

One In A Million?



Photos Courtesy of the Maine DMR and
The Lobster Institute

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A close-up photograph of a vibrant blue lobster inside a wire trap. The lobster is positioned vertically, with its head at the top and its large claws at the bottom. The trap is made of dark metal wire, and some dried seaweed or twigs are visible inside. The background is dark and out of focus.

Perspective is Everything

If you've ever priced fresh lobster at a restaurant or even at the grocery store, you know how expensive they can be.

But did you know that during the 17th and 18th century Americans along the north-eastern coast of the United States considered lobsters “garbage” food—much like we think of fish like the carp as “trash” fish?

When lobsters were caught in quantities they were often used as fertilizer or given to servants and prisoners.

Typical Lobster Coloring

It wasn't until the 19th century that lobsters became a luxury food item and regained their status as the food of kings. Like many things in life, once they were perceived as being scarcer, they became more valuable.

That's where the true secret of value lies—in scarcity and a perceived value.

American lobsters are generally

“dark bluish green to greenish brown,” in color.

They're generally redder on the body and claws, and greener on the legs. Lobsters in these colors are plentiful and easy to find. Not all lobsters are so commonly colored.

Have you ever seen a blue lobster? Probably not. According to oceanographers, only an estimated one in two million lobsters is blue. The coloration comes from a genetic defect that causes the lobster to produce an excessive amount of a particular protein that gives the lobster that unique coloration. They're still lobsters, but they stand out because they're different. And because that difference is rare and startling, among those who understand and appreciate the difference, they're more valued! At least until something rarer comes along...

Only one in two million lobsters is blue? That makes blue lobsters pretty rare, special and valuable, especially if you're comparing them to the common darkish green and brown lobster most restaurants and stores offer. One in two million sounds pretty rare, and it is.



But is there something rarer than a blue lobster? There is!

While most of us assume lobsters are red, they're only red after they're cooked, unless they happen to be one of the one in 10 million lobsters that the Gulf of Maine Research Institute says occur naturally in nature with that same brilliant red coloring. One in 10 million. That kind of makes the blue lobster not quite as rare, and therefore not quite as special as a live red lobster.

But is there anything rarer than a live red lobster?

There is! Even rarer than blue or red lobsters are yellow lobsters. The odds of finding a yellow lobster are estimated to be one in 30 million, six times more rare than a blue lobster.

What is as rare or rarer than the yellow lobster?

Calico lobsters—lobsters with mottled orange and black shells. The odds of such a find? One in 30 million.

With only one in 30 million lobsters being yellow, or calico colored, all of a sudden that one in two million blue lobster seems kind of, well, ordinary as far as remarkable coloration in lobsters goes.

Why? Because once the blue lobster is no longer the rarest lobster on the planet the next rarest lobster becomes even more remarkable. The yellow lobster, with its one in 30 million occurrences blasts the one in two million occurrences of rare blue lobsters right out of the water!



Calico Lobster

Blue Lobster

**Orange-Brown
Split Colored
Lobster**

[Photos Courtesy of Maine State Aquarium](#)
and [The Lobster Institute](#)

But wait. Is there something rarer than a yellow or calico lobster? Something that's even rarer than one in 30 million lobsters?

Yes.

A split-colored lobster, with half the body being orange and half being brown is even rarer than the yellow or calico lobster.

Not only is the coloring different, but according to Bob Bayer of the Lobster Institute in Maine, all the ones he has seen have been

hermaphroditic, meaning they contain both male and female sex organs.

In July 2006, a fisherman in Maine caught such a spilt colored lobster and gave it to his local oceanarium. The oceanarium says that in 35 years they have only seen three lobsters with this kind of coloring.

So what exactly are the chances of finding a brown and orange, split-colored lobster?

The oceanarium estimates it's about one in 50 million.

So how rare does that yellow or calico colored lobster seem now? Or what about that blue lobster? Not so rare. But wait!

Is there anything even rarer than the orange and brown split-colored lobster?

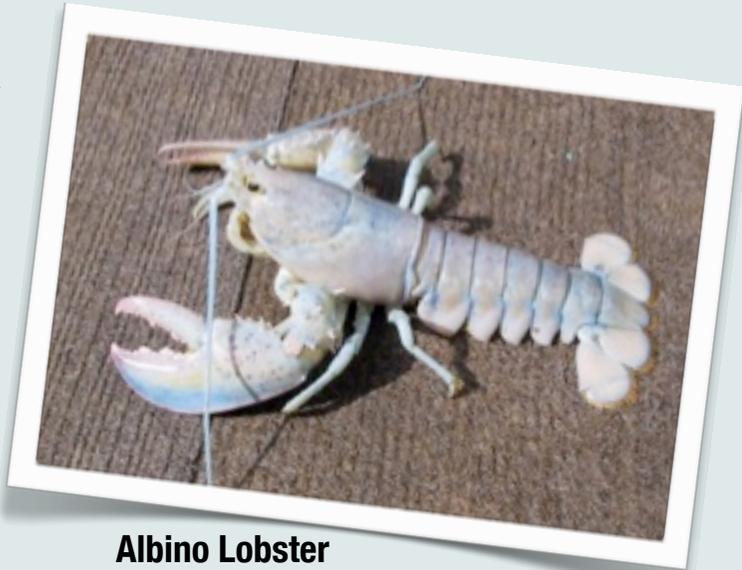
Yes.

Even rarer than the orange and brown split-colored lobster is the albino or “crystal” lobster – a lobster without any coloration at all, a totally colorless lobster.

Researchers and marine experts agree, only albino lobsters are rarer than the orange-brown split-colored lobster.

The odds of finding an albino lobster are one in 100 million lobsters. Yet, people do find them. One in 100 million. That's a long way from the one in two million blue lobsters that appear in nature.

Do you see now
how our perception
of what is valuable
and rare changes
once we
understand how
truly rare
something is?



Albino Lobster

The lobsters
didn't change.
They were always
rare. Our appreciation and the value we placed
on them changed once we understand how unique and rare they are.
We hope this has helped you understand how special lobsters are. We
have more information on lobsters at our website. Join us for more
information on all phases of a lobster's life.

Knowledge is Everything.

Learn more about the world around you.
Visit us at <http://www.lobsterinstitute.org>

About This ebook



This ebook is one of a series of educational books created for the Lobster Institute at **The University of Maine**. For more information:

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"The Lobster Institute, with guidance and involvement from fishermen and all constituents within the lobster industry, and with both a community and global perspective, conducts and provides for research and educational outreach focused on protecting, conserving, and enhancing lobsters and lobstering as an industry... and as a way of life."

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