

Catch-and-release for conservation

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The release of fish, unharmed by recreational anglers, is a recommended and effective practice to enhance the quality of the fishery. Recommended practices to aid in the survival of released fish are as follows:

Use tackle that is heavy enough to allow for quick landing to minimize exhaustion of the fish.



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Avoid removing large fish from the water. If they are removed, support their weight horizontally to prevent damage to the internal organs.

Do not use a gaff when other options are available. If a gaff is used, insert it in the lower jaw immediately behind the lower lip in the thin tissue to avoid damage to the fish. Do not lift the fish out of the water with the gaff. Support the fish's weight horizontally if it is lifted from the water.

Use wet hands when handling fish to prevent the removal of the fish's protective slime coating.



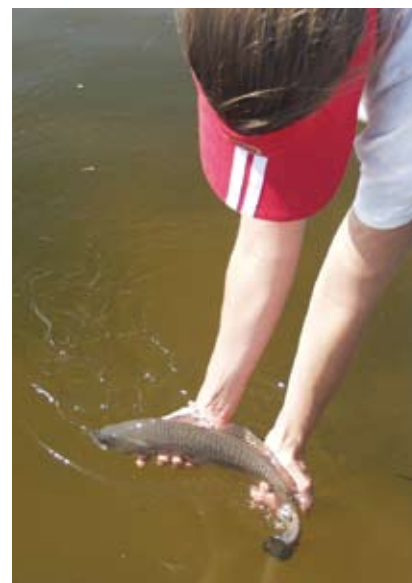
MICHELLE OWEN

Revive a tired fish before release by holding it horizontally in the water and moving it forward with its mouth open to allow for the flow of water over the gills.

Gripping devices can be effective for controlling and handling fish, but only use them by gripping behind the lower lip and supporting the weight of the fish in a horizontal position.



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Leave the fish in the water while removing the hook and release it without removing it from the water.



Take any pictures of the fish while it is in the water.

Do not put fingers or other objects into the gills or eyes of the fish.

When using de-hooking devices or long-nosed pliers to remove hooks to protect the fish and yourself, do not damage the fish by probing into the gills or throat. If the fish is hooked deep, cut the line as near the hook as possible.



When fishing with live or cut bait, use in-line (non-offset), barbless circle hooks that are the proper size for the targeted fish to maximize the incidence of hooking the fish in the jaw and not in the gut.

If a landing net is used, be sure it is knotless. Nets are recommended as a means to control the fish while in the water rather than a tool for removing the fish from the water.

Use artificial lures with barbless hooks to reduce the incidence of gut-hooking and minimize the time of handling to prevent further damage to the fish.



Deep water fish are susceptible to damage resulting from the expansion of the air in the swim bladder as they move rapidly to the surface. It can be detected by the protrusion of eyes from the sockets and/or the stomach from the mouth and a bloated body. The method recommended to aid survival is “venting,” which is the removal of the air from the swim bladder by puncturing the fish behind the pectoral fin with a hypodermic syringe (with the plunger removed) and inserting it into the swim bladder.

If a fish is brought onto the boat, place it on a cool wet surface and support its weight horizontally to avoid damage to internal organs.