

The Crab Collectors' Code Exe Estuary

Be an ambassador for crab tiling in Devon



working to protect the future of bait collection

The mudflats, sandbanks and marshland of the estuary are of international importance as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for thousands of birds and the valuable habitats which support them and other wildlife. The estuary is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is not an unlimited resource. Please ensure that by your careful use today, future generations will enjoy the Exe tomorrow.

Remember that estuaries are dangerous places with fast moving tides, strong currents and soft mud. See the RYA Safety at Sea leaflet or the Exe Estuary Water and Shore Code for more information.

Want to know more?

Devon Sea Fisheries Committee 01803 854648

Environment Agency 08708 506506

Exe Estuary Office 01392 382236

www.exe-estuary.org.uk

English Nature - Devon Office 01392 889770


www.english-nature.org.uk

National Federation of Sea Anglers 01364 644643

www.nftsa.org.uk

This code has been developed as a partnership initiative by English Nature, the Environment Agency, SW Federation of Sea Anglers, National Federation of Sea Anglers, Devon Sea Fisheries Committee and the Devon Estuary partnerships.

Recorded by




People who work on the foreshore, whether bait collecting or angling are perhaps most aware of the beauty and amount of wildlife that exists around our shores. The worms, shellfish, birds, fish, crabs and shrimps which live either in or close to the mudflats all belong to a complex ecosystem.

In using nature's resource responsibly, you can help maintain the source of bait stocks and allow nature to thrive at the same time.



Shore crab (Carcinus maenas)




English Nature / Typical crab tile

This code has been drawn up following consultation with all those concerned with the practice of collecting shore crab (*Carcinus maenas*) within estuaries.

The reason for the Code is to:

- help reduce the risk of conflict between those who collect shore crab for angling bait and other estuary users, and
- to help crab tilers 'farm' the estuary in a way that respects nature, sustaining stocks, both now and in the future.

The organisations responsible for regulating crab tiling on the estuary will be monitoring this code. If it is not adhered to, regulations will be introduced to control and manage the fishery.



Crab tile

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct the term 'Crab Tile' shall include any form of artificially placed habitat, structure or shelter to aid the collection of shore crab (*Carcinus maenas*) within an estuary.


Plate 1: A 'soft' peeler crab, post-moulting phase. Notice the difference in size between the existing exoskeleton (left) and the unprotected body (right).

Crab Collectors' Code

- Through voluntary agreement of existing crab collectors it has been agreed that no more tiles should be placed on the Exe Estuary.
- Due to rapid expansion in recent years Devon Sea Fisheries Committee have introduced new legislation – Byelaw 24. Tiles outside the area marked on the map (overleaf) are now illegal.
- Be aware that permission of the landowner should be given before accessing the foreshore or placing crab tiles.
- Make sure you are aware of Devon Sea Fisheries, Local Council Byelaws and Harbour Authority Byelaws.
- To avoid causing difficulty or damage to other estuary users:
- Avoid placing crab tiles in awkward or dangerous positions (e.g. near slipways)
- Place crab tiles at a low angle. Crab tiles should be no more than 20cm in height above the mudflat.

- Avoid using or placing crab tiles within 5m of commercial oyster and mussel beds and leave a 10m wide access route to each bed.
- Never use (and phase out whenever possible) materials such as asbestos or sharp metal which could have a detrimental impact on the environment or people.
- Only take crabs that are fit for use as bait and return immature, berried (egg carrying) and non moulting crabs.
- Whilst on the foreshore, keep dogs on a lead to avoid disturbance to birds.
- Offer advice about your activity to other estuary users whenever possible.

Should you encounter non-native or unusual species e.g. Chinese mitten crab please report these to MarLIN 01752 255026.



Mitten crab / Natural History Museum Photo Unit

Exe Estuary

