



Fishery participants have many regulations, such as a size limit and a season when the lobster can be fished. This is why local lobsters are available only between October and March. These and other regulations help maintain healthy lobster populations by allowing adult lobsters to reproduce before they can be caught, protecting female lobsters carrying eggs and protecting lobsters when they are molting. (Besides, no one wants to eat soft, squishy lobster!)

To catch lobsters, fishery participants – known as ‘trappers’ – use traps that have bait in them that attracts the lobsters inside. Small lobsters entering the traps can leave the trap through “escape ports,” small openings in the trap. Legal-sized lobsters are removed from the traps, loaded off the boat and sold live to markets, restaurants and buyers who distribute them elsewhere. That’s how those delicious lobsters make their way from the sea to your dinner table!



Photo: Diane Pleschner-Steele

East Coast Lobster



Photo: Carolyn S. Culver



CRABS

Rock Crab

Unlike the lobsters found in the region, the crabs fished here have claws that provide a lot of meat for seafood lovers. Rock crab and sheep crab (a large type of spider crab that has a spiderlike appearance) are the main species fished locally. Although you may not have eaten any local rock crabs, you’ve probably had a relative, the Dungeness crab. Believe it or not, there are three local rock crabs in the Santa Barbara Channel that are similar but smaller than their northern relative, the Dungeness crab! Sheep (spider) crabs, while also delicious, are not as popular as other crabs partly because they are difficult to eat. Unlike other types of crabs, a sheep crab never molts after reaching adulthood. Instead, the shell just keeps getting thicker, making it more difficult to crack!

Crabs are caught with methods similar to lobster fishing, but much larger openings are needed on the traps to fish the large sheep (spider) crab. Like lobster, the local crabs are sold alive. These delicious local crabs are found not only in the waters off our coast, but also in happy crab consumers’ stomachs!

RIDGEBACK SHRIMP

The Santa Barbara Channel is a favorite area for ridgebacks and spot prawns. Ridgeback and spot prawns are found in deep waters. Ridgebacks live in waters ranging from 145 to 525 feet deep, while spot prawns are found even deeper, from 150 to as much as 1,600 feet! Spot prawns are fished in many areas using traps, while ridgeback shrimp are fished using trawl nets in areas of mixed mud and sand. Special devices (fish excluders) have been developed for trawl nets to limit the amount of bycatch – the other fish that are accidentally caught in the net that are not being targeted. The little bit of bycatch that may come up with the shrimp can often be returned to the ocean alive.



WORD SCRAMBLE

Researchers working in collaboration with some commercial fishery participants have catalogued their catch by listing the scientific name of each species they caught (column one). See if you can unscramble the letters in the middle column to figure out what they caught.

Scientific name	Scramble	Common name
1. <i>Sardinops sagax</i>	iiPfeac idsearn	
2. <i>Paralichthys californicus</i>	irfCaoainl hitablu	
3. <i>Cancer anthonyi</i>	oelywl rcko cabr	
4. <i>Loligo opalescens</i>	teakMr uisdq	
5. <i>Strongylocentrotus franciscanus</i>	dre esa inhucr	
6. <i>Semicossyphus pulcher</i>	oiaalCanfr ehasphdee	
7. <i>Atractoscion nobilis</i>	tehwi sssaeba	
8. <i>Panulirus interruptus</i>	linCfaairo niyps olesrtb	
9. <i>Sicyonia ingentis</i>	cgribeadk rnapw	
10. <i>Parastichopus parvimensis</i>	wtray eas rubcecum	