

Fishing for yabbies in New South Wales

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The freshwater yabby (*Cherax destructor*)

Best known of the 100 or so freshwater crayfish species found in Australia the yabby inhabits the still, warm waters of the lowlands west of the Great Dividing Range in NSW. The common yabby is one of several species of smooth-shelled crayfish in the genus *Cherax*. Its scientific name (*Cherax destructor*) refers to its burrowing habit. It can cause considerable damage by burrowing into dam walls and levee banks. In times of drought the yabby can burrow many metres down into the ground where it can lie in a dormant state for several years until the next rains or flood bring conditions suitable for growth and breeding.

The yabby is in the middle of the food chain and is basically vegetarian, but also scavenges

decaying plant and animal matter. Yabbies will eat just about anything. In times of overcrowding and shortage of food, yabbies will eat their own kind. In turn, they are an important part of the diet of the white ibis, several species of cormorant and warmwater fishes such as Murray cod and golden perch.

Fishing for yabbies forms part of the inland commercial fishery but is also a popular recreational fishery in the far western parts of the state. Catches in the Riverina, Lower Murray and the Far West lakes and rivers are usually highest during February, March and April, decreasing in winter and spring. The yabby is taken both to eat and to be used as bait, especially for Murray cod.

Mating occurs in spring and summer and the female can carry around 800 eggs with swimmerets located under her tail. Any yabbies carrying eggs ('berried') must be returned to the water immediately to ensure the next generation of this valuable species.

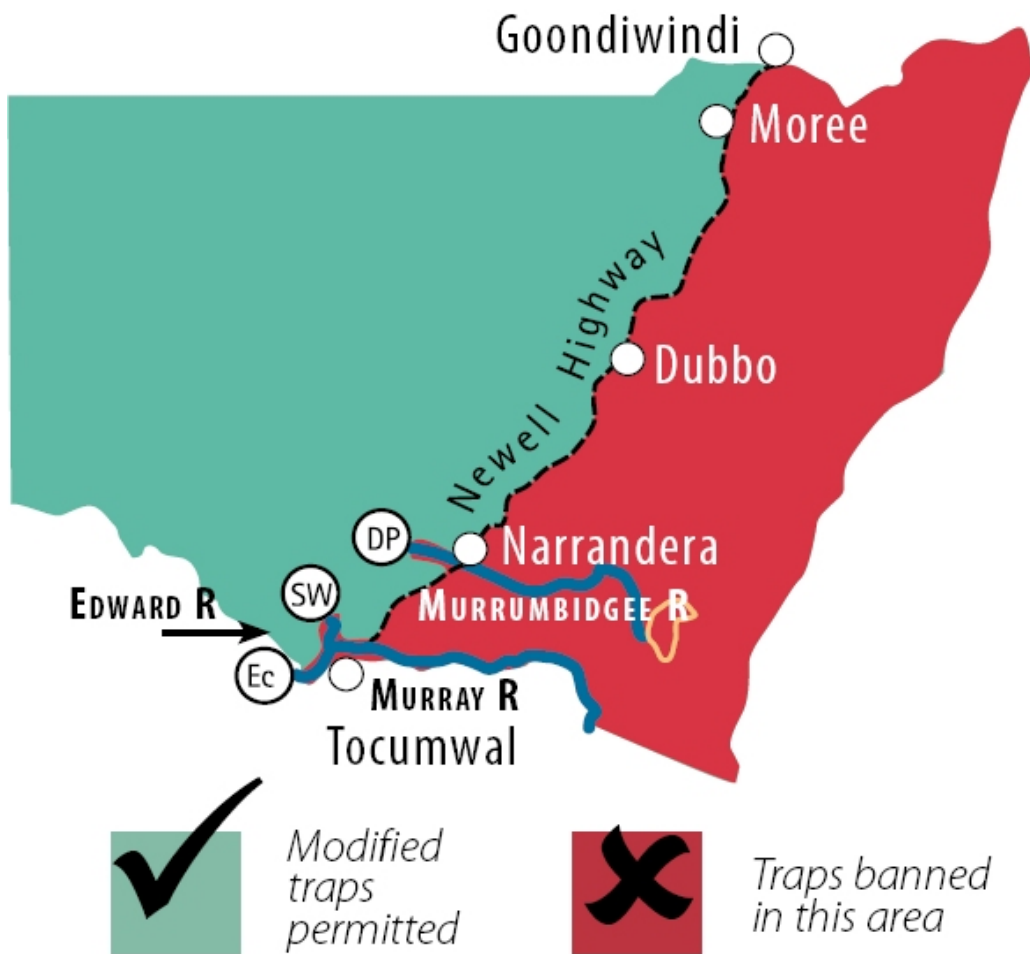
Closures

The use of yabby/ opera house traps are banned in public waters east of the Newell Highway and in three stretches of river west of the Newell Highway: the Edward River upstream of Stevens Weir, the Murray River upstream of the Echuca/Moama Rd Bridge and the Murrumbidgee River upstream of Darlington Point Rd Bridge. (See closure map below.)

All yabby traps are required to have a bycatch reduction device fitted to all entrance funnels. The intent of the general yabby trap closure and the bycatch reduction device is to prevent the death of platypus and minimise capture of air-breathing animals such as turtles and water rats. Other closed waters exist throughout the state and you should contact your local fisheries office.



Map of yabby / opera house trap closures

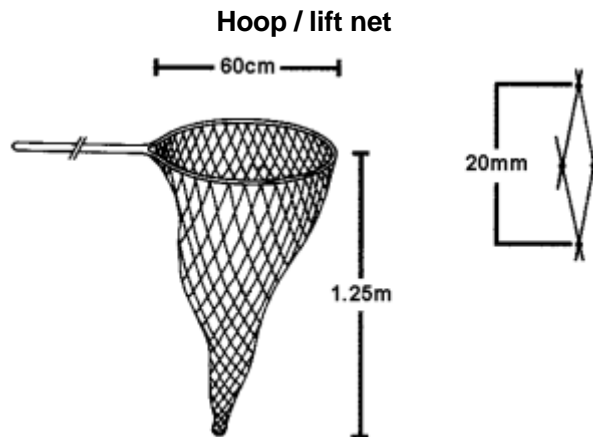


Yabby trap / opera house trap



Yabby trap / opera house trap table

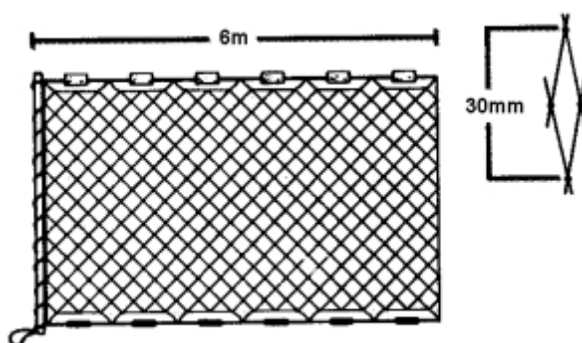
Maximum dimensions:	1 m × 0.6 m × 0.3 m
Mesh size:	13 mm minimum, calculated on the narrowest point of any axis.
Entrance funnels:	A bycatch reduction device must be fitted to all entrance funnels. The device must consist of a rigid ring with a maximum internal diameter of 90 mm permanently affixed to entry funnels at some point along their length, so as to restrict the entry funnels to a maximum opening of 90 mm measured in any direction.
Maximum number:	Unless otherwise specified, five traps may be set, used or in your possession.
Identification:	The position of any trap must be marked above water by a stake or buoy. Each trap must also be tagged with the owner's name plus residential address and/or boat registration.



Hoop / lift net table

Maximum dimensions:	Net attached to no more than two hoops, rings or frames not more than 1.25 m at their greatest diameter or diagonal. Maximum drop of net to be 1 m.
Mesh size:	13 mm minimum, calculated across the diagonal.
Maximum number:	Unless otherwise specified, five nets may be set, used or in your possession.
Identification:	Each net must be tagged with the owner's name plus residential address and/or boat registration number.
Note: The net is used only as a hand implement and only by the method of lowering into the water and then drawing the net vertically to the surface.	

Hand-hauled yabby net



Hand-hauled yabby net table

Maximum dimension:	Up to 6 m in length.
Mesh size:	40 mm maximum, calculated across the diagonal.
Note: Can only be used in ground tanks, bore drains or lagoons. Must be continuously and manually propelled not set or staked, joined or placed together with any other net.	

Fishing laws

A bag and possession limit of 200 yabbies per person applies when in, on or adjacent to waters or transporting or storing the quantity specified.

You may encounter other species of crayfish whilst fishing for yabbies such as Murray crayfish and other freshwater spiny crayfish. There is a size and bag limit for Murray and freshwater spiny crayfish and different regulations pertaining to the capture of these species apply. Consult the fisheries guide, check the website or contact your local fisheries office for more detail.

Regulations are designed to protect and conserve our fish stocks and their habitats. Expect to see fisheries officers patrolling foreshores, ramps and waterways. They will be keen to help and advise, but will also have an eye out for illegal fishing. Other bag and size limits are set out in the advisory material available free from your licence agent or fisheries office.

Report illegal fishing to your local fisheries office or fisherman's watch 1800 043 536. All information will be treated, and remain, confidential.

NSW Recreational Fishing Licence

You must hold a NSW Recreational Fishing Licence when fishing for yabbies and other fish in NSW. Licences are available from your local tackle shop or check with your local fisheries office for the nearest agent, or ring 1300 369

365 to purchase a licence using a credit card, over the phone. Licences can also be purchased [online](#). You must carry your licence with you at all times or risk an on-the-spot fine of \$200.

Your fishing licence supports your sport! All licence fees are put into special trusts overseen by angler committees to improve recreational fishing.

Access

It is generally much easier to get to streams in Australia than in many other countries, but sometimes you may want to cross private land. If so, make a point of asking the owner for permission. It is courteous to do so and the owner may want to advise you or give tips on choice yabbing spots.

Don't litter, and remember that permission to enter and fish does not necessarily include the right to camp, picnic, take animals, leave rubbish or carry firearms.

In most cases, the river or stream bed is not privately owned, and you may legally fish these streams from a boat, or while walking along the stream bed, as long as you keep well within the bank-tops of the stream's normal flow. Be sure that you gained legal access to the stream, e.g. via a reserve or bridge, or with permission.

NSW DPI inland offices

Hume

3/556 Macauley Street
Albury
Ph: 0260 424 228

Narrandera

Narrandera Fisheries Centre
Ph: 0269 599 066

Riverina

449 Charlotte Street
Deniliquin
Ph: 0358 819 999

Lower Murray

AR & AS, Silver City Hwy
Dareton
Ph: 0350 235 204

Far West

425 Blende Street
Broken Hill
Ph: 0880 876 483

Macquarie

Suite 1 Lot 7 Nanima Crescent
Wellington
Ph: 0268 454 438

Central Tablelands

Research Station Drive
Bathurst
Ph: 0263 311 428

Peel

72 Gunnedah Road
Tamworth
Ph: 0267 654 591

New England

127 Otho Street
Inverell
Ph: 0267 221 129

Monaro

Gaden Hatchery
Kosciuszko Road
Jindabyne
Ph: 0264 562 335

Yass

25 Warroo Road
Yass
Ph: 0262 263 867

Tumut

64 Fitzroy Street
Tumut
Ph: 0269 479 028

Please keep in mind that fisheries officers spend a lot of their time in the field, therefore the office days/hours for each of the locations will vary. It is suggested that you phone prior to visiting the office.

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Updates of this Primefact are available at
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/primefacts

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (February 2006). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.