



Use needle-nose pliers or a dehooking device to grip the hook securely.

- Use a pair of needle-nose pliers or a dehooking device to grip the hook and gently back the hook out. Do not twist the hook.
- If the hook has been swallowed, cut the fishing line; the hook may dissolve in the fish's digestive system.
- Gently slide the fish back into the water head first, allowing water to pass over its gills.



Protect the Environment

- Never leave or throw trash overboard. Take it ashore and properly dispose of it. This includes old fishing line, six-pack drink yokes, leaders and hooks, bottles, cans, plastic shopping bags or anything that could harm fish or wildlife.
- Avoid spilling or dumping pollutants such as oil and gasoline into the water or on land.
- Report any pollution or environmental damage to the appropriate authorities.
- Never harm marine mammals, birds or sea turtles, even if they are trying to steal your bait or catch.



Use a soft, wet towel to hold the fish. This protects the fish and protects your hand from the sharp dorsal fin

Be Nice

- Learn and obey fishing and boating laws and treat other anglers and boaters with courtesy.
- Call the N.C. Marine Patrol at 800-682-2632 if you witness fishing violations or are uncertain of any laws. Do not try to handle the situation yourself.



When you're fishing, be nice to others.



N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell St.
Morehead City NC 28557



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Ethical Angling

A Guide to Responsible Fishing



People of all ages enjoy fishing for many reasons. It's been that way since time began.

Parents teach their children how to fish and those children teach their children how to fish in a never-ending cycle.

However, habitat destruction, degraded water quality and poor fishing habits can greatly impact fish populations. So it is your responsibility to do your part to help ensure sustainable fisheries for the future by becoming an ethical angler.

Ethical angling means more than just obeying regulations; it means fishing in a way that minimizes harm to the fish and their environment.

If each new generation of fishermen learns to be an ethical angler and change old, wasteful habits into new conservative ones, they will be helping to continue the cycle of parents teaching children to fish for generations to come.

Here are some tips for ethical angling:

Prepare for Your Trip

- Make sure you have a valid Coastal Recreational Fishing License or are covered under an exemption.
- Check the latest size and bag limits on the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries website at www.ncdmf.net. These regulations can change frequently.
- Become familiar with the fish species commonly caught in North Carolina waters so that size and bag limits can be properly applied.

- Stock your tackle box with a pair of needle-nose pliers or a dehooking device, a tape measure, glove or towel.

While You Fish

- Use circle hooks to help prevent the fish from swallowing the hook. Pinch the barb down on all hooks.
- Do not fight a fish into exhaustion; instead tighten the drag and land it as quickly as possible.
- Practice Catch and Release. Do not take your entire bag limit if you are not going to consume them. Most released fish survive to be caught another day.
- Do not discard a previously caught legal fish for a larger legal fish to remain within the bag limit. This is called high-grading and is an unnecessary waste of fish.

Releasing Your Catch

- Handle the fish as little as possible and keep it out of the water as little as possible. Leave the fish in the water to release it if conditions are feasible.
- When handling the fish, use a wet towel or wet glove to gently but firmly grip the fish below the gills. This will keep the fish from thrashing around. The wet towel or glove will preserve the protective slime on the fish.



Example of a circle hook rig



Tackle box essentials: tape measure, dehooking tool, glove or towel