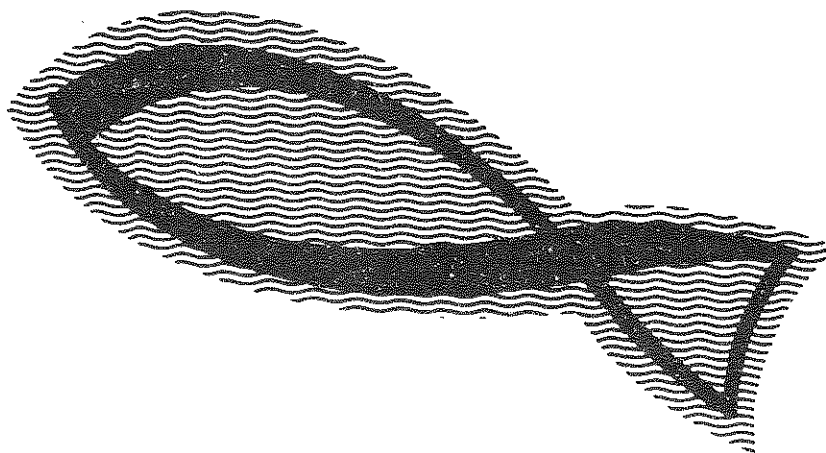




**Fishery Leaflet  
Number 65.  
1974.**

**an roinn  
talmhaíochta  
agus iascaigh**

**Lobster trap census, 1973.**



**by**

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LOBSTER TRAP CENSUS 1973

This leaflet continues the information provided by Fishery Leaflets numbered, 11, 23, 26, 39, and 57. Although more lobster traps (51.0%) were used in relation to French crawfish, (49.0%) in 1973 (Table 1), the order of preference of lobster fishing (all types) remained the same as in previous years as follows:

- (a) French crawfish traps
- (b) Scottish creels (or variation thereof)
- (c) Other types of traps.

The slight decrease in the number of crawfish traps is mainly due to the increased interest in the use of tangle nets for catching crawfish especially off the Wexford coast, for the third year in succession.

There was a drop of 3,329 in the number of all traps used in 1973, in comparison with 1972. In many areas, particularly off the coast of Cork, Kerry, Galway and Mayo (where the potential for lobster fishing is considerable) French crawfish traps formed the majority trap in use (Table 1).

The distribution of boats by size and county is given in Table 2. There were 675 boats of all classes engaged in the fishery in 1973, of which 8 were almost exclusively engaged in crab fishing. Thus there was an effective decrease of 59 boats compared with 1972 when 726 boats were engaged in the fishery. The significant drop in the number of boats was in Cork and Galway, while the number of lobster boats in Donegal increased to 153 bringing the number over the 1971 level when 150 boats were engaged in the fishery (Gibson 1972). There was also a drop in the boats using outboard engines, from 384 in 1972 to 302 in 1973 whilst the number of boats in the 21 to 30 feet class increased by 36 in 1973 compared with 1972.

There were small fluctuations in the density of boats per coastal mile in 1973 compared with 1972 (Table 3). Like previous years lobster gear was dominant in counties Louth, Dublin, Wicklow, Waterford, Clare, Sligo and Donegal, while in counties Cork, Kerry, Galway and Mayo, which probably constitute the best Irish areas for lobster fishing, crawfish gear was dominant (Table 4).

The average catch per trap per coastal county (all types of traps) is given in Table 5. In Cork, Kerry, Galway and Mayo, where crawfish gear dominates, the seasonal catch of lobsters per trap ranged from 6.8 to 10.8. In the remaining counties where lobster gear is dominant the catch per trap ranged from 4.8 (Co Louth) to 31.0 (Co Wexford). Table 5 also reveals that the catch of lobster per trap in 1973 dropped considerably in Louth, Wexford, Clare, Galway and Sligo in comparison to previous years (Gibson 1973) while catch per trap in Waterford increased nearly twofold (from 16.4 to 31.0) and considerably in Dublin in comparison to the previous years (Gibson 1973). Other minor increases in catches per trap were recorded in Kerry and Donegal.

Since 1968 the average seasonal catch per trap by number and weight has steadily dropped (Gibson 1972). There was a slight increase in the number and weight of lobster per trap in 1973 (Table 6) which may be attributed to effective decrease in the number of boats, and fishing effort staying at the same level as in previous years. There was no change in the average number of traps (63) per boat in 1973 in relation to previous years.

A considerable number of undersized lobsters have been recorded in the catch in the past (Gibson 1968). In the autumn of 1973 a representative sample of lobsters (total 4,742) were measured at various holding ponds of which an average of 21% were found to be under the legal limit. This is a danger signal to the Irish lobster fishing industry which cannot be maintained at its present level if undersized lobsters continue to be landed.

One of the most effective ways to further the maintenance of lobster stock is to allow undersized fish to reach maturity and breed. Lobsters do not generally make long journeys and occur around our coast as a number of individual stocks which neither migrate nor mix with each other because of their almost sedentary habit and highly developed territorial sense. Therefore, if the undersized recruiting lobsters are taken out of a particular area that area can be denuded of both maturing and breeding stock in a short time, requiring about 3 to 4 years to recover its stock strength. Lobster fishermen must therefore in their own interest and for the better management of the lobster resource be prepared to:

- (a) return to the sea lobsters under 83 mm carapace length.
- and (b) rotate fishing grounds by opening up new fishing areas for which purpose boats ought to be equipped with electronic fishing aids.

If the present reducing trend in yield per trap continues it may well become necessary to introduce measures to restrict the freedom of fishing which fishermen enjoy at present. Tables 7 and 7a show monthly landing of lobsters by number and percentage respectively for all coastal counties. In counties Dublin and Donegal in 1973 the fishing started in January and continued till the end of the year. Lobsters were being caught as late as December in 6 counties out of 12 in 1973 in comparison to 2 in 1972. The early and late parts of the year are those times when lobsters are most likely to be under the legal size so that fishermen must exercise great care to ensure that all undersized lobsters are returned to sea. The greatest catch of lobsters was during August and amounted to 27.5% of the total monthly catch for all counties. Table 7a also shows that most productive lobster producing areas were Donegal (21.1%), Kerry (17.0%), Waterford (12.4%), Galway (12.3%), and Cork (10.3%).

Summary

- (i) A total of 675 boats of all classes, ranging from boats with outboard engines to vessels exceeding 45' in length took part in the 1973 lobster fishery, but 8 of these boats were almost exclusively engaged in crab fishing.
- (ii) A total of 42,259 traps was used, of which 51.0% were designed for lobster fishing and 49.0% for crawfish fishing.
- (iii) There was an effective decrease in the number of boats (59) and number of traps (3,329) in 1973 in comparison to 1972.
- (iv) Boats were fishing well into the winter months in several counties in 1973 by comparison with 1972, and the total catch of lobsters for 1973 was 452,523, a slight improvement of 26,116, on the 1972 season.
- (v) There was a slight increase in the national average yield of lobsters per trap per season to 10.7 (13.4 lbs) compared with 9.4 (12.2 lbs) in 1972. This may be due to the effective decrease in the number of boats and the fishing effort staying at the same level as in previous years.

## References

- Gibson, FA (1969) Lobster trap census 1968 Fish Leaf No 11  
- - (1970) Lobster trap census 1969 Fish Leaf No 23  
- - (1971) Lobster trap census 1970 Fish Leaf No 26  
- - (1972) Lobster trap census 1971 Fish Leaf No 39  
- - (1973) Lobster trap census 1972 Fish Leaf No 57

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF TYPES OF TRAPS USED IN 1973 BY COUNTY

County	TYPES OF TRAPS					
	Scottish Lobster	French Crawfish	Kilmore Quay	U.S. Parlour	Others	Totals
Louth	570	-	-	-	-	570
Dublin	463	-	-	64	238	765
Wicklow	129	-	-	-	26	155
Wexford*	-	105	2,111	10	220	2,446
Waterford	-	115	-	-	1,687	1,802
Cork*	480	3,845	-	-	425	4,750
Kerry	60	5,827	40	70	1,095	7,092
Clare	20	390	75	153	1,088	1,726
Galway	245	6,591	-	1,115	618	8,565
Mayo	856	3,420	-	30	-	4,306
Sligo	1,352	65	-	-	167	1,584
Donegal	7,976	363	-	155	-	8,494
Total	12,151	20,721	2,226	1,597	5,564	42,259

\* In these counties 12 of the boats included crab fishermen using 1,822 crab pots which have not been included in the total.

(8 boats from Wexford and 4 boats from Cork were using 782 and 1,040 crab pots respectively).

49.0% of all traps = French Crawfish.

51.0% " " " = Lobster traps.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF BOATS BY SIZE CATEGORY BY COUNTY COMPARING  
1972 WITH 1973

County	1972					1973				
	Outboard engines	Up to 30'	31'-45'	45 <sup>+</sup>	Total	Outboard engines	Up to 30'	31'-45'	45 <sup>+</sup>	Total
Louth	2	4	-	-	6	2	2	-	-	4
Dublin	17	2	-	-	19	14	4	-	-	18
Wicklow	4	1	-	-	5	5	1	-	-	6
Wexford	8	11	6	1	26	5	18	6	2	31
Waterford	24	5	4	2	35	22	11	4	2	39
Cork	56	18	24	7	105	38	28	17	4	87
Kerry	45	18	17	16	96	32	20	15	16	83
Clare	5	10	9	-	24	6	11	8	-	25
Galway	101	45	19	2	167	75	48	16	1	140
Mayo	21	45	8	5	79	14	37	9	5	65
Sligo	13	11	3	-	27	10	11	3	-	24
Donegal	78	34	25	-	137	79	49	24	1	153
Totals	374	204	115	33	726	302	240	102	31	675



TABLE 3

APPROXIMATE COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTIVE RATIO OF BOATS  
TO MILEAGE AS BETWEEN 1972 AND 1973

County	No. all boats in 1972	No. all boats in 1973	Effective costal mileage	Ratio of boats to coastal mileage	
				1972	1973
Louth	6	4	40	6.7	10.0
Dublin	19	18	45	2.7	2.5
Wicklow	5	6	40	8.0	6.6
Wexford	26	31	84	3.6	2.7
Waterford	35	39	54	1.1	1.4
Cork	105	87	108	1.3	1.2
Kerry	96	83	198	2.6	2.4
Clare	24	25	104	4.3	4.1
Galway	167	140	207	1.4	1.4
Mayo	79	65	220	2.6	3.3
Sligo	27	24	68	2.1	2.8
Donegal	137	153	120	0.8	0.7
TOTALS	726	675	1,288	-	-

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF TRAPS PER COUNTY AND AVERAGE CATCH OF LOBSTERS PER TRAP IN 1973

COMPARED WITH 1972

County	No. of traps 1972	No. of traps 1973	Lobster traps in 1973 as % of total traps	Average catch per trap 1972	Average catch per trap 1973
Louth	560	570	100%	15.7	4.8
Dublin	719	765	100%	23.2	30.4
Wicklow	102	155	100%	19.1	19.7
Wexford	2,480	2,446	95%	13.6	8.0
Waterford	1,589	1,802	93%	16.4	31.0
Cork	5,769	4,750	19%	9.6	9.8
Kerry	7,760	7,092	18%	8.9	10.8
Clare	1,279	1,726	77%	26.6	17.9
Galway	10,495	8,569	23%	4.9	6.5
Mayo	5,200	4,306	20%	6.1	6.3
Sligo	1,740	1,584	95%	13.7	9.6
Donegal	7,895	8,494	96%	9.3	11.3
TOTAL	45,588	42,259	-	9.4	10.7

TABLE 5

TOTAL NUMBER OF TRAPS PER COUNTY AND CATCH OF LOBSTER IN 1973TOGETHER WITH AVERAGE CATCH PER TRAP

County	Total number of traps (all types)	Total catch of lobsters	Average catch of lobsters per trap for season
Louth	570	2,736	4.8
Dublin	765	23,256	30.4
Wicklow	155	3,060	19.7
Wexford	2,446	19,623	8.0
Waterford	1,802	55,963	31.0
Cork	4,750	46,712	9.8
Kerry	7,090	76,846	10.8
Clare	1,726	30,836	17.9
Galway	8,569	55,465	6.5
Mayo	4,306	27,224	6.3
Sligo	1,584	15,146	9.6
Donegal	8,494	95,656	11.3
TOTALS	42,259	452,523	10.7

TABLE 6

AVERAGE NATIONAL CATCH OF LOBSTERS PER TRAP (ALL TYPES) IN  
NUMBERS AND WEIGHT, 1968 TO 1973

Year	Number of lobsters per trap	Weight of lobsters per trap (lbs)
1968	15.2	19.0
1969	16.7	20.9
1970	12.4	15.5
1971	11.7	14.6
1972	9.4	12.2
1973	10.7	13.4

TABLE 7

## MONTHLY CATCH OF LOBSTER PER COUNTY IN 1973

County	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Totals
Louth	-	-	-	-	-	72	540	1,440	624	60	-	-	2,736
Dublin	216	240	384	456	2,232	2,760	4,160	5,764	4,361	2,122	430	131	23,256
Wicklow	-	-	-	-	276	528	704	768	604	180	-	-	3,060
Wexford	-	-	-	113	775	3,799	5,074	6,174	3,367	321	-	-	19,623
Waterford	-	23	46	537	2,291	9,986	12,156	11,778	15,616	3,085	285	160	55,963
Cork	-	30	-	1,486	2,416	3,800	9,784	11,367	10,542	4,198	1,778	1,329	46,712
Kerry	-	-	140	1,209	5,433	10,584	12,164	20,528	17,200	9,572	76	-	76,846
Clare	-	-	-	400	1,496	4,160	7,792	7,328	4,790	4,534	336	-	30,836
Galway	-	-	160	1,753	6,498	7,025	15,745	12,291	8,484	3,250	154	105	55,465
Mayo	-	-	-	-	3,524	5,988	1,546	7,686	6,558	1,828	50	44	27,224
Sligo	-	240	200	534	1,640	2,308	2,352	4,696	2,832	288	56	-	15,146
Donegal	185	600	1,080	2,408	8,082	6,156	18,249	34,750	18,218	5,880	24	24	95,656
TOTALS	401	1,133	2,010	8,878	34,663	57,166	90,266	124,570	93,196	35,318	3,129	1,793	452,523

TABLE 7a

## MONTHLY PERCENTAGE CATCH OF LOBSTER PER COUNTY IN 1973

County	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Totals%
Louth	-	-	-	-	-	2.6	19.7	52.6	22.8	2.2	-	-	0.6
Dublin	0.9	1.0	1.7	1.9	9.6	11.9	17.9	24.8	18.8	9.1	1.8	0.6	5.1
Wicklow	-	-	-	-	9.0	17.3	23.0	25.1	19.7	5.9	-	-	0.7
Wexford	-	-	-	0.6	3.9	19.3	25.9	31.5	17.2	1.6	-	-	4.3
Waterford	-	0.1	0.1	0.9	4.1	17.8	21.7	21.0	27.9	5.5	0.5	0.3	12.4
Cork	-	0.1	-	3.1	5.2	8.1	20.9	24.3	22.6	9.0	3.8	2.8	10.3
Kerry	-	-	0.2	1.6	7.0	13.8	15.8	26.7	22.4	12.4	0.1	-	17.0
Clare	-	-	-	1.3	4.8	13.5	25.3	23.8	15.5	14.7	1.1	-	6.8
Galway	-	-	0.3	3.2	11.7	12.7	28.4	22.1	15.3	5.8	0.3	0.2	12.3
Mayo	-	-	-	-	12.9	23.0	5.7	28.2	24.0	6.7	0.2	0.2	6.0
Sligo	-	1.6	1.3	3.5	10.8	15.2	15.5	31.0	18.7	1.9	0.4	-	3.3
Donegal	0.2	0.6	1.1	2.5	8.4	6.4	19.1	36.3	19.0	6.1	0.1	0.1	21.1
TOTALS %	0.1	0.3	0.4	2.0	7.7	12.6	19.9	27.5	20.6	7.8	0.7	0.4	