



Best Practices for Recreational Blue Crab Trapping

Crab traps that are not checked regularly can kill fish and other animals. These unintended captures are called “bycatch,” and often include *diamondback terrapins*, unique brackish water turtles that cannot breathe under water and die in traps within hours.

Following the practices below can help ensure your catch is fresh and that you are being a good steward of Florida’s natural resources by not killing animals you didn’t mean to catch.

- **Remove your traps from the water when not in use!**
 - Traps left in the water continue to fish, killing everything that enters the trap.
 - Removing traps prevents loss and keeps traps from becoming a navigational hazard.
 - Store unused traps away from the water so that they don’t fall in or get blown in.
- **Check all traps at least daily, more often if possible.**
- **Only use the number of traps that you are willing to check daily, up to the limit of 5 per person.**
- **Install “Bycatch Reduction Devices” (BRDs) to exclude most diamondback terrapins and reduce bait loss or damage to crabs from terrapins (FREE; email terrapiin@MyFWC.com for details).**
- **Terrapins can congregate in particular, local “Hotspots.” If you catch terrapins in the same place more than once, try trapping in a different area.**
- **Do not place traps in channels or where boats might run over them. Boats can cut buoy lines and cause you to lose traps, or the traps could damage boats.**
- **Avoid buoys when boating so that you don’t cause others to lose traps.**
- **Make sure buoys are marked with a large “R,” your name and address, and that the buoy or dock lines are in good condition to avoid losing traps.**
- **Be sure degradable materials are built into the trap so that, if lost, it will eventually break down.**
- **Remember, you must have a recreational fishing license before you place a trap in the water. There is a limit of 1 terrapin per person per day (2 total in possession), and they cannot be sold.**
- **Consider participating in a volunteer clean-up for abandoned or “derelict” traps (information available at: MyFWC.com/fishing/saltwater/trap-debris).**
- **Biologists are trying to learn more about terrapin populations statewide, so if you catch a terrapin, you can help by reporting it to terrapiin@MyFWC.com.**



Diamondback terrapin - photo by Bill Turner.



A total of 744 lost or abandoned blue crab traps were removed from the St. Johns River during the regional closure January 16-25, 2012.



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