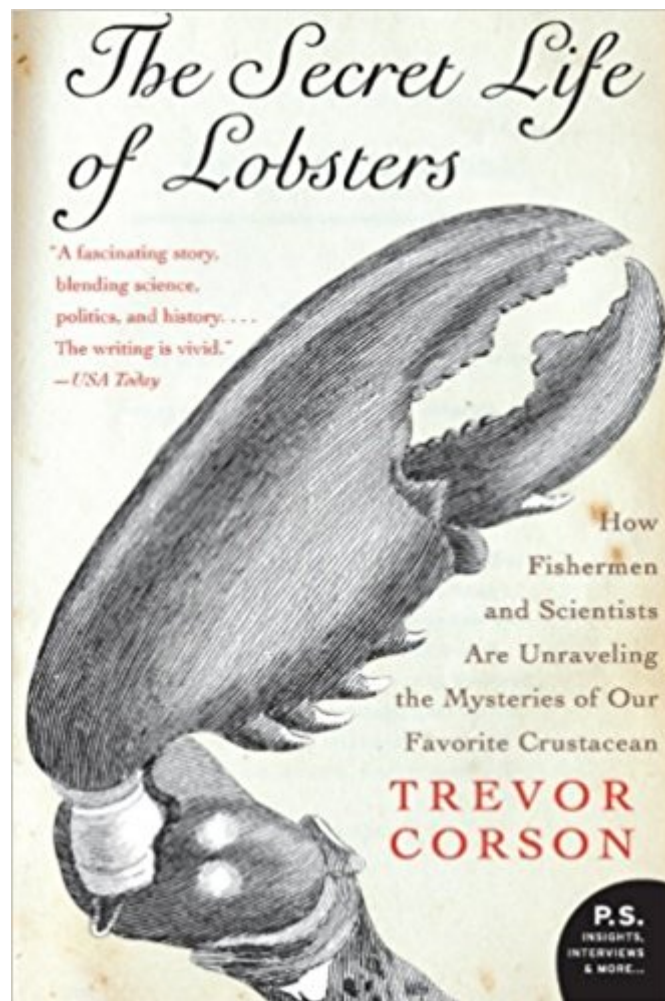


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The Secret Life Of Lobsters: How Fishermen And Scientists Are Unraveling The Mysteries Of Our Favorite Crustacean (P.S.)



Synopsis

In this intimate portrait of an island lobstering community and an eccentric band of renegade biologists, journalist Trevor Corson escorts the reader onto the slippery decks of fishing boats, through danger-filled scuba dives, and deep into the churning currents of the Gulf of Maine to learn about the secret undersea lives of lobsters. This P.S. edition features an extra 16 pages of insights into the book, including author interviews, recommended reading, and more.

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Customer Reviews

For anyone with an interest in Maine lobsters which goes beyond the plastic bibs and melted butter, this is the "Everything You Always Wanted to Know..." resource. After spending two years aboard commercial lobster boats, meeting scientists dedicated to conserving the lobster as a natural resource, and studying the research about the lobster's habitat, breeding habits, and possible endangerment, author Trevor Corson has produced a highly readable, balanced account of what is happening in the industry and the remarkable co-operation which has evolved between some lobstermen and scientists. Little Cranberry Island, just south of Mt. Desert Island and Acadia National Park in Maine, is a lobstering community with the perfect lobster habitat just off its coast, its lobstermen as concerned about preserving their livelihoods for the future as are scientists (many working for the government) about protecting the coast from "over-fishing." Until recently, however, the two groups had not pooled their knowledge, and scientists had not done enough on-site studies of how and where the lobsters live and breed and what constitutes the true threats to their continued

existence. No one on either side really knew whether cyclical declines in the number of pounds caught were natural or induced by man. Concentrating on the roles of individuals on the island and noted scientists engaged in unusual research, humanizing all of them and describing their day-to-day lives, Corson delves into seemingly arcane subjects, such as the lobster's mating rituals, molting and its effects, battles for territory (both by lobsters and fishermen), ocean currents that carry lobster larvae, natural "lobster nurseries," and the role of the extremely large lobsters which sometimes live in very deep water. The book is entertaining, and in a few cases humorous (a discussion of lobster courtship juxtaposed against the courtship of a lobsterman), but it is uncompromising in its attention to serious research and what has been discovered about the lobster's life cycle. Filled with insights into how and why scientists, lobstermen, the government, and the lobsters themselves all continue to behave as they do, this well-written account is accessible to scientists and laymen alike. Mary Whipple

I have to admit that I was predisposed not to like Trevor Corson's *THE SECRET LIFE OF LOBSTERS*. I know that I like to eat lobsters, that I prefer not to cook them myself, and that I need to have someone else help me crack the claws open to get out the meat. That's about all I ever knew, or cared to know, about lobsters before reading this book. I was skeptical that someone could actually write a whole book about lobsters, let alone that I would want to read it. That's why I was pleasantly surprised to find myself enjoying this nonfiction book that is part scientific mystery, part adventure story, and even part romance. There are two main groups of human characters in Corson's book. One group is the lobstermen of Little Cranberry Island off the coast of Maine. These rugged men, many of whose families have been lobstering for generations, work incredibly hard and understand more about lobsters than just about anyone. They're also surprisingly complex folks, some of whom hold degrees in economics or marine biology or who dabble in painting. The other group is the scientists who are dedicated to understanding lobster habitats and behavior in the hopes of swelling their population. These scientists alternate between skepticism of the lobstermen's own theories for ensuring a healthy lobster population and grudging respect for the lobstermen's time-tested methods. The scientists are a quirky bunch, too. One fellow plays a flute made out of a lobster claw, and one scientist becomes a waitress --- at a lobster restaurant --- because it's the only job that gives her enough flexibility to conduct her research. In many ways, *THE SECRET LIFE OF LOBSTERS* is an account of how these two groups, often at odds with one another, work over a period of years to discover why --- and if --- the lobster population is declining. The third subject of Corson's book is the lobsters themselves. Corson probes the

creatures' habitat, their development, and even their sex lives in minute detail. These sometimes violent and graphic descriptions of lobsters' behavior are broken up into short segments, alternating with accounts of the humans' own dramas. This technique helps keep the reader from growing overwhelmed by the amount of information presented. Occasionally, the author tries a little too hard to draw explicit analogies between the lobsters and their human counterparts ("Jack was a bit like a large lobster himself."). The text is most successful when it allows readers to discover the parallels for themselves. These connections are rich, though, and the mystery of the lobsters' survival is compelling. Even if Corson's book doesn't answer all the questions it poses, it will make you appreciate your next lobster dinner --- and the people who helped bring it to you --- in a whole new way. --- Reviewed by Norah Piehl

Dust cover makes the book look old and worn, but this up-to-date book has astonishing new information, even for someone who has known about lobsters for decades. You won't believe the life of these interesting critters down at the bottom of the cold sea! But the story is almost equally about the scientists who study the lobsters and their stories are fun and interesting too. This book kept me turning the pages and chapters to find out more about the personalities under water and the guys on the surface.

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