

The Dangers of Opera House Traps in Eastern NSW

The use and possession of yabby - opera house traps are banned in public waters east of the Newell Highway. The reason for this is simple, in eastern drainages there are a vast number of animals that can be captured by these traps. Many of them are air breathing animals which drown in these traps.

A juvenile native Water Rat (Hydromys chrysogaster) drowned in an opera house trap

All yabby traps are required to have a bycatch reduction device with a maximum diameter of 90mm (fixed ring) fitted to all entrance funnels. The intent of the bycatch reduction device is to prevent the death of platypus and minimise capture of air-breathing animals such as turtles and water rats. Unfortunately, this does not stop juvenile animals being captured.



If you see illegal fishing occurring REPORT the activity immediately to your local fisheries office or call fisherman's watch 1800 043 536.

Freshwater crayfish are an important keystone species that have a disproportionately large effect on the whole catchment relative to their abundance. They play a critical role in maintaining the structure of the whole ecological community, their prosperity and abundance directly affecting the health and abundance of numerous other species (macroinvertebrates, fish, eels, turtles, lizards, snakes, water rats, platypus, quolls and birds) in the ecosystem. If anything happens to a crayfish population, the consequences are felt throughout the food chain for years. It's not only the direct illegal capture of crayfish but also discarded illegal yabby traps and nets, which are common in local creeks, indicating a broad non-compliance to existing fishing regulations. Traps and nets not only pose a threat to the rare eastern crayfish and fish species, but rare and protected animals such as snakes, lizards, turtles, platypus, water rats and cormorants, are also easily entangled and killed in illegal traps and one of the reasons they are banned in the area. The problem is enlarged by the traps being cheap to purchase, so many irresponsible illegal fishers bait and set large numbers of traps over a wide area but are then too lazy or irresponsible to actually pull them back in. Many of these traps can "ghost fish" where they catch a fish or crayfish that eventually dies in the trap which then attracts another fish or crayfish to eat the dead animal. Referred to as ghost fishing, abandoned traps can fish for years constantly killing our native species.


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