

American Lobster

Scan for more information



Species Description

Scientific name: *Homarus americanus*

AKA: New England lobster

Native to: North Eastern America

Habitat: Most likely shallow coastal waters among boulders, but other habitats and deep water

Easily confused with the native European Lobster. Expert identification may be required, so retain any suspicious specimens (and take photographs of key features). Differences can be subtle, but the key characteristic is the ventral tooth on the rostrum of American Lobster. American Lobster may also be slightly larger and different in colour.

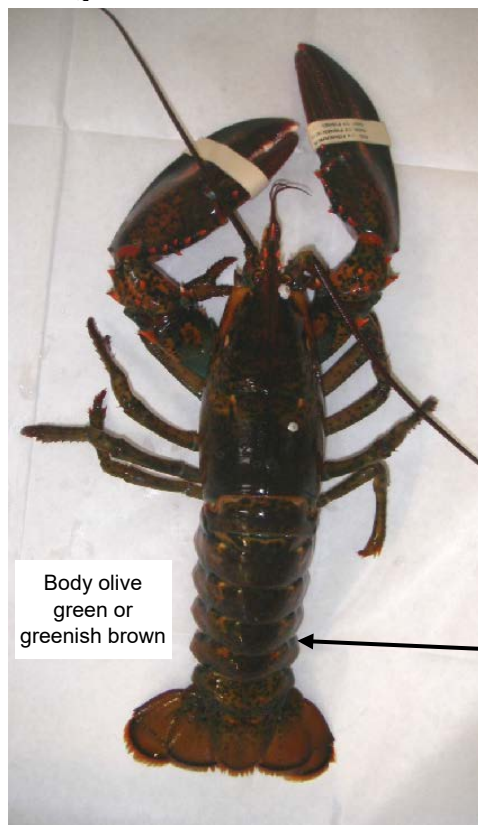
Homarus americanus poses a serious risk in Northern Ireland and Europe as it could have significant detrimental impacts on the native lobster through competition, inter-breeding and by spreading disease.

Homarus americanus is not established in Northern Ireland but reproduction is believed to be possible. Specimens in the wild are probably as a result of deliberate releases or escapes from captivity. Uncommon in Irish waters (in the past decades there have been some confirmed reports, although this is likely to be an underestimate).

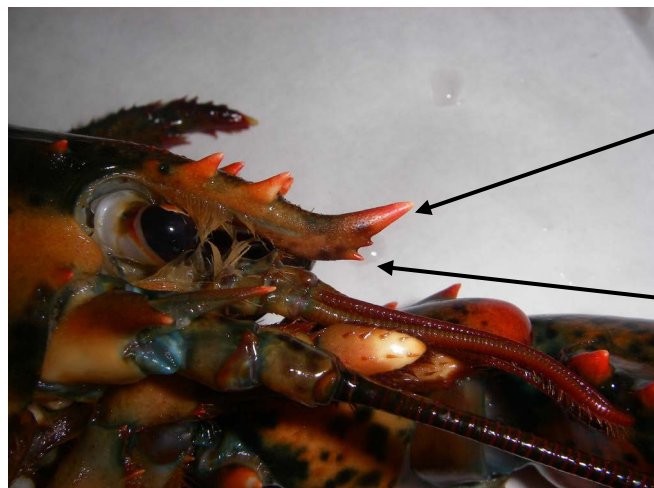
As *American lobster* is not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland, under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is an offence to release or allow this species to escape into the wild.



Key ID Features



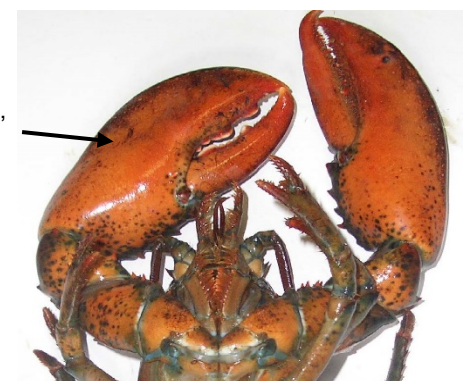
Body olive green or greenish brown



Spines on rostrum tend to be red

Ventral tooth

Orange, reddish, dark green or black speckles



Underside of claws, usually orange-red

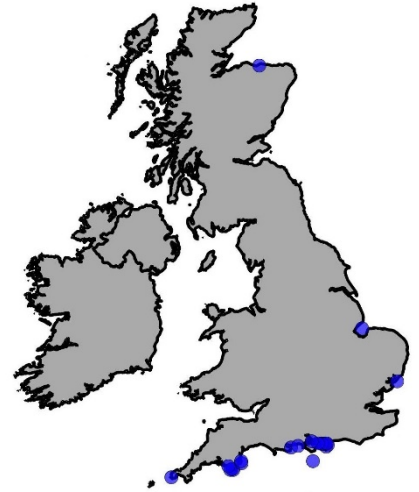
Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>

Similar Species

The American lobster can be confused with the European Lobster. Both are characterised by large recognisable claws (chelae). American Lobsters are generally bigger than European Lobster, growing to approximately 30cm (but can reach 65cm). Distinguishing between the two species is difficult and may require expert assistance. The spines on the rostrum (a - American Lobster; b-European Lobster) are the most characteristic feature.

Distribution

Recorded along south coast of England.



Source: NBN atlas – available at <https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0021049553>
Check website for current distribution

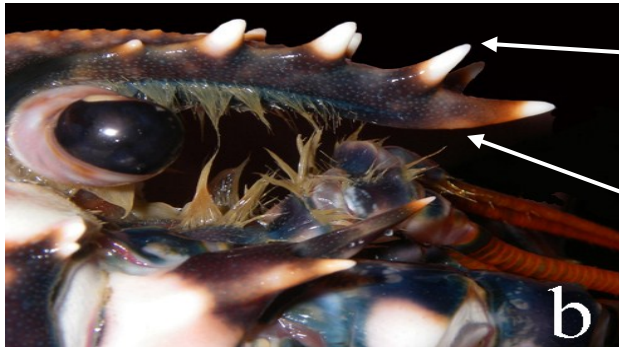
American lobster (*Homarus americanus*)



Spines on rostrum tend to be red tipped

Spines on rostrum tend to be red tipped

European lobster (*Homarus gammarus*)

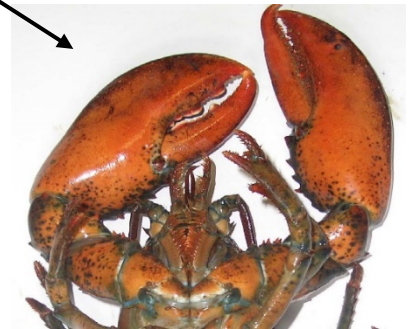


Rostrum spines white tipped

No ventral tooth

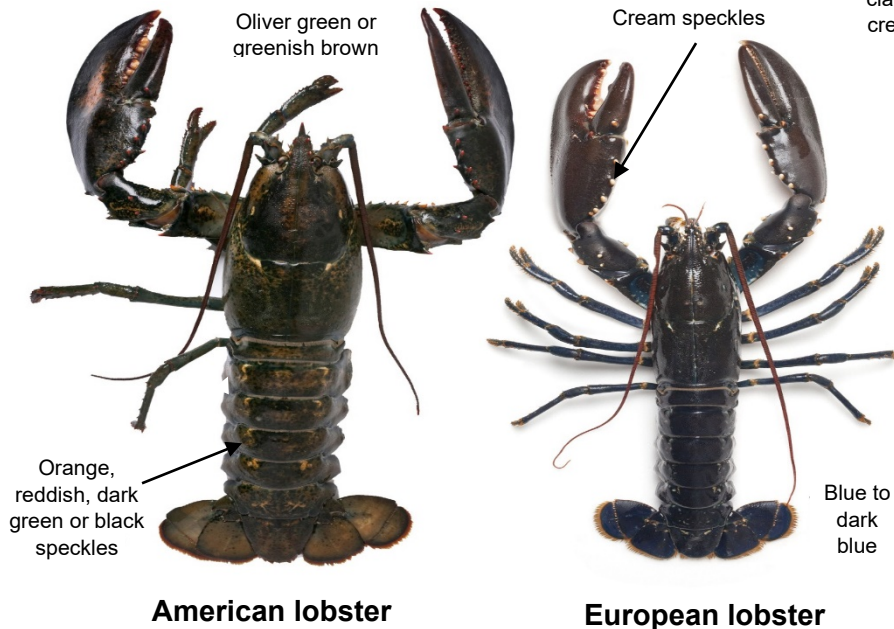
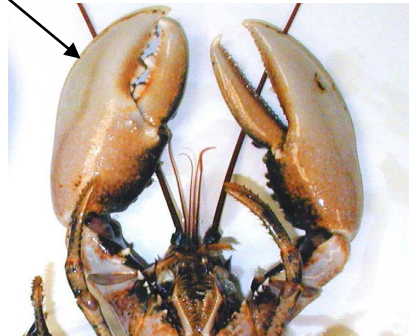
Underside of claws usually orange-red

American lobster



Underside of claws usually cream colour

European lobster



Olive green or greenish brown

Cream speckles

Orange, reddish, dark green or black speckles

Blue to dark blue

American lobster

European lobster

References and further reading:

CABI datasheet *Homarus americanus* (American lobster) available at <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/79674>
Information brochure on the American lobster (Fisheries and Ocean Canada) available at <https://catalogue.ogsf.ca/en/dataset/e9d86c62-9cbb-4cd4-83a2-cff29e626090>
Photographs: Natural History Museum, Cefas, FAO and St. Laurence Global Observatory

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

Adapted for Northern Ireland Environment Agency 2020