



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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The catch of lobsters on the coast of Maine is the largest in at least three years, in spite of a 25 percent decline in the number of fishermen, shortages of gear, and difficulties in obtaining engine parts, according to a report submitted to Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes.

Although the Maine fishery, which yields about two-thirds of the U.S. lobster catch, reaches its peak in September and October, the early season fishery this year was so brisk that some 3,300,000 pounds had been taken by August 1, an increase of 20 percent over the catch in the first seven months of 1941.

During the same interval the price of lobsters increased by 80 percent, giving Maine fishermen a return of \$945,000 for the early season catch. Lobsters, which in colonial times were so plentiful that they sold for a penny apiece, now bring the fishermen anywhere from 25 to 80 cents each, depending on their size.

Although the number of full-time lobster fishermen has decreased by about a fourth, the number of traps fished has declined only about 15 percent. Because of increased profits, the individual fishermen are using more traps than formerly.

The large 1943 catch was made in spite of wartime difficulties, suggesting that lobsters may be somewhat more abundant this year. Lath for making lobster pots is critically scarce, according to the report, and rope for buoy markers is also on the list of shortages. Lobster fishermen have also been handicapped by occasional local scarcity of gasoline, and by difficulties in obtaining engine parts.

According to a recently enacted Maine law, small lobsters (measuring less than 3 1/8 inches from the head to the beginning of the tail) may not be taken in the waters of that state. Because of the steady decline in abundance of lobsters since the early days of the New England fishery, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey have also passed laws for the purpose of allowing more lobsters to spawn before they become subject to capture in the commercial fishery.