

MaineToday.com
 Portland Press Herald
 KENNEBEC JOURNAL
 Morning Sentinel
 NEWS 8 WMTW

Press Herald ONLINE NEWS
 HOME · NEWS · SPORTS · BUSINESS · VIEWPOINTS · OBITUARIES · CLASSIFIEDS · SPECIAL REPORTS · PERSONALS · ARCHIVE



- HOME
- CLASSIFIEDS**
 - ▶ Careers
 - ▶ Homes
 - ▶ Wheels
 - ▶ Marketplace
 - ▶ Place an ad
 - ▶ WebPix
- NEWS**
 - Local and state
 - Midday/4PM Reports
 - In Depth
 - Week in Photos
- WEATHER**
 - 5-day forecast
 - On the Ocean
- SPORTS**
 - High schools
 - Pirates Cove
 - Sea Dogs
 - Running
- BUSINESS**
 - News
 - Resources
 - Maine News Direct
 - Classifieds
- ENTERTAINMENT**
 - Movies
 - Dining
 - Music
 - Theater
 - Art
 - TV listings
- CALENDAR**
 - Southern Maine
- TRAVEL**
 - Visiting Maine
 - Trip Talk
 - Vacation Rentals
 - Lodging guide
- OUTDOORS**
 - Fishing
 - Hiking
 - Nature Watching
 - More activities
 - Campground Guide
- 20 BELOW**
 - Teen writing
 - Views and reviews
- CAREERS**
 - Classifieds
 - Advice and info
 - Featured employers
- HOMES**
 - Classifieds
 - Advice and info
 - Featured agents
 - Moving to Maine
 - Retiring in Maine
- WHEELS**

Thursday, August 14, 2003

[E-mail this story to a friend](#)

LOBSTERS CHOW DOWN

By CLARKE CANFIELD, Associated Press

©Copyright 2003 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

Also on this page:
[IN DEPTH: Lobstering](#)

Maine lobsters are getting fattened up on the herring that lobstermen put out as bait in their lobster traps, according to a study that shows bait is the main food in a lobster's diet.

The study supports the long-held belief that lobster traps essentially act like fast-food restaurants for lobsters off the Maine coast.

It also suggests that the huge amount of herring bait - Maine lobstermen use about 220 million pounds of it annually - is contributing to the healthy lobster stocks and the explosive catches of recent years.

Jonathan Grabowski, a scientist who led the study through the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, said the study revealed that lobsters eating herring grew 16 percent more on average last summer and fall than lobsters without herring in their diets.

ADVERTISEMENT



TOP PRO SEAF

[Pro Search NEW ACC](#)

[PROSPEC Employme Bonney St Bonney CHILDCAF l... Employme carpet & vi](#)

[FLOORIN. Employme DOWNEA](#)

[Downeas.. Downeast Bonney St Bonney HELP GRC COMM... Tri-County Monday, S 200... MaineToda SEASONA](#)

[FULL-TIME Downeast](#)

MOR

Maine

Classifieds
Resources and info
Featured dealers

MILESTONES

Celebrations
Obituaries

MARKETPLACE

Classifieds

DIRECTORIES

Medical Directory
Education Guide
and more

ADVERTISING

Advertising products
Request a quote

About Us

Help/site guide

The findings were presented last week at the Ecological Society of America's annual conference in Georgia. They were also presented at this year's Maine Fishermen's Forum in Rockland.

"A lot of the research was motivated by the industry suspicion that herring might be important as a subsidy to lobster populations," said Grabowski. "This study certainly supports that notion."

Fishermen have long said that putting bait, herring being the most popular, in traps amounts to feeding lobsters by supplying them free meals. Little lobsters can freely crawl in and out of traps until they grow large enough to be trapped.

Besides bait, lobsters generally eat crabs, mussels, clams, snails, urchins, worms and, on occasion, each other, Grabowski said.

For the study, Grabowski and a research technician last summer used dive equipment to collect lobsters from the ocean bottom a few miles off the midcoast fishing village of Port Clyde, and more lobsters off Monhegan, an island about a dozen miles off the coast. The project also included scientists from the University of Maine and the Department of Marine Resources, and lobster fishermen from Port Clyde and Monhegan.



Associated Press Photo by Robert F. Bukaty
Bait dealers Jesse Bennett, left, and Jeff Legere dump salted herring into crates on Wednesday in Portland. A new study suggests that herring provided as bait is the main diet of many lobsters, and may be responsible for the huge increases in catches in recent years.

IN DEPTH: Lobstering

Tuesday, July 8, 2003

- [STONINGTON: Riding high, no safety net](#): Residents worry that a decline in lobstering could quickly turn Stonington into a summer colony.



- [The allure of coastal Maine may change its very nature](#): Newcomers buy up picturesque waterfront sites, pricing locals out.

Monday, July 7, 2003

- [R.I. lobster boom goes bust](#): The crash of that state's once-abundant fishery, due to disease or predators or overfishing, could be an object lesson for Maine.

- [As shell disease spreads, Maine watches](#): R.I. lobstering collapsed as the disease killed off lobsters, and Maine fears the same fate.

Sunday, July 6, 2003

- [Lobsters still one of sea's great mysteries](#): Given the huge value of the fishery, and coastal Maine's dependence on it, researchers have worked for years to try to understand population changes and predict the future.

- [With record catches, why are prices so high?](#): The recent development of large processors that cook and freeze millions of lobsters ensured that a growing number of lobster fans all around the world could share in the bounty - and keep a vital coastal industry growing.

- [Tough work, sweet rewards](#): Lobstering is far from a get-rich-quick fishery the way

Find Auto Near
FROM AMONG FEATURED DEALERS AT MAINETOWN

- CLAIR FORD
- CLAIR VW/MF
- CLAIR SACO
- CLAIR CADILLAC
- ROWE WEST
- NORMAN DAV
- ARUNDEL FO
- PAUL BLOUIN
- DICK BOURNI
- SATURN OF
- AUTO ROWE
- ROWE AUBU
- ROCKLAND F
- YANKEE FOR
- CHARLIE'S M
- NORM'S USET
- WALKER CHE
- WISCASSET
- AUGUSTA FC
- PRE-OWNED
- FRANK GALO
- BRUNSWICK
- SEBAGO LAK
- RIPLEY & FLI
- LAND ROVER
- WEIR'S GMC
- MORONG BRU
- BLOUIN MOT
- PRIME TOYO
- AND SUBARU

Maine



To determine the diet makeup, scientists analyzed the lobsters' stomach contents and conducted a chemical analysis of the lobster meat. They found that herring made up 33-55 percent of the diet of lobsters off Port Clyde.

The lobsters off Monhegan, however, had little or no herring in them. That's because lobstering is banned there from June into November, meaning there are no herring-filled traps in the water in those months.

The study also raises questions about the long-term effects that might come about as a result of lobstermen, in essence, feeding lobsters much like farmers feed their animals.

What happens, for instance, when you take 220 million pounds of herring out of the ecosystem to feed another creature in the ocean? With so much herring in the water, are crabs, mussels, and other lobster prey under less pressure from lobsters and more likely to survive?

Bob Bayer, executive director of the Lobster Institute research and education organization, said the findings also underscore the importance of herring as a bait source for fishermen. He said herring is a popular food among consumers in Europe, and could grow in popularity among American eaters. If that happens, lobstermen could face severe herring shortages.

"There's barely enough herring to go around," Bayer said.

[To top of page](#)

that urchins and elvers were in the 1990s but lobstermen are making more money than they ever have.

- [Great Lobster Bust shook Maine's coastline in 1930s](#) : Until the early 1800s, lobster was valued mostly for being so easy to find and for attracting fish such as cod that had real value.

- [Flirting with disaster](#): Scientists warn that Maine's record lobster harvests may come to an end soon. A major drop-off would cripple a fishing industry grown dependent on lobstering - and gentrify coastal towns.

- [The Art of Lobstering](#): The hows and why of catching lobsters.

[In Depth: Lobstering](#)

Special section includes a look at the day in the life of a lobsterman, background stories about lobstering, and related links.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Boom or Bust

Are there really signs of decline for the lobster industry? Or are there enough lobsters to keep Maine's lobstering industry strong?

- There are problems with the lobster population that need to be addressed
- Maine's lobster industry faces bigger problems from regulation

[Vote!](#)

[[View Results](#)]

This poll is not a scientific survey of reader opinion. The results are a snapshot of what readers are thinking.

[To top of story](#)

Portland Press Herald
TODAY'S HEADLINES

Get an e-mail with the day's headlines each morning.

Your e-mail:

Signup now

... or visit our [signup page](#) for more information.



[Copyright](#) © Blethen Maine Newspapers Inc.