



Photo Ian Shaw



Estuaries are among the most biologically productive ecosystems in the world and contain a high diversity of life. They are the ‘nurseries of the sea’, providing nutrient-rich breeding grounds for fish, crustaceans and other aquatic species, many of which have commercial and recreational value. Estuarine habitats are important feeding and nesting areas for birds, and act as safe places for migratory stopovers.

**Threats such as marine debris, erosion, recreational fishing and boating all have an impact on estuarine species and the habitats that they rely upon.**

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ▶ **Check crab traps regularly** as reduced soak-time will limit negative impacts on non-target species.
- ▶ **Use the correct tackle for your target species.** This reduces lost tackle and undersized catches, and minimises harm to non-target species.
- ▶ Collect and responsibly **dispose of any fishing line, gear and bait packaging.**
- ▶ **Correctly label crab traps** to NSW Fisheries specifications. Labelled traps are easier to locate and less often lost. [See <dpi.nsw.gov.au> for fishing rules and regulations.]

### KEY FACTS

**Fishing gear**, whether abandoned, lost or discarded, represents **one of the most common litter types recovered from the marine environment.**

**Unclaimed mud crab traps** not only damage the environment, they **continue fishing indefinitely.** In a process commonly referred to as ‘**ghost fishing**’, the traps keep snaring crabs, fish and other animals. Many of these animals die imprisoned in the trap and themselves become bait, thus perpetuating the cycle.

**If estuarine species ingest or become entangled** in bundles of discarded fishing line or plastic bait packaging, **they can be injured or killed.**



Photo Steve Smith

