)	NA
Black jewfish	2	Not suitable for catch and release in water 10 m+ in depth, susceptible to barotrauma. (see page 10)	NA
Spanish mackerel	2	Sensitive to handling. The use of barbless single hooks for catch and release fishing is recommended. (see page 17)	NA

To ensure fish species can be identified, the following rules apply:

- The entire skin must be left on fillets and trunks of all fish.
- Fillets from the species listed above must be stored in separate packaging to all other fish.
- Frozen fillets from different species must be kept in separate packaging.
- Two fillets together are deemed to comprise 1 fish.
- A piece of fish, other than a fillet, is to be counted as 1 fish, unless you can prove that 2 or more pieces of fish were obtained from the one fish.
- It is illegal to tether fish.

In addition to the 30 fish general possession limit, a maximum personal limit also applies for the following species.

Species	Personal possession limits	Vessel possession limits	Special controls and key information	Minimum size limits
Mud crabs	10	30 when 3 or more people are on board.	Females with eggs must be released unharmed. (see page 12)	Carapace width 13 cm for males and 14 cm for females
Freshwater crustaceans - cherabin and/or redclaw	30	Daly River Fish Management Zone A combined vessel limit of 90 when 3 or more people are on board with a maximum of 30 cherabin.	Daly River Fish Management Zone specific controls: A combined personal possession limit of 30 which includes a maximum of 10 cherabin. Females with eggs must be released unharmed. (see page 14)	NA
Tropical rock lobster	10	30 when 3 or more people are on board.	Tropical rock lobster must not be taken using underwater breathing apparatus. (see page 16)	NA
Molluscs	10 litres in shells	NA	Giant clams are protected and must not be taken. (see page 16)	NA

Protected species

You must not be in possession of protected species which include:

- all species of cod or groper longer than 1.2 m
- sawfish, northern river and speartooth sharks
- giant clams.

Protected species must be released unharmed.

Species exempt from possession limits are:

- prawns, octopus, cuttlefish and squid
- bait fish (mullet, whiting, garfish, pilchards, sardines, herrings)
- marine bream (*Acanthopagrus sp.*)
- echinoderms (sea urchins and starfish)
- crabs (other than mud crabs).

Recreational fishing in the Northern Territory

Recreational fishing is an important part of the Territory lifestyle. The ongoing enjoyment of the Territory's first class fishing experiences depends upon the careful management of our valuable aquatic resources and habitats.

The Fisheries Division monitors and manages the health and sustainability of our fisheries. However we all have a role to play in maintaining the Territory's world class fishing lifestyle and ensuring current and future generations can enjoy the pleasures of recreational fishing and catching a fresh feed of seafood.

Play your part by using common sense and observing the following key points:

- Take no more than your immediate needs.
- Understand and comply with all the fishing regulations of the Northern Territory.
- It is illegal for a recreational catch to be sold or bartered.
- Report illegal fishing activities and environmental damage.
- Prevent pollution by taking your rubbish home with you.
- Respect other water users.

Why have possession limits for recreational fishing?

Possession limits are the key tool used to:

- help keep recreational catches at sustainable levels
- share catches equitably among sectors
- reduce the potential for localised over fishing
- help eliminate the illegal sale of fish.

Remember: Possession limits are the maximum number of fish you may keep, however you should only take what you need.

Fisheries compliance

NT Water Police Section Fishwatch Hotline 1800 891 136

In the NT the Water Police are responsible for enforcing the fisheries and marine safety laws. Phone the Fishwatch Hotline on 1800 891 136 to report suspected illegal fishing activity. For general enquiries phone 08 8947 0391.

In some remote areas, local police and Indigenous Marine Rangers work collaboratively. Ranger groups are strategically located along the remote NT coastline and are formally trained by Fisheries to assist police to perform their duties more effectively. This partnership is integral to ensuring fisheries compliance in isolated areas.

Aboriginal land and waters

You do not require a recreational fishing licence in the NT, however a large portion of the Territory's intertidal waters lie over Aboriginal land and recreational fishers should respect and recognise the cultural importance of these waters to traditional owners. Permits are required to enter Aboriginal land and may also be required for access to tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land for fishing purposes. Information on permit requirements is available from the Northern Land Council on 1800 645 299 or by visiting the website www.nlc.org.au

For permits and information about fishing the Tiwi Islands contact Tiwi Enterprises on 08 8941 1162 or by visiting the website www.tiwienterprises.com. The cost of a permit purchased from the Tiwi Land Council in 2012 or 2013 to access intertidal waters around the Tiwi Islands can be reimbursed through Fisheries Licensing.

For maps and updated information regarding fishing permits visit the NT Government website www.fishing.nt.gov.au

Kakadu National Park specific controls

Specific recreational fishing rules apply within the Park; some of the key regulations are listed below.

Fishing gear

You may not possess nets, firearms, spears, traps or any other device designed for taking an animal or fish other than:

- a rod and reel or handline with a single hook or lure attached
- landing nets are permitted only for landing fish, they may not be used for any other purpose.

Other rules

- No live baiting. A live animal (including fish) cannot be used as bait.
- Set lines are prohibited.
- Do not clean fish within 50 m of a water body unless using a designated fish cleaning facility.
- All crabs are protected and must not be taken.
- Nets, traps and pots used for recreational fishing outside the Park may be transported into or through the Park only along the Oenpelli Road or the Arnhem and Kakadu Highways. These items must be securely stowed at all times and not used.

Restricted waterways

Fishing and boating is prohibited in the following areas:

- Between the part of the South Alligator known as 'the forks' or 'the rapids' (about 24 km upstream of the bridge on the Arnhem Highway) and 2 km north of Fisherman's Gully on Yellow Water.
- The West Alligator River.
- Waterways upstream of the Kakadu Highway are closed with the exception of Sandy and Jim Jim Billabong.

For more information contact Kakadu National Park Headquarters on 08 8938 1120 or email info@kakadu.com.au

Key recreational species in the Northern Territory

Barramundi 'barra' (*Lates calcarifer*)

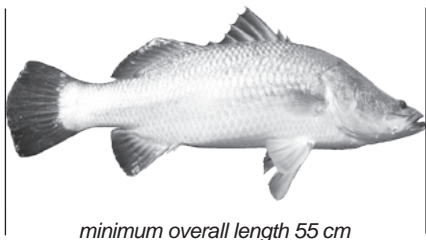
Minimum overall length 55 cm.

Minimum headed length 39 cm (*body minus head*).

Minimum fillet length 27 cm.

5 per person possession limit NT wide
(excluding the Daly and Mary River Fish Management Zones)

3 per person possession limit in the
Daly and Mary River Fish Management Zones (see page 7)



Tagged barramundi

The Fisheries Division coordinates a barramundi tagging program to monitor the health of the fishery. If you catch a tagged barramundi please report the tag number, fish length, date, capture location and your personal details to AFANT – phone 1800 456 410 or email research@afant.com.au

Please release any tagged barramundi unharmed with the tag intact as they can continue to provide valuable information.

Daly and Mary River Fish Management Zones

Daly River Fish Management Zone

If you are in the area within the dotted line on the Daly River map opposite, you must not have more than 3 barramundi in your personal possession at any time. You must not have more than a combined personal possession limit of 30 freshwater crustaceans which includes a maximum personal possession limit of 10 cherabin. A maximum of 3 freshwater pots or dillies, or combination of per person limit applies with a maximum limit of 6 freshwater pots or dillies, or combination of per vessel when 2 or more people are on board.

Mary River Fish Management Zone

If you are in the area within the dotted line on the Mary River map opposite, you must not have more than 3 barramundi in your personal possession at any time. The use or possession of a cast net or drag net is prohibited.

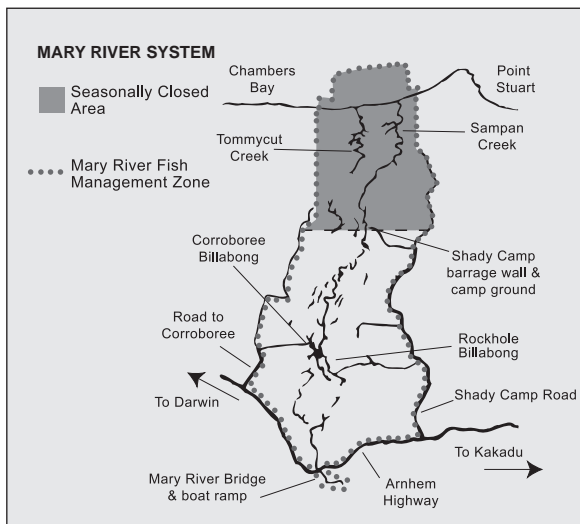
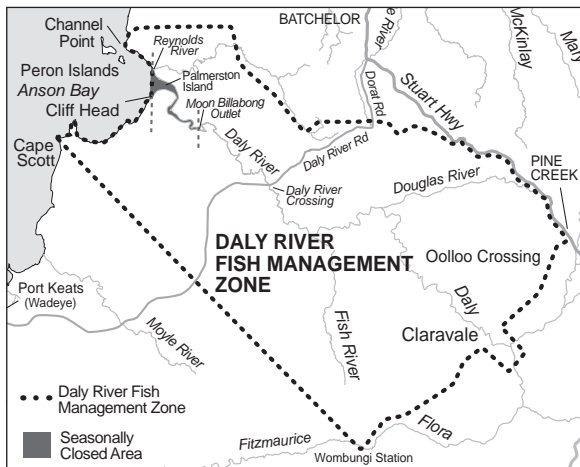
Shady Camp barrage

You must only use a lure or fly with a single point hook when fishing from, or within, a 100 m radius of the barrage wall at Shady Camp billabong. Bait fishing and the use of double or treble hooks in this area is prohibited.

Daly and Mary River seasonally closed areas

Shown as the shaded areas on the maps opposite.

If you are in either of these areas between 1 October and 31 January you must not fish, or have in your possession a barramundi or a fishing line to which a hook, lure or bait is attached. It is during this period that most barramundi spawning occurs and these areas are thought to contain significant spawning habitat.



Golden snapper ‘goldie or fingermark’

(Lutjanus johnii)

5 per person possession limit.

Important information

Fisheries research indicates that female golden snapper are not sexually mature until they are over 60 cm in length and approximately nine years old. Male golden snapper are not mature until they are over 45 cm and approximately five years old. These life history characteristics and a susceptibility to barotrauma make this species particularly vulnerable to overfishing.

Tagged golden snapper

The Fisheries Division coordinates a golden snapper tagging program to monitor the health of the fishery. If you catch a tagged golden snapper please report the tag number, fish length, date, capture location and your personal details to AFANT – phone 1800 456 410 or email research@afant.com.au

Black jewfish ‘jewie’ *(Protonibea diacanthus)*

2 per person possession limit.

Important information

Black jewfish are not suitable for catch and release in water depths greater than 10 metres as most fish are unlikely to survive once released due to the effects of barotrauma.

Spanish mackerel ‘Spaniard’

(Scomberomorus commerson)

2 per person possession limit.

Pelagic fish such as mackerel are fragile and tolerate minimal handling. The effects of bringing a mackerel into the boat are often fatal. If you wish to catch and release mackerel it is best to do so by using barbless single hooks and if practical remove the hooks while the fish is in the water. Beware when handling mackerel they have extremely sharp teeth!

Barotrauma

The term barotrauma applies to injuries caused by the expansion of gases in the fish's body due to a decrease in pressure as the fish is brought up from deep water. The most obvious symptoms include the fish's stomach pushed out through the mouth, distended intestines and an inability to swim down from the surface. Most fish with these symptoms have sustained severe internal injuries. Even fish that are returned to the water in apparently good condition may have suffered fatal injuries.

Recreational fishing survey data shows that recreational anglers in the NT are releasing around 60% of their reef fish. Research indicates that many of these fish caught from water deeper than 10 metres are unlikely to survive release due to the effects of barotrauma.

It is the responsibility of all recreational anglers as stewards of the resource to assist in the sustainable management of our precious reef fish stocks by observing the following key points when reef fishing in water deeper than 10 metres:

- Utilise the reef fish you catch (released fish are unlikely to survive due to internal injuries caused by barotrauma).
- Stop reef fishing once you have caught enough for your immediate needs or reached your possession limit (whichever comes first).
- Once you have caught enough for your immediate needs you should change locations and target species not susceptible to barotrauma.
- Use large non-offset circle hooks to prevent the capture of smaller fish.
- If you are continually catching juvenile fish change locations.

Sharks

3 per person possession limit (excluding protected species).

Sharks are an important part of the ecosystem and any unwanted or protected sharks should be carefully released unharmed.

Shark tagging

Captures of tagged sharks provide valuable information which assists in their management. If you catch a tagged shark please report the tag number, date, capture location, length (if possible) and your personal details to Fisheries by mail to GPO Box 3000 Darwin NT 0801 or by email fisheries@nt.gov.au or phone 08 8999 2144. Please release any tagged shark unharmed with the tag intact as they will continue to provide valuable information.

PROTECTED SHARK SPECIES

Sawfish

All sawfish species are protected and must be released unharmed. Sawfish are unable to survive without their rostrum (saw), and on no account should this be removed.

Northern river shark (*Glyphis garricki*) and **Speartooth shark** (*Glyphis glyphis*)

Northern river shark and speartooth shark are protected and must be released unharmed. These species have been found in many Territory rivers, including the upper freshwater reaches. Both species are similar in appearance to the common bull shark.

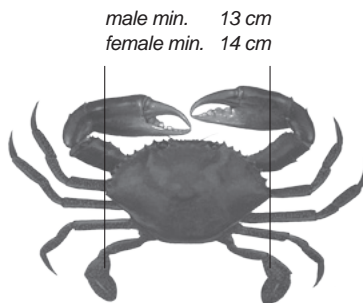
Mud crab 'muddie' (*Scylla spp.*)

10 per person possession limit.

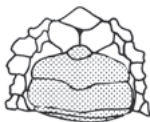
30 per vessel possession limit when 3 or more people are on board.

13 cm minimum carapace size limit for male mud crabs.

14 cm minimum carapace size limit for female mud crabs.



- Female mud crabs with eggs (berried) attached under the abdominal flap must be released immediately.
- You must stop crabbing if you have taken, or have in your possession, the limit.



Female crab underside diagram

Underside view of a female mud crab showing a broad pigmented abdominal flap. A berried female will have a cluster of eggs attached to the abdominal flap.



Male crab underside diagram

Underside view of a male mud crab showing a narrow unpigmented abdominal flap.

Marine pots

Maximum of 5 pots or dillies, or combination of per person with a maximum of 10 pots or dillies, or combination of per vessel when 2 or more people are on board.

All pots / dillies must have a float attached that is no less than 80 mm in diameter or length. The float must be visible at all times when in use and have the user's first and last name clearly marked on it.

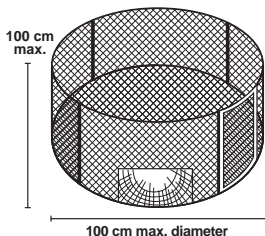
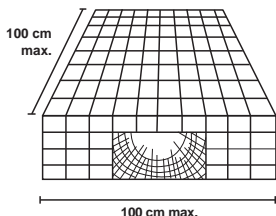
Complying marine pot:

Maximum size: 100 cm in length, width, height or diameter.

Maximum volume: 0.5 m³.

Maximum number of entrances: 2

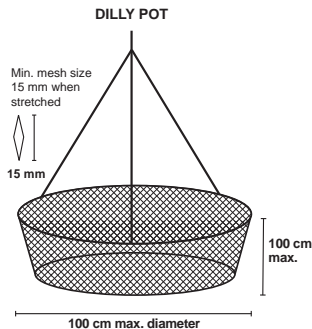
Material placed in the pot which is likely to entangle fish or aquatic life is not permitted.



Dilly pot:

Maximum size: 100 cm in length, height or diameter.

A dilly pot must be constructed so that, when set, the sides collapse and the net lies flat on the ground and does not contain material that is capable of entangling fish or aquatic life.



Freshwater crustaceans –

cherabin (*Macrobrachium spp.*)

redclaw (*Cherax quadricarinatus*)

**30 per person combined possession limit NT wide
(except in the Daly River Fish Management Zone).**

Berried females (with eggs) must be released unharmed.

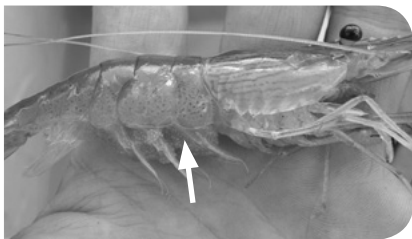
Daly River Fish Management Zone specific controls:

A combined personal possession limit of 30 freshwater crustaceans which includes a maximum personal possession limit of 10 cherabin.

A total combined vessel limit of 90 freshwater crustaceans which includes a maximum vessel possession limit of 30 cherabin when there are 3 or more people on board.

Cherabin and redclaw are highly valued by recreational fishers both as bait and for their great eating qualities.

To identify a berried female freshwater crustacean check the underside of the tail / abdomen and look for small round eggs which can vary in colour from opaque to red.



This is a female cherabin. A berried female will have a cluster of eggs attached under the abdomen.

Freshwater pots

Maximum of 5 freshwater pots or dillies, or a combination of per person with a maximum of 10 freshwater pots or dillies, or a combination of per vessel when 2 or more people are on board.

Daly River Fish Management Zone specific controls:

Maximum of 3 freshwater pots or dillies, or a combination of per person with a maximum of 6 freshwater pots or dillies, or a combination of per vessel when 2 or more people are on board.

A freshwater pot / dilly must have a float attached that is no less than 80 mm in diameter or length. The float must be visible at all times when in use and have the user's first and last name clearly marked on it.

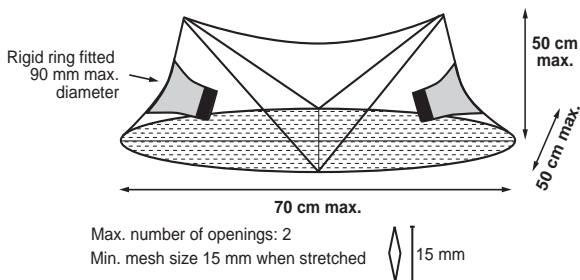
Complying freshwater pot:

Maximum size: 70 cm in length and 50 cm in width and height.

Maximum number of entrances: 2 with rigid turtle excluder rings fitted with a maximum diameter of 90 mm.

Must be constructed of flexible net material that has a minimum mesh size of not less than 15mm when stretched.

Material placed in the pot which is likely to entangle fish or aquatic life is not permitted.



Tropical rock lobster ‘painted crayfish’

(*Panulirus spp.*)

10 per person possession limit.

30 per vessel possession limit when 3 or more people are on board.

You must not take tropical rock lobster while using underwater breathing apparatus.

Molluscs (*oysters, cockles, pipis, mussels, etc*)

10 litres (in shells) per person possession limit.

(excluding cephalopods ie. squid, cuttlefish and octopus which are exempt).

Protected species

Giant clams are protected and must not be taken.

Additional amateur gear regulations

Amateur drag net

Maximum length: 16 m excluding the length of any attached lines.

Maximum drop: 2 m.

Maximum mesh size: 28 mm and must not have pockets.

A drag net must not be staked or fixed and may only be hauled by hand. It must have a float attached with the user's first and last name clearly marked on it.

A drag net must not be used in creeks and rivers and must be used seaward of the coast line and any catch must be cleared in water to prevent the death of released or unwanted fish.

Cast net

Maximum diameter: 6 m.

Maximum drop: 3 m when suspended from the centre.

Maximum mesh size: 25 mm.

A cast net must be attended at all times when in use and may only be used by casting, throwing or dropping it.

Handling fish

For the table

Fish that you want to keep should be spiked in the brain (iki jime) and bled (cut behind or under gills) immediately after capture then placed on ice. When handled in this way the table qualities of your catch will be significantly enhanced whether cooked fresh or after freezing.

Mud crabs are best kept live and can be tied and kept in a moist hessian bag in a cool place until you are ready to cook them. 'Anaesthetise' crabs before cooking by putting them in the freezer or ice slurry until they stop moving.

Catch and release

The following advice is provided to help ensure captured fish are given the best possible chance of survival after release:

- Fish should be released as soon as possible after capture.
- Use appropriate tackle and gear which is capable of handling fish of a size that can be expected.
- Use barbless hooks when using lures.
- Use non-offset circle hooks when using bait.
- Use purpose-built fish-friendly knotless landing nets.
- Do not suspend fish vertically by their jaw or gills; you should support the fishes weight with both hands.
- Don't lay a fish which is to be released on a hot surface.
- When a fish is deeply hooked cut the line close to the mouth and leave the hook in place.

Boating Safety

Pleasure craft in the NT do not require registration and operators are not required to hold a licence.

However, for your safety:

- check the weather and sea reports before you leave home, especially during the cyclone season
- let a responsible adult know where you are going and when you will return
- ensure your boat, motor and equipment are in reliable working order
- observe and understand all boating regulations and ensure your vessel has the correct safety gear as listed below on the NT Marine Safety table
- always carry adequate amounts of drinking water, vinegar and a first aid kit
- familiarise yourself with the area you will be fishing i.e. tides, charts and maps of the area.

For more information contact the Marine Safety Branch on 08 8924 7100 or visit the website marinesafety.nt.gov.au

Minimum safety equipment requirements for pleasure craft

Pleasure craft under 5 metres in length		Pleasure craft of 5 to 10 metres in length	
One approved lifejacket or buoyancy vest for each person on board		One approved lifejacket or buoyancy vest for each person on board	
Two paddles or oars fitted with rowlocks		One bailer with lanyard or bilge pump	
One bailer with lanyard	*EPIRB	One portable fire extinguisher	*EPIRB
One anchor fitted with an anchor cable of not less than 50 m		One anchor fitted with an anchor cable of not less than 50 m	
One litre for each person on board of fresh drinking water in a leakproof container		One litre for each person on board of fresh drinking water in a leakproof container	
One waterproof torch		One waterproof torch	One liquid damped compass
Two red flares		Two red flares	Two orange smoke signals
Two orange smoke signals		One "V" distress sheet	One chart of the area of operation

***A person shall not operate a pleasure craft more than 2 nautical miles from the coastline or outside sheltered waters unless it carries an approved 406 MHz Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB)**

Fishwatch Hotline

1800 891 136

(report suspicious fishing activity)

Customs Hotline

1800 061 800

(report suspicious border activity)

Fisheries Division

General fisheries enquiries

08 8999 2144

Marine Safety

08 8924 7100

Amateur Fishermen's

Association of the

Northern Territory

(AFANT)

08 8945 6455

**Department of Sustainability,
Environment, Water,
Population and Communities**

Kakadu Headquarters

08 8938 1121

www.fisheries.nt.gov.au

The information in this booklet does not replace the controls in the NT fisheries legislation, but provides a summary of the general intent of the legislation. Fishing rules do change, for the most-up-to date information on recreational fishing, check the Fisheries website at www.fisheries.nt.gov.au or contact Fisheries on 08 8999 2144. The complete Fisheries regulations can be accessed from the Fisheries home page.

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Report a problem crocodile

Darwin 0419 822 859

Katherine 0407 958 405

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www.nt.gov.au/becrocwise