



THE RED CRAB

These crabs occur from Cape Town to the Transkei and are found mainly in rock pools amongst the weed or under flat rocks in the pools. Their main predator is the octopus and you often find them scurrying outside the water to get away from an octopus in hot pursuit. I have come across pools where you have around ten crabs sitting just outside the water with an octopus at the edge of the pool waiting to rip them apart. Red crabs are eaten by most fish including Rock cod, Cats sharks, Barbell eel, Galjoen Black tail Poenskop, Sand soldier and my favorite target species the White Cracker. I have seen big Galjoen being caught on a 7/0 hook and a whole red crab and they flatten you just like a Cracker. There are many ways to use the red crab the one I most often use is the one I have shown here in this article but the crab can be cut in half you can break off the legs and use the section where the legs meet the body and cotton these pieces onto a 2/0 or 3/0 hook and use it for Galjoen or smaller Cracker. I have found that Cracker tend to feed on crabs in certain areas and other areas tend to prefer shell fish like armadillo and olicrock. They work especially well along the Knysna and Natures Valley section to Oyster Bay also the section between Maitlands, Beach view and Kini bay to Bushy park area during the early winter months. You also have good results along the Transkei coast



Step 1

Finding red crabs is your first challenge. Once you have found one or two you are ready for some good cracker fishing. Your hook trace should be around 0.90mm. I use Maxima ultra green for this. Your sinker trace should be tied on with lighter line a short 10cm piece of 0.50 or 0.60mm. So if your sinker gets stuck in a rock it can be broken off easily. A sliding trace works best for the bite but I prefer a fixed trace myself so if the fish gets stuck during the fight he often pulls your sinker loose after swimming around.



Step 2

The most important thing when fishing for Cracker is to start with sharp hooks. This applies to all fishing but especially to Cracker. Loads of fish are lost to blunt hooks so invest in a good quality hook file or sand stone to sharpen your hooks. Files cost around R50 from a reputable hardware store. You can't use any file so make sure it is very fine to give you the best point on your hook. Each side must be filed razor sharp then flattened in the front of the hook.



Step 3

Insert the hook between the legs try not to break them from the body when doing this. Push the point out the other side.



Step 4

Use latex cotton and cotton the legs onto the line making sure the legs are tightly cottoned on from the line to the point of the hook. If you prefer you can use thicker cotton but I find the latex works well.



Step 5

Look for a spot with deep working water and cast as close as you can to an exposed rock out in the water. Cracker tend to stick in the deeper foamy working water and are often found feeding very close to the side where you have deep gully's. Fishing in the middle of a cold front normally produces the best results. I tend to use the hit and hold method if you can these fish are extremely strong on there first run. They then tend to give up soon afterwards with a few shows in front before you land them.



Fisherman's Tip

Red crabs can be chased out of a rock pool using an octopus or some white strips of rag attached to the end of a gaff to mimic an octopus. Stick the end of the gaff into rock pools under ledges to chase the crabs onto the rocks then quickly grab them. Carry some crayfish gloves to make catching them easier on the hands.