

HABITAT

Lobsters prefer a habitat where they can find shelter. In deep water canyons off the coast of the U.S., Lobsters have been observed lodged individually in small burrows in the face of clay cliffs. Inshore lobster populations are found on rocky bottoms, where a large number of individuals can obtain appropriate shelter. On sand or mud lobsters may be found hiding under rocks of about their own size.

The lobster begins its life as an egg, glued to the underside of the females abdomen. Usually the eggs hatch in summer and float to the surface where they feed upon smaller planktonic organisms. In three to six weeks the larvae sinks to the seabed to begin its sedentary existence. The mortality rate is very high and only about one per cent of the floating larvae may settle to the bottom.

While the mortality rate of larvae is very high, each female produces an enormous number of eggs. For example, a lobster with a carapace or shell length of only 3 inches releases about 7500 eggs at one time. Even if only one per cent survive this still means that each female releases about 75 offspring that survive. Typical large breeders in the bay of fundy release 30,000 eggs at one time and jumbo lobsters of 5 inch carapace can produce more than 40,000 eggs.

As the growing lobster becomes too large for its shell it sheds it for a new one. This process is called moulting. Water temperature is critical to the rate of growth. Since lobsters grow faster in warmer waters they also moult more often. In the northumberland strait for example where summer water temperatures may reach 20 degrees celsius, a lobster at the current minimum size of 2.5 Inches carapace length, can moult twice in one year.

Once a lobster has replenished the flesh within its shell, it will be about 50 per cent heavier than before the moult. Thus a lobster from the Northumberland Strait would grow from 7 ounces to about one pound and would moult twice, whereas its counterpart in a cooler habitat would average 10 ounces and moult only once.

Temperature is also a factor in the age at which a lobster attains sexual maturity. Female lobsters in the Northumberland Strait may mature at 7 ounces or three years of age while their counterparts in the Bay of Fundy will not mature sexually until they are about 1.5 pounds and eight years of age.

CATCHING SEASONS

In Atlantic Canada there are no less than 38 lobster fishing districts with 26 different opening and closing periods. Suffice to say that lobster is caught throughout the year in Canada. There