

GEHR Watershed Minute #48

Blue Crab Harvesting: (239 words)

The Blue Crab's Latin name, *Callinectes sapidus*, means savory beautiful swimmer. The **blue crab** is a crustacean found in the waters of the western Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, and it is one of the most important economic items harvested in local oceans and bays.

Crabs are harvested with baited pots and traps, trotlines, hand lines, fishing poles, and nets. Commercial traps or crab pots are wire cages with two fixed entrances for the crabs that prohibit their exit, while recreational crab traps contain some form of "entrance" for the crabs, such as hinged panels, that are typically closed as the trap is raised from the water. Crab pots and traps are baited with any of several types of meat, including bunker, bluefish, chicken or eel.

Male crabs are called "Jimmies", immature females are "Sallies", and mature females are "sooks" or "she-crabs". Females bearing eggs are also known as "gravid," and crabs with signs of getting ready to molt or shed are called "busters". Some commercial crabbers hold the "busters" until they shed, and then sell them as soft shell crabs, or peeler or shedder crabs.

Blue crabs are most often boiled in seasoned water until they turn red, and eaten out of the hard shell. Crab shells are very sharp and getting the small amount of edible meat out is a lot of work, so the eater of crabs is going to work for the eating pleasure.