

The Lobster Conservancy

Sustaining a thriving lobster fishery through science and community

Summer 2008

Dear Volunteers and Friends of The Lobster Conservancy,

The Lobster Conservancy's (TLC's) mission is to strive to sustain a thriving lobster fishery through science and community. Our quarterly newsletter keeps TLC members and volunteers informed of our research, education and outreach activities.

More than 100 volunteers participate in The Lobster Conservancy's monthly juvenile lobster count each year from April through November. The results of their data collecting efforts along with observations in our cove-converted-to-lobster-pound-converted-to-research center show that the 2008 lobster season is off to a fabulous start.

Juvenile Lobster Monitoring Program 2008 Volunteer Season Kick-Off

Many thanks to Brian Tarbox – gracious host of our 2008 Volunteer Season Kick-Off at Southern Maine Community College in late March. The well attended two-day event provided an excellent opportunity for volunteers from Massachusetts to Downeast Maine to hone lobster handling and measuring skills, meet with one another and compare results.



Lobster census takers from left to right: Clare McBane (NH Fish & Game), Amy Watson Saxton (TLC board chair), Tim Emerson, Sandy Meyer, Carol Lord, Diane Cowan (TLC executive director), Kevin Shea at Volunteer Kick Off 2008 at Southern Maine Community College.

Lobster Census

April and May yielded more or less typical early spring results. The lobsters were present in relatively low numbers and molting had not yet begun. Then something big happened. The average juvenile densities were unusually high – ranging from 0.4-5.8 lobsters per square meter in June (Table 1). There was also a dramatic peak in molting activity at many sites and we found a lot of large lobsters – two sites uncovered lobsters larger than the minimum legal size!

A few thoughts on what's going on.

1. our concept of what qualifies as "high" density for lobster nurseries needs upward adjustment.
2. it becomes more and more difficult to buy into the idea that lobsters are solitary cannibals.
3. overcrowding doesn't seem to be an issue.
4. the big "settlement" peaks we started recording in 2002 are beginning to translate into higher numbers of larger lobsters.

Table 1. Results of June 2008 Juvenile Lobster Census. Sampling locations are listed geographically from Northeast to Southwest. Lobster density is given as mean number of lobsters per square meter.

Sampling Location	Lobster Density
Dobbins Island, Jonesport, ME	1.1
Beach Street Cove, Winter Harbor, ME	3.1
Coast Guard Beach, Islesford, ME	0.4
Lanes Island, Vinalhaven, ME	1.2
Waterman Point, South Thomaston, ME	1.0
Drift Inn Beach, Port Clyde, ME	1.2
North Beach, Allen Island, ME	2.1
Deep Cove, Friendship Long Island, ME	4.7
Pratt Island, Southport, ME	1.7
Cundys Harbor, Harpswell, ME	1.4
Gun Point, Harpswell, ME	2.4
Lowell's Cove, Orrs Island, ME	5.8
Potts Point, Harpswell, ME	2.5
Bennett Cove, Chebeague Island, ME	1.3
Spar Cove, Peaks Island, ME	1.1
Broad Cove, Cape Elizabeth, ME	1.0
Goose Rocks Beach, Biddeford, ME	2.1
Fort Stark, New Castle, NH	2.6
Odiorne Point, Rye, NH	1.3
Plum Cove, Gloucester, MA	1.6
Gerry Island, Marblehead, MA	4.7
Bluefish Cove, Scituate, MA	1.4

Critter Question

Volunteer rock flippers at Waterman Point sent the photo below and asked what those blobs were that they found under their lobster rocks. Great work team! You uncovered a mass of dorid nudibranchs (*Onchidoris*) engaged in orgy and egg-laying activity. No kidding!

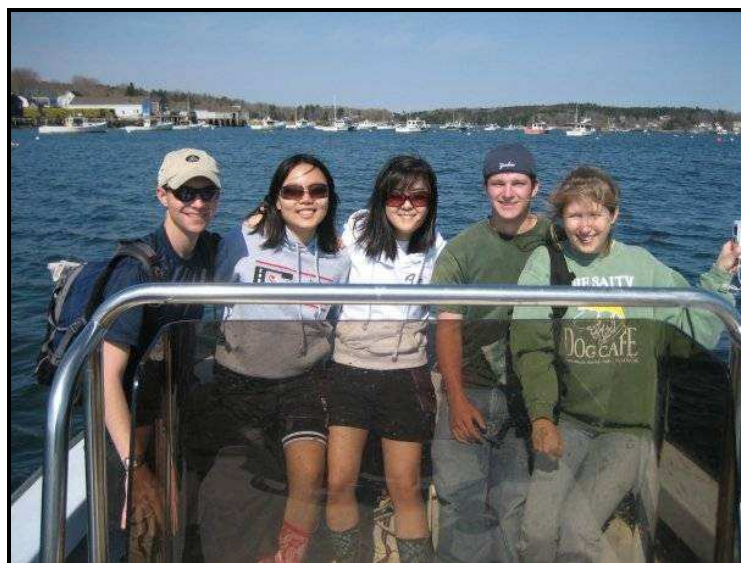
Nudibranchs are simultaneous hermaphrodites – meaning that they act as both male and female at the same time. In the photo, the brown adults with the bumpy looking “skin” are fertilizing one another’s eggs in a mass exchange of sperm. Each individual is then extruding ribbons of gelatinous fertilized egg masses containing tiny nudibranch embryos. Groups of adult nudibranchs and their egg masses were abundant at many of the sites monitored by volunteers in April and May. By June the tiny juvenile nudibranchs had hatched from the eggs and were busy eating this year’s barnacle crop.



Outreach, Education and Media

Recent highlights on the outreach and education front included a day of work and learning with Bowdoin College students who volunteered their efforts to The Lobster Conservancy in exchange for learning about lobster science, management and fishing. TLC staff have also been volunteering at the Friendship Village School to educate youngsters interested in lobster life.

Our outreach, education and press coverage activities over the last three months are summarized in a table below.



Students from Bowdoin College travel back to Friendship Harbor after participating in Earth Day 2008 at The Lobster Conservancy. From left to right: Randy King, Diana Zhang, Dorothy Pei, David Funk, and Cameron Weller.

The Lobster Conservancy				
Apr – Jun 2008 Outreach and Education Activity				
Organization	Location	Date	Title	Presenters
The Lobster Conservancy	Southern Maine Community College	Mar 28	2008 Volunteer Season Kick Off Meeting	Diane Cowan and Jane Roundy
The Lobster Conservancy	Southern Maine Community College	Mar 29	2008 Volunteer Season Kick Off Meeting	Diane Cowan and Jane Roundy
Bowdoin College	The Lobster Conservancy	Apr 19	Earth Day Service Learning Project	Diane Cowan
Midcoast Stewards, Maine Planning Board	Damariscotta River Association	Apr 26	The Lobster's Tale: From Egg to Plate	Diane Cowan
Bowdoin College	Brunswick, Maine	May 3	Lobsters and Global Warming	Diane Cowan
Friendship Village School	Friendship, Maine	May 20	Lobster Anatomy & Physiology	Diane Cowan
Friendship Village School	Friendship, Maine	May 28	Lobster Respiration & Dye Breath	Diane Cowan
Brownies and Girl Scouts	Friendship, Maine	May 30	Lobster Patch Program	Diane Cowan
Friendship Village School	Friendship, Maine	Jun 17	Lobster Dissection	Diane Cowan
Media Coverage and Publications				
Publication/Media	Date	Title/Link		Author / Interviewer
Harpwell Television (H-TV) (Broadcast on Community TV stations throughout Maine)	Various air dates	The Lobster Conservancy: Interview with Board Chair Amy Watson and Executive Director Diane Cowan		Leila Percy
Binghamton University Alumni Magazine	Spring	Me and My Lobsters		Sharon Tregaskis
Maine Public Broadcasting Network	Apr 11	Maine Things Considered: Maine Lobster Researcher Leaves No Stone Unturned http://www.mpbnet.net/mpbnnews/mainenews.asp go to archives and search "Maine Lobster Research"		Barbara Cariddi
Portland Magazine	Summer	Lobstah Lovah		Chris Ladd
Farmer's Almanac	2008	http://www.almanac.com/extras/blogs/volunteer/count-heads.php		Heidi Stonehill
Courier Gazette	May 6	Lobster Conservancy Receives Grant		Jane Roundy
Harpwell Anchor	May	The Lobster Conservancy at Work		Stacy Welner

The Lobster Conservancy was awarded two grants for the Juvenile Lobster Monitoring Program during this quarter. We thank the Maine Community Foundation and Bruce J. Anderson Foundation for their continued support.

Memberships

Become a member today by visiting www.lobsters.org and clicking on the membership icon. Your contribution to TLC is a terrific investment in the future of lobsters!

Yours in TLC,

Diane F. Cowan, Ph.D., Executive Director
Jane Roundy, Volunteer Coordinator