

## From the Fishers Mouth

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Jamin Forbes

May heralds the start of the Murray Crayfish open season. These enigmatic crustaceans are the armour plated warriors of the Murrumbidgee. With a thick, spiny exoskeleton and powerful claws designed to fend off hungry cod, lobsters are an unusual, if not, odd creature.

May, June, July and August are the months when fishermen are allowed to catch lobsters. The other months of the year are closed as female crays are without eggs



(berries), which open them up for consumption as without eggs (berries) they are able to be taken.

Murray crayfish take a long time to grow with up to nine years to achieve the legal limit of a 90mm carapace. As such they are very prone to overfishing, so bag limits should be observed to ensure the protection of the species for future generations.

Crays are caught using hoop nets (purchased from specialist tackle stores such as Fishing World, Gumly) with a bait secured firmly in the middle of the hoop. The best bait to use is carp. If you are unable to get any carp, liver is a suitable alternative, but carp is the premium enticer.

In order to maximise your success, nets should be placed adjacent to steep banks and deeper water where the crays live. Check the nets every thirty minutes or so (less if they are biting, or up to an hour if things are slow). Move your nets to different locations depending on where you are having success.

Crays are most active at night, however being on the river at night in the middle of winter is not a pleasant (or safe) thing to do, so early mornings are a good option, particularly for families.

Lobstering is a great family day which allows the kids to be involved in a fun, outdoor activity away from the electronic gizmo's that seems to dominate their attention these days.

Before you go lobstering, make sure you procure a plastic measuring gauge and a fishing licence so that you have no worries with the authorities. Remember that Blowering Dam is closed to crayfishing and to check with NSW Fisheries for more details on the rules and regulations.