

How to Crab

Oregon Dungeness: A Great Catch!



KIDS UNDER 12 DO NOT NEED A LICENSE

- 🦀 People 12 and older must have a shellfish license. Licenses are available at ODFW offices as well as many sporting goods or hardware stores. Please review the Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations before you head out.

Time of year

- 🦀 Fall is typically the best time to crab. Beginning in September, crabs tend to “fill out” and contain a higher percentage of meat. Hard-shelled crabs contain 20%-30% meat by weight while soft-shelled crabs may have as little as 12% meat.
- 🦀 After heavy rainfall and resulting freshets, crab tend to be less abundant in the bays.

Time of day

- 🦀 Slack water (the time around high or low tide) is the best time to crab. During slack water, crabs are generally walking around and foraging since they are not getting pushed around by tidal exchange.

Where to rent crab gear

- 🦀 Many businesses along the coast rent crab gear. Check with local Chambers of Commerce or visitor centers for the business nearest you. An internet search will also yield a number of businesses that sell or rent crab gear.

Prepare for crabbing

- 🦀 Make sure you have your shellfish license, crab measuring tool, pots or rings, cooler, gloves, bait holders and bait supply.
- 🦀 Use sinking line to avoid having it get tangled in a boat propeller.
- 🦀 Marking your gear with your name and/or number may help if it is lost.

Baiting your gear

- 🦀 Many different types of bait are used for crabbing: turkey, chicken, mink, fish carcass, shad, herring, clams, etc. Fresh bait is best.
- 🦀 There are many ways to secure your bait inside of your crab gear. As long as the bait stays inside of your crab gear when crabbing, and the crabs can get to it, most methods will work.
- 🦀 Keep in mind that seals and sea lions will eat attractive bait that they can access (e.g. laying out on a crab ring). You can minimize this problem by using heavy-duty pots, using bait that they don't eat (chicken or turkey), or avoiding areas where they are prevalent.

Working your crab gear

- 🦀 Tie the end of your crab line to the dock or pier before you throw it in the water.
- 🦀 If crabbing from a boat, don't use buoys that are too large as they can cause light gear to float away.
- 🦀 Allow between one to two hours before retrieving your gear if you are crabbing with crab pots and 15 to 30 minutes if you are crabbing with rings.
- 🦀 When crabbing with rings, remember to retrieve them at a brisk and consistent speed in order to retain the crabs within the ring.



Sorting crabs

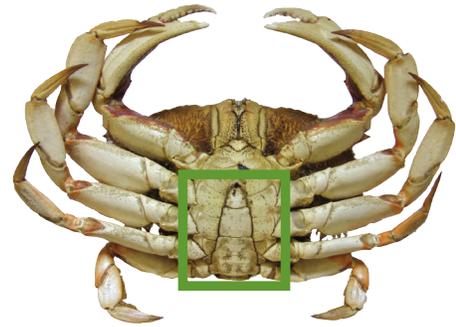
-  Quickly sort through crab, being careful to not break crab legs or get your fingers pinched.
-  An experienced crab handler will sort crabs by keeping them at ease. They want to get out, but they don't want to be forcefully grabbed. A quick shake of the pot is often more effective than reaching directly for them.
-  Be sure to quickly and carefully release crab. Do not throw them from heights as this can crack their carapace and kill them. It is illegal to retain only the claws from any species.

Make sure your crabs are LEGAL

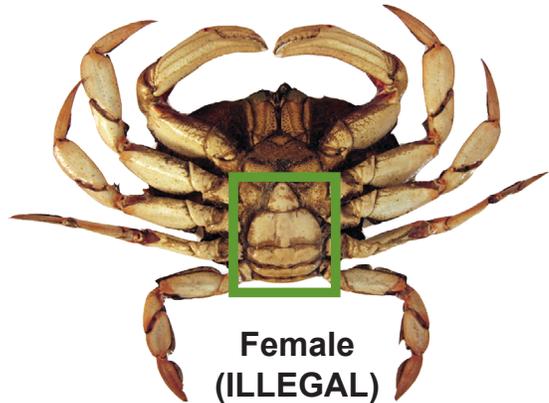
-  Immediately release all female Dungeness crab (see picture to the right.)
-  With a crab gauge, measure all male Dungeness crab retained. Retain no more than 12 male Dungeness crab per shellfish license that are $5\frac{3}{4}$ " inches across (NOT including the points) or wider.
-  When measuring crab, make sure you measure in a straight line across the back immediately in front of, but NOT including, the last points.

Keep your crab fresh

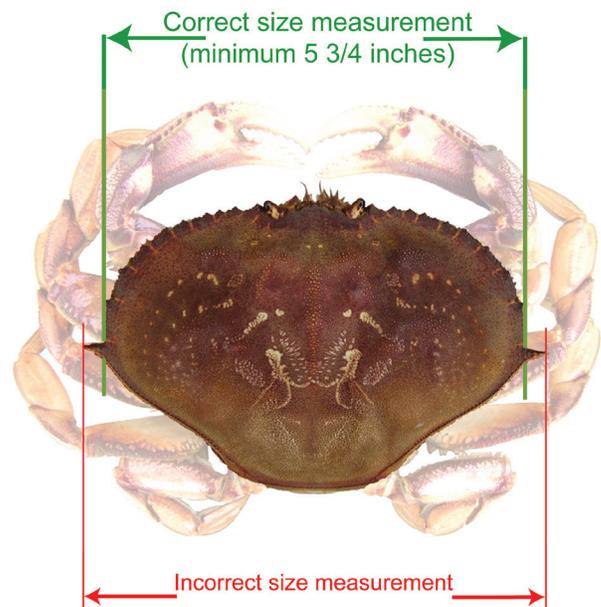
-  Store legal-sized (keeper) crabs in a cooler with ice or ice packs, or in a bucket or cooler with water.
-  If you keep your crabs in a bucket or cooler with water, make sure to change the water frequently to keep it cool and oxygenated. Make sure the water is seawater; freshwater will kill crabs.
-  All red rock crab (a native species) are legal to retain (daily limit 24), but most people only retain the largest males with the most meat.
-  Releasing soft-shell crab is strongly recommended. Soft-shelled crab are newly molted and are essentially a small crab in a big crab's body. Meat content can be very low (as little as half that of a crab in good condition) and the meat is usually stringy and less palatable.



**Male
(LEGAL)**



**Female
(ILLEGAL)**



As shown in the picture above, the correct size measurement of the carapace is IN FRONT OF, but not including, the points.