

Video	Audio
	<p>&gt;&gt;MALE NARRATOR: ON THIS EPISODE OF GEORGIA OUTDOORS WE'LL EXPLORE THE MANY WAYS THAT SHELLFISH, CRUSTACEANS, AND MOLLUSKS CONTRIBUTE NOT ONLY TO OUR DIET, BUT ALSO TO OUR ENVIRONMENT. COMING UP NEXT ON GEORGIA OUTDOORS.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;NARRATOR: GEORGIA IS HOME TO AN ABUNDANCE OF WILDLIFE, FROM THE VERY LARGE TO THE VERY SMALL. IT'S EASY TO APPRECIATE THE AWESOME BEAUTY OF A BALD EAGLE IN FLIGHT, OR THE QUIET NOBILITY OF A WHITE TAILED DEER, BUT THERE ARE MANY OTHER, OFTEN OVERLOOKED CREATURES WHICH DESERVE OUR ATTENTION. FROM OUR COASTAL WATERS TO OUR INLAND RIVERS AND STREAMS – A VAST ARRAY OF SHELLFISH CAN BE FOUND. THESE AQUATIC INVERTEBRATES INCLUDE MOLLUSKS SUCH AS CLAMS, OYSTERS, AND MUSSELS, AS WELL AS CRUSTACEANS LIKE CRABS, SHRIMP, AND CRAYFISH. THOUGH WE MOST OFTEN ENCOUNTER THESE FASCINATING CREATURES AT THE DINNER TABLE, THEY PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN OUR AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS.</p>
	<p>THE FRESH WATER MUSSEL IS ONE OF NORTH AMERICA'S MOST DIVERSE SHELLFISH GROUPS. THOUGH OFTEN REGOGNIZED BY THEIR DISTINCTIVE SHELLS, BENEATH THE WATER'S SURFACE, FRESHWATER MUSSELS COME TO LIFE IN BEAUTIFUL WAYS RARELY SEEN BY THE HUMAN EYE. GEORGIA IS HOME TO A NUMBER OF THESE BEAUTIFUL AND FRAGILE CREATURES. STEPHEN GOLLADAY OF THE JONES ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTER IS STUDYING GEORGIA'S FRESH WATER MUSSELS.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Golladay: It's estimated that there are more than 300 species in north America, and of that, historically a hundred species occurred in Georgia. Now we know that 8 of those species are probably extinct and another 15 of those are considered rare, but still Georgia supports a very diverse mussel fauna.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;NARRATOR: BECAUSE FRESHWATER MUSSELS REMAIN STATIONARY THROUGHOUT MOST THEIR LIVES, THEY HAVE DEVELOPED COMPLEX AND UNIQE WAYS TO REPRODUCE. JUST AS HONEYBEES WORK TO HELP POLLINATE FLOWERS, MUSSELS USE FISH TO HELP DISTRIBUTE THEIR YOUNG.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Skelton: The larval mussel has to attach either to the gill or the fin of a fish before it can complete its development. So the trick is how do you get a larval mussel into a fish's mouth? Female mussels have developed fantastic strategies.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;NARRATOR: MUSSEL LARVAE IS PACKED INTO A THIN MEMBRANE BUILT TO IMITATE A WORM, SMALL FISH, OR</p>

ANYTHING THAT MIGHT LOOK APPETIZING TO THE UNSUSPECTING HOST. THESE LURES COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES. FROM THE BEAUTIFUL TO THE BIZARRE. SOME LURES ARE QUITE CONVINCING, WITH MARKINGS AND SHAPES WHICH RESEMBLE FINS AND EVEN EYE SPOTS. UPON STRIKING, THOUSANDS OF LARVAE ARE RELEASED, SOME OF WHICH ARE SUCKED IN TO THE FISH'S GILLS. THE FISH THEN CARRIES THE YOUNG MUSSELS TO ANOTHER AREA. FOR SOME SPECIES, THIS BEHAVIOR IS ONLY CARRIED OUT UNDERCOVER OF DARKNESS.

THE SHINYRAYED POCKETBOOK USES A LURE VERY SIMILAR TO THE SPECIES. IT GROWS TO A LENGTH SEVERAL TIMES THE SIZE OF THE MUSSEL ITSELF. THE LARVAL SACK, OUTSTRETCHED ON AN INVISIBLE LINE DARTS AROUND LIKE A SMALL FISH AS THE WATER FLOWS. LARGER FISH CANNOT RESIST THIS EASY TARGET. THE SHINYRAYED POCKETBOOK IS ONE OF GEORGIA'S MOST INTERESTING AND BEAUTIFUL MUSSEL SPECIES. IT IS ALSO ONE OF THE RAREST. IN THE SOUTHEAST, HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS INDICATE THAT OUR STREAMS AND RIVERS WERE ONCE LITERALLY PAVED WITH COLONIES OF FRESHWATER MUSSELS. THIS, UNFORTUNATELY IS NO LONGER THE CASE.

>>Golladay: Throughout north America, mussel species are experiencing a decline, and that's also true in Georgia In the past there has been over harvesting of mussels which has led to declines. Certainly pollution of waterways has led to declines in mussel populations. We've altered our river corridors through channel dredging for navigation and other activities that have decreased the availability of habitat. The development of reservoirs has led to mussel population declines because many species don't live in still water.

>>NARRATOR:

LIKE OYSTERS AND CLAMS, MUSSELS ARE BIVALVES. IN TERMS OF DETECTING POLLUTION AND OTHER DETRIMENTAL FACTORS IN OUR RIVERS AND STREAMS, THEY ARE OUR CANARIES IN THE AQUATIC COAL MINE.

>>Golladay: More than 50 percent of the mussel species throughout north America are considered in peril, that means they're in danger of going extinct throughout their range. . We know that their declines are due to the poor health of many of our water bodies, so as mussel goes, so goes some of the rest of the quality of the water body itself.

>>NARRATOR:

ANOTHER INHABITANT OF OUR WATERWAYS, CRAYFISH ARE VERY RECOGNIZABLE. ALSO CALLED CRAWFISH, CRAWDADS OR MUD BUGS, THESE SMALL BUT FEISTY CRUSTACEANS LOOK LIKE TINY LOBSTERS, BUT ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE FOUND IN FRESH WATER ENVIRONMENTS. THOUGH MOST CRAYFISH SPECIES LIVE IN FLOWING WATER, MANY HAVE ADAPTED TO LIVE IN UNUSUAL PLACES. THEY INHABIT CAVES, LAKES, PONDS, AND

EVEN BURROW UNDERGROUND. FROM BROWNS AND OLIVE GREENS, TO FANTASTIC REDS AND BLUES, CRAYFISH COLORS COVER THE SPECTRUM. AND THOUGH THE ONES YOU FIND IN GEORGIA SELDOM END UP ON THE MENU, OUR STATE IS HOME TO A SPECTACULAR ARRAY OF THESE CREATURES. CHRIS SKELTON, OF GEORGIA COLLEGE AND STATE UNIVERSITY, IS ONE OF THE STATE'S MOST KNOWLEDGABLE CRAYFISH SCHOLARS.

>> Skelton: About 600 species in the world. Over half of those live in the United States. We have about 70 species in the state, which ranks up with the highest numbers in the rest of the country.

>> NARRATOR:

IN HIS RESEARCH, CHRIS EMPLOYS A NUMBER OF METHODS TO COLLECT CRAYFISH SAMPLES. HERE, HE USES TRAPS FILLED WITH CAT FOOD - A CRAYFISH DELICACY. THESE INVERTEBRATES ARE NOT PICKY EATERS.

>> Skelton:

Crayfishes are kind of set right in the middle of the food chain. They eat decaying plant or animal matter, just pretty much whatever they can get. They're called opportunistic omnivores, which means they'll grab whatever they can get and eat that.

>> NARRATOR:

AND JUST ABOUT ANYTHING WILL EAT CRAYFISH. FISH, BIRDS, MAMMALS, AND EVEN OTHER CRAYFISH ALL PREY UPON THEM. THEY ARE A VITAL FOOD SOURCE IN MANY AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS. TODAY, CHRIS IS LOOKING FOR AN EXOTIC SPECIES, AND IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG TO FIND ONE.

>> Skelton

It's the freckled clawed crayfish or speckle clawed crayfish and you can see it's got speckles on its claws. But it is an exotic. One of the biggest threats to our native crayfishes is exotic crayfishes. Pretty much the meanest crayfish is the one that makes it. If they don't have a good hiding place in the daytime to hide from predators, they're more vulnerable to predation. So the biggest toughest one gets the good hiding places.

>> NARRATOR: CRAYFISH ARE AQUATIC SPECIES, NOT ALL CRAYFISH LIVE IN OPEN WATER. ALONG RIVER BEDS AND OTHER SEMI-DRY AREAS, MANY CRAYFISH BUILD COMPLEX TUNNELS AND SPEND THEIR WHOLE LIVES IN BURROWS. AS THE CREATURE BURROWS UNDERGROUND, DIRT IS PUSHED TO THE SURFACE, FORMING A "CHIMNEY" TO THE ENTRANCE. CHRIS HAS ENLISTED SOME HELP IN CATCHING A DEVIL CRAYFISH, ONE OF OUR NATIVE BURROWING SPECIES. DR. GEORGE STANTON OF COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY HAS BROUGHT A GROUP OF STUDENTS TAKING HIS COURSE IN CRAYFISH

BIOLOGY TO HELP WITH THE DIRTY WORK.

>>STANTON: IT USUALLY INVOLVES HEAVY LABOR. YOU HAVE TO DIG A HOLE.

>>NARRATOR: DIGGING FOR BURROWING CRAYFISH IS HARD DIRTY WORK. BECAUSE THEY NEED WATER TO LIVE, CRAYFISH BURROW DOWN TO THE WATER TABLE, WHICH CAN BE SEVERAL FEET UNDER GROUND.

>>SKELTON: THIS IS LIKE WORK. YOU DO THIS ALL DAY ONE DAY, THE NEXT DAY YOU CAN BARELY OPEN YOUR FINGERS.

>>Hollis:

Upon signing up for the course I was a little bit nervous because I didn't know what to expect. I wasn't too sure as to how I was going to apply it to my life. After having our first crayfish hunt and seeing the diversity of the crayfish, I began to realize that it's something worth studying.

>>Brown:

I'm applying to medical school, so I'm hopefully going to be a doctor in the next decade or so, but just in my four years at Columbus state it's been real apparent to me that you need to know a little bit about everything in your environment in order to be efficient at whatever you do.

>>Skelton to group: This is one we talked about earlier, the devil crawfish.

>>Skelton:

I think it's a good thing to get students out and the general public just familiar with these things. They don't have to come out here and catch them, but just to know these things are around. Growing up, everybody's seen a crawdad, it's a little brown thing crawling around in a creek, but who knew there were 70 species and who knew that they come in orange and blue and all these fantastic colors. It's a fascinating group. I think it's our duty to preserve as much as we can, because we don't know how it all fits together. You start taking pieces out of the puzzle and pretty soon you can't recognize it any more.

>>NARRATOR: CRAYFISH AND MUSSELS SHARE THEIR UNDERWATER ENVIRONMENT WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER AQUATIC ANIMALS. THE HABITAT OUR STREAMS AND RIVERS PROVIDE IS GREATLY AFFECTED BY STREAM FLOW.

>>PETERSON: STREAM FLOW IS BASICALLY THE VOLUME OF WATER COMING DOWN A STREAM. AND OF COURSE, AS THE VOLUME OF WATER INCREASES, YOU TEND TO HAVE LARGER AMOUNTS OF HABITAT. WHEN THERE'S LESS WATER AVAILABLE, YOU TEND TO HAVE FEWER HABITAT AVAILABLE FOR STREAM FISHES.

>>NARRATOR: JIM PETERSON AND RHETT JACKSON ARE CONDUCTING A THREE YEAR STUDY OF STREAM FLOW IN THE FLINT RIVER BASIN TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW THIS PHENOMENON AFFECTS UNDERWATER COMMUNITIES. THEY DO THIS BY TAKING FISH SURVEYS, STREAM MEASUREMENTS AND WATER CHEMISTRY READINGS. THEIR RESEARCH SHOULD PROVIDE A MODEL TO HELP THE STATE MANAGE WATER FOR ALL WHO NEED IT.

>>Jackson:

In GA we've been having a drought for the last four years and it's become very clear that people have a lot of different desires for the water. We've got farmers in south Georgia that want to pump water out of Florida from the aquifer for irrigation. We have rivers that need water for fish and for fishermen and for shellfishermen, and we've got metro Atlanta needing water for commercial and residential supply.

>>Peterson:

I think people are concerned about water quality and about stable, diverse communities, mussel communities, aquatic communities in general, and our study is going to help decision makers put together policies and management options that will allow people to use the water resources at a very minimal impact to the aquatic community, so we're trying to develop the tools to determine how we can get the best of both worlds

#### GEOFACT

>>FEMALE NARRATOR:

WATER QUALITY IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM. HERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP KEEP THE STREAMS AND RIVERS NEAR YOU CLEAN. CORRECTLY DISPOSE OF HAZARDOUS HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS. BETTER THAN THAT, BUY NON-TOXIC HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS WHEN POSSIBLE. RECYCLE AND DISPOSE OF TRASH PROPERLY AND NEVER NON-BIODEGRADABLE MATERIALS DOWN THE TOILET. CONSERVE WATER AND AVOID OVERWATERING YOUR LAWN AND GARDEN. USE NATURAL FERTILIZERS ON YOUR LAWN AND DECREASE HARD SURFACES AROUND YOUR HOME. THIS WILL IMPROVE DRAINAGE. RECYCLE USED MOTOR OIL. AVOID PUTTING IT DOWN GUTTERS OR STORM DRAINS. BE AN ACTIVIST. CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIALS OR ATTEND PUBLIC MEETINGS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE LAWS THAT PROTECT YOUR WATER.

>>MALE NARRATOR: SEAFOOD IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF A HEALTHY DIET. AMERICAN'S CONSUME OVER 4 BILLION POUNDS OF IT EVERY YEAR. AND OUR COASTAL SHELLFISH, SHRIMP, CRAB, OYSTERS AND CLAMS ARE SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR ITEMS ON THE MENU. OF ALL THESE CREATURES OYSTERS ARE A DELICACY, WHICH HAVE PEAKED OUR CURIOSITY FOR CENTURIES. THIS LOW-CALORIE MOLLUSKS ARE

NOT ONLY A GREAT SOURCE OF PROTEIN, IT'S LONG BEEN REPORTED THAT OYSTERS CAN INCREASE YOUR IQ AND LABIDO. THE LEGENDARY LOVER, CASANOVA, IS SAID TO HAVE STARTED EVERY MEAL WITH AN APPETIZER OF 12 DOZEN OYSTERS. THOUGH THERE'S NO SCIENTIFIC PROOF TO HELP SUPPORT THE APHRODISIAC POWERS OF THE OYSTER, THE VITAMINS AND MINERALS THEY CONTAIN CAN INCREASE YOUR ENERGY AND FIGHT FATIGUE.

THERE ARE DOZENS OF WAYS TO EAT AN OYSTER – STEAMED, FRIED, RAW, WITH A CRACKER OR WITHOUT - BUT IF RAW IS YOUR PREFERENCE, YOU MAY NEED TO BE A BIT MORE CAUTIOUS.

>>Good: Your best defense against eating, or getting sick from eating raw oysters is cooking your oysters. If you really enjoy eating raw oysters, be sure that you know where the oysters came from. If you're going out and buying them on your own, go to a certified wholesale dealer.

>>NARRATOR: THERE'S ALSO A LOT OF SPECULATION OVER THE BEST TIME OF YEAR TO EAT OYSTERS.

>>GOOD: people have asked me – is there a season on oysters, can we only eat oysters in months with “R” or end with r as the case is...the answer to that is no, you can eat oysters 12 months out of the year if you like, there is no season on them.

>>Narrator: Historically we have found other uses for oysters as well. TABBY, A MIXTURE OF EQUAL AMOUNTS OF OYSTER SHELL, SAND, LIME, AND WATER, WAS A POPULAR BUILDING MATERIAL OF EARLY COASTAL SETTLERS. OFTEN CALLED THE COASTAL CONCRETE, TABBY HELD UP WELL AGAINST THE STRONG WINDS OF COASTAL STORMS, AND THE RUINS OF THESE STRUCTURES DOT THE BARRIER ISLANDS OF GEORGIA'S COAST. MORE RECENTLY, THE OYSTER WAS ALSO AN IMPORTANT PART OF GEORGIA'S COASTAL ECONOMY.

>>Good: A lot of people don't realize this, but around the turn of the century, Georgia was one of the leading oyster producing states in the nation. There were several major canneries set up around Georgia that canned oysters, and all of the shell stock or shell from those oysters went to paving highway 17, which is a major thoroughfare running north and south on our coastline.

>>Narrator: Young oysters need a surface to attach to. The most popular material is oyster shell. Because so much shell was removed from the estuary and used to pave highway 17, populations declined and so did Georgia's oyster industry. Today, our beds are back and people do continue to collect oysters in Georgia, though on a smaller scale. You don't necessarily have to use a rod and reel to take advantage of a Georgia fishing license. That same license also allows you to collect shellfish. So what does it take to harvest a Georgia oyster?

>>Townsend: A strong back...and a lot of work and just good heavy gloves and good boots

>>Good: The Georgia oysters, being that they're clusters, they have to be broken up either using a small hammer or a crowbar. We do harvests here by squatting down on the oyster bed, bending over, breaking the oysters up on the gulf coast they use tongs, they tong for them, or in some cases they dredge for them. *the gulf coast oyster is just a larger oyster.* It's larger, it's smoother and, depending on who you ask, people will tell you it doesn't have as much flavor as a Georgia oyster, but it makes a better half-shell oyster.

>>NARRATOR:

CLAMS ARE ALSO ABUNDANT ON GEORGIA'S COAST. UNLIKE OYSTERS, WHICH ARE EASY TO SPOT AT LOW TIDE, CLAMS LIVE BURIED IN THE MUD. THOUGH THERE ARE RECREATIONAL DIGGING AREAS, MOST OF GEORGIA'S CLAMS ARE FARMED. MIKE TOWNSEND IS ONE OF GEORGIA'S ORIGINAL CLAM FARMERS.

>>Townsend: In 1990 I was shrimp fishing and I had been shrimping for about 16 years, and I had some friends that harvested wild oysters and clams, and I saw them making a little money, so I asked them if I could join them and they let me join them. I acquired a lease of my own after a few years. In may of 1997, the University of Georgia put a few of us into mariculture.

>>Narrator: In clam mariculture, juvenile clams or "seed" are set on the river bottom to grow in mesh bags. When they're large enough, they're planted directly in the mud and covered to keep out predators. At harvest time a clam farmer can collect between 8 and 12 thousand clams a day. Harvesting clams in the wild is done much the same way. And many of the same areas, which are good for oystering, are also good for digging clams.

>>Good: A lot of people who harvest clams use either a small rake or just do it by hand. I prefer to do it by hand because you can feel the clams just beneath the mud. I always it equate it to picking up dimes and quarters.

>>Narrator: Both oysters and clams are filter feeders. They survive by removing bacteria and nutrients from the water. A thriving population is usually a good indicator of a healthy estuary. Clams and oysters also accumulate chemicals and pollutants, so water quality is closely monitored in areas where they're harvested.

>>Good: There's very good recreational oyster and clam digging in Georgia. We've got recreational harvest areas in Chatham County, Glynn County, McIntosh County and Camden County. The department of natural resources has maps that all have outlined these recreational harvest areas for anybody that's interested.

>>NARRATOR:

OF COURSE, CLAMS AND OYSTERS AREN'T THE ONLY SHELLFISH HARVESTED ON GEORGIA'S COAST. FOR DECADES, COMMERCIAL SHRIMP TRAWLERS HAVE NAVIGATED OUR WATERS JUST OFFSHORE. THESE PICTURESQUE VESSELS, TEAMING WITH SHOREBIRDS HOPING FOR AN EASY LUNCH, HAVE BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR COASTAL HORIZON. BUT, YOU DON'T NEED A SHRIMP BOAT TO CATCH SHRIMP IN GEORGIA. THERE ARE OTHER WAYS WHICH REQUIRE LESS GEAR, AND CAN BE DONE WITHOUT A COMMERCIAL LICENSE.

>>Gaddis:

There's two legal methods for recreational harvesting of food shrimp in Georgia. One is a cast net, the other is a seine net. And cast nets and seine nets have both been used for over 2,000 years to harvest shrimp in shallow coastal waters.

>>NARRATOR: CAST NETTING CAN BE DONE FROM A DOCK, PIER OR BOAT. THERE ARE SEVERAL TECHNIQUES IN USING A CAST NET. THE SPANISH METHOD REQUIRES LOADING THE NET OVER YOUR SHOULDER PIECE BY PIECE BEFORE THROWING. THE QUICKER, FLORIDA MULLET FISHERMAN'S METHOD REQUIRES LESS PREPARATION TIME AND IS POPULAR AMONG THOSE CAST NETTING FOR FOOD SHRIMP. WITH BOTH METHODS, THE TRICK IS TO HAVE YOUR NET FORM A NEARLY PERFECT CIRCLE WHEN IT HITS THE WATER. IN CAST NETTING, THE NUMBER ONE CHALLENGE IS FINDING THE SHRIMP, THEN IT'S A GAME OF WATCHING, WAITING, AND THROWING.

>>Gaddis: In Georgia, we've got 3 different species of shrimp that are collected for food consumption. We have the pink shrimp, the brown shrimp, and the white shrimp. The white shrimp makes up almost 100 percent of the cast net caught food

shrimp in Georgia.

>>NARRATOR: IF YOU'D RATHER DO YOUR SHRIMPING FROM THE SHORE, THERE'S ALWAYS THE SEINE NET. SEINING IS VERY POPULAR ON THE BEACHES OF GEORGIA'S BARRIER ISLANDS. ALL YOU NEED IS A NET, ANOTHER WILLING BODY, AND A GOOD LOCATION.

>>GABBIS: The first thing you want to take into account is you want to make sure that you're seine netting on a legal location, any sandy beach of any barrier island on the coast of Georgia, unless that barrier island happened to be marked with some sort of nesting bird protection sign...then you typically want to look for a sandy beach that isn't on the ocean side of the island.

>>Narrator: Seining requires one person to head out to deeper waters while the other stays close to shore covering as much area as possible. The net is then dragged through the water. Because seining picks up a variety of fish eaten by local wildlife, it attracts a lot of attention from shorebirds. Gulls, egrets and wood storks will often hang around in hopes of a snack.

>>Gabbis: Occasionally you'll even see dolphins circling around *as* you're seining. It is important, however to keep in mind to not feed the dolphins while you're seining. We would like to try not to condition those animals to losing their fear of humans and then actually interacting with humans or that gear.

>>Narrator: If you're seining for shrimp, you'll probably catch a few other species as well. Bi-catch is anything you collect other than what you're fishing for. Some bi-catch like this mullet are edible, while others are not. Anything in your net that you don't plan on eating should be returned and you should always comply with Georgia's fishing regulations in taking your catch home.

Blue crab is one of Georgia's most sought-after crustaceans. There are a number of methods for catching crab in Georgia, from a chicken neck on a string to the more sophisticated crab pot.

Gabe Gaddis and Chris Kalinowski will try to catch a few of these tasty shellfish using several different traps.

THE BLUE CRAB LIFE CYCLE TAKES THE SPECIES ON A JOURNEY FROM THE ESTUARY TO THE OPEN OCEAN AND BACK AGAIN. AFTER MATING IN THE MARSHLANDS, FEMALES MIGRATE TO SALTIER WATERS TO LAY THEIR EGGS. THE CRAB LARVAE THEN GOES THROUGH A NUMBER OF MICROSCOPIC STAGES AS IT DEVELOPS, MAKING ITS WAY BACK TOWARD THE ESTUARY WHERE THE CYCLE BEGINS AGAIN.

BLUE CRABS ARE PROLIFIC BREEDERS, AND A FEW YEARS AGO IT SEEMED AS IF THERE WAS AN INFINITE SUPPLY. HOWEVER, DROUGHT CONDITIONS, THE DESTRUCTION OF WETLANDS, AND DAMMING OF RIVERS HAS REDUCED THE FLOW OF FRESH WATER INTO THE ESTUARIES INCREASING SALT LEVELS WHERE CRABS BREED. THIS DISRUPTION OF THEIR HABITAT, AFFECTS

	<p>THE BLUE CRAB LIFE CYCLE, AND, UNFORTUNATELY, ALLOWS CRAB PARASITES TO FLOURISH. THE RESULT HAS BEEN A DRAMATIC DECREASE IN BLUE CRAB POPULATIONS ON THE COAST, MAKING CRABBING A SLOW GAME. BUT, TODAY, GABE AND CHRIS ARE LUCKY.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Kalinowski: Here in GA we're lucky to have several different piers scattered up and down the coast, several different fishing docks, several old bridges that have been converted into fishing docks. And the most important thing for me in determining a location to go crabbing, especially if I were taking children, would be a safe location as we are at today where you don't have to worry about car traffic, you don't have to worry about falling in the water.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;GABBIS: THAT'S WHAT'S CALLED A LESSER BLUE CRAB. IT'S AN ADULT FEMALE THAT'S ACTUALLY BEARING HER EGG CASE RIGHT NOW. WE CALL THIS A SPONGE CRAB.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;NARRATOR: IT IS NOT LEGAL IN GEORGIA TO KEEP BLUE CRABS BEARING EGGS, ANY CRAB LESS THAN 5 INCHES ACROSS OR IMMATURE FEMALES. THIS MALE HOWEVER IS ONE THAT IS PRIZED BY BLUE CRAB connoisseurs.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Gabbis: They call this the rusty male. Instead of having the bright colors, they like to see the crab, the blue crab, the males that aren't the brilliant colors. This rusty one's full of nice firm meat so that's a nice catch, big male.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;NARRATOR: OF COURSE, CATCHING CRAB AND SHRIMP IS ONLY HALF THE FUN... THE LOW COUNTRY BOIL IS A TRADITION ON GEORGIA'S COAST. ALL IT TAKES IS A BIG POT OF BOILING WATER, A FEW SPICES, AND ALL THE SHRIMP, CRAB, POTATOES, CORN, AND SAUSAGE YOU CAN EAT! ADD A FEW STEAMED CLAMS AND OYSTERS, AND IT'S A VARITABLE FEAST. BUT SHELLFISH ARE MORE THAN JUST A DINNER TABLE TREAT. IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT WHILE THEY MAY BE HIDING UNDER ROCKS, UNDER THE SAND, OR DEEP WITHIN CAVES, THOSE SPECIES WHICH WE DON'T SEE, WEAVE AN ESSENTIAL THREAD INTO THE FABRIC OF OUR ENVIRONMENT.</p>




