



CHRISTMAS LOBSTER FISHERY FACTSHEET



Teacher resources - Activities



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WA Rock Lobster Fishery Factsheet



The Western Rock Lobster industry is an iconic fishery that is based along Western Australia's coast between Shark Bay and Cape Leeuwin. It was the world's first fishery to be certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) in 2000. Western Australia rock lobster is the most valuable single-species fishery in Australia. Exported to China and sold domestically in Australia.

Western Rock Lobster (*Panulirus Cygnus*)

Classification: Decapod family

Size: 70-90mm at maturity (up to 200mm at maximum), weighing up to 5kg

Diet: Coralline algae, detritus (dead and dying marine matter), molluscs and crustaceans

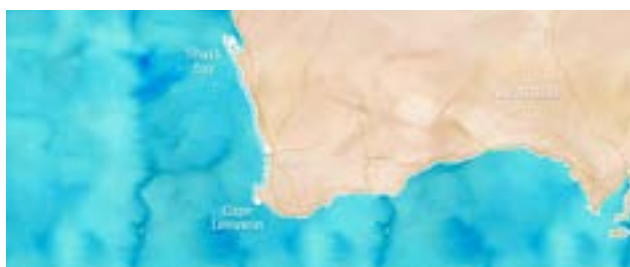
Eaten by: Large fish species and octopus. Lobsters can regrow legs and antennae lost as a result of skirmishes with predators.

Habitat: Juveniles live in shallow inshore reefs (up to 40m depth) and adults live in deep water habitats including coral reefs (up to 80m depth).

Markings: The Western Rock Lobster is identifiable by a single white dot on the outside edge of each tail segment.

Where do Rock Lobsters live?

Western Rock Lobsters are a temperate species, found on the continental shelf off the Southern coast of Western Australia.



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The Fishery

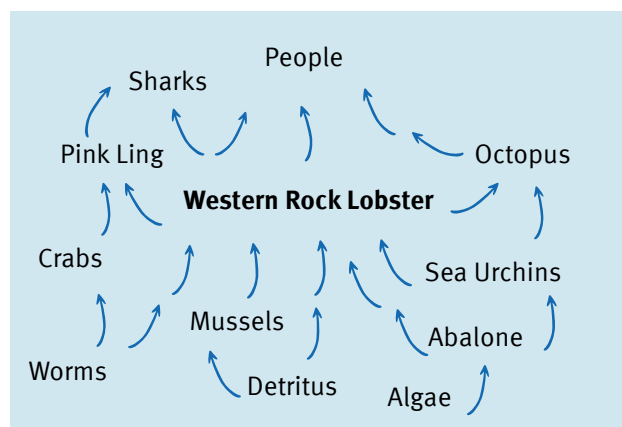
The Western Australia Rock Lobster Fishery is made up of around 250 commercial fishing boats, which operate under a quota management system. This means that commercial fishers have an allocated number of lobsters that they are allowed to catch during the lobster fishing season, which runs from all year round.

Family & lifecycle

The Western Rock Lobster typically live for 15 to 20 years. They mate in Winter and Spring, after which females carry eggs on the fine hairs beneath the tail. The eggs hatch in 4 to 8 weeks, releasing tiny larvae which drift offshore and grow in a series of moults. A lucky few will be carried close enough to the onshore reefs to settle. Many however will not make it, or will be eaten by predators along the way. The juvenile lives for 3 to 4 years on inshore reefs, after which they will moult their shells and turn a creamy white or pink colour, a colour which they will keep for a few months as they migrate into deeper waters. Lobsters trek in large groups in the night, until they resettle and return to their normal red colour.

See this [WA Rock Lobster Lifecycle](#) poster from *Marine Waters* for more detail.

Western Rock Lobster food chain





Environmental impact

The Western Australia Rock Lobster is caught using **baited pots and traps**. These are fitted with special Sea Lion Excluder Devices (SLEDs) which block access to juvenile sea lions while still allowing lobsters to be caught.



Hauling in a rock lobster pot

There are strict controls in place such as a minimum size requirement for lobsters caught and a **ban on catching breeding females**.

Scientific data on the Western Australian lobsters has been recorded since the 1960s, and migrating lobsters are tracked through tagging programs. This enables scientists to predict catches accurately and measure the growth, migration and mortality of lobsters. This **scientific data** helps fishers to ensure that they maintain a sustainable population of lobsters, for today and for the future.

The Western Australia Rock Lobster Fishery was the **first in the world** to achieve MSC certification, demonstrating its exceptional sustainability.

You can also read [how science data is used](#) to monitor, assess and manage the WA Rock Lobster fishery.

Markets

The lobster is a highly prized crustacean, and can sell for over \$100 per kilogram. The biggest export market for WA Rock Lobster used to be China, but this year Australians will be buying up lobsters for their Christmas lunch instead!

Rock lobster fishing is also a popular recreational activity in Western Australia. Fishers require a license and must follow strict size requirements and catch limits of 8 rock lobsters per licensed fisher per day.

Credits - Lobster Management profile by Department of Primary Industries and Resources

Lobster Christmas Dishes

The most popular ways to cook lobster are steamed or grilled on the barbecue with lots of lemon and butter!

Other ideas to cook your lobster this christmas include:

- Wild lobster with salsa verde butter ([see recipe](#))
- Wild barbecued rock lobster ([see recipe](#))
- Lobster rolls ([see recipe](#))
- Lobster saffron risotto ([see recipe](#))
- Lobster salad with avocado and mango ([see recipe](#))

