

Species brief

Homarus americanus American lobster



The Lobster is one of the most recognizable icons of the American Northeast, from Maine's license plate to the Red Lobster franchises all across the country. It's a species with a cultural history stretching back before America was a country, as fertilizer and a food for poor people in one era, and a sought-after delicacy in another. Beyond its nutritional value, it's also an amazing species in its own right. Lobsters can be found in a variety of colors, and nobody's really sure how long they can live, or how big they can grow. The biggest one on record was over three feet long and weighed almost 50lbs when it was caught.

When Europeans first came to the Americas, lobsters were so plentiful that they could be harvested by walking along the beach, and the coastal Native American tribes would use them as fertilizer. At that time, lobsters weighing over 10lbs were quite common.

These days, finding a lobster like that is very rare, thanks to the fishing industry that takes over 100,000 out of the ocean per year. Today, fishing is no longer the only threat to the American Lobster. Rising temperatures, and rising acidity in the ocean have been linked to skin diseases and slowed growth, and the lobsters themselves have indicated that they're rather particular about water temperature. Lobstermen have found that as temperatures have risen, lobster populations have changed their seasonal migrations along the sea floor. They're moving north, and toward deeper water earlier in the year, avoiding high temperatures.

Scientists are continuing both research and conservation efforts for the lobster populations in the American Northeast, and while it's likely they will eventually leave the waters of southern New England, only time will tell.

For more information on this species and its response to climate change, go to <https://external-wiki.terc.edu/display/BAC/Not+Peer+Reviewed>



Image by Toter Alter Mann

Response type:

Range Shift • Evolution • **Behavior Change** • Community Imbalance • Extinction

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