

## New Jersey Crabbers Form Part of Research Team

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If you are crabbing in the coastal bay areas between Cape May Point and Little Egg Harbor this summer, don't be surprised if someone approaches you and asks about your catches. Field researchers will be out collecting information on recreational blue crab activities for the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife's Marine Fisheries Administration.

The survey will take place from May through October, and the information gained from the survey will be used to help determine the status of the blue crab population in New Jersey's coastal bays.

In 2005, funding from the DEP's Division of Science, Research and Technology enabled Fish and Wildlife to begin the research to update recreational blue crab data that was more than 30 years old. Last year, researchers also conducted surveys from May through October. Using telephone and field interviews, they assessed the number, size and sex of crabs harvested according to the different gear types used



Jersey blue crab.

for the recreational blue crab fishery within the Delaware Bay areas of Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties.

Researchers measured more than 4,000 individual crabs during 800 field interviews and conducted more than 2,250 telephone interviews. The information collected will be used by New Jersey and Delaware to assess blue crab stock in the Delaware Bay so informed management and research decisions can be made regarding the recreational and commercial fisheries.

In addition, Fish and Wildlife implemented a voluntary reporting system, based on their voluntary striped bass angler survey, for recreational crabbers possessing a non-commercial crab-pot license. For each trip they take, crab-pot license holders now are asked to maintain a log that includes, among other information, the fishing location, number of crabs caught and number of crabs kept. At the end of the season, crabbers send their logs to Fish and Wildlife's Nacote Creek Research Station. The information will provide insight on the annual changes in recreational crab-pot participation, effort and fishing locations. The survey will continue this year during the recreational blue crab season.

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For more information about either survey, to download voluntary reporting forms, and to view survey results and updates, visit Fish and Wildlife's Web site at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com). To purchase a recreational crab-pot license online, visit [www.njfishandwildlife.com/fishneed.htm](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/fishneed.htm). For information on purchasing a license at a retailer, visit the Web site or call the marine fisheries office at (609) 748-2020.