



MEDIA RELEASE
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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Lobster lotto to help in quest for big, red rock lobsters

University of Tasmania researchers are asking people fishing for crays this summer to help in the quest for bigger, redder rock lobsters by reporting any tagged catches.

Today is the opening of the commercial rock lobster season, and researchers from the University's Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) in Taroona are hoping fishers will report catches of tagged rock lobsters on the new 2007 tagged lobster reporting card.

"These tagged rock lobsters have been translocated from deeper waters, often in the south of Tasmania," researcher Dr Bridget Green said.

"We are in the third year of trialling the effect of moving rock lobsters from deeper to shallower water.

"So far we know that it results in bigger, redder lobsters – and these are the ones of most value to the commercial fishery and most prized by recreational fishers. Survival of translocated lobsters is similar to resident lobsters."

People who catch tagged crays are asked to fill in details on the reporting card so researchers can track the changes in growth and survival of translocated lobsters.

There is also an added incentive for fishers:

"Every reported tag puts the fisher in the running for one of our prizes in bi-monthly tag lotto – cash, fishing or boating gear, or wine," Dr Green said.

The recreational rock lobster fishing season opened on November 3.

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Fast facts on translocated rock lobsters

Research Time Line: Trials in translocating rock lobsters began in 2005 in Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria, funded through the Fisheries Resource and Development Corporation.

The Rationale: Large, red rock lobsters are in demand and fetch high prices. These lobsters are usually found in shallow waters and in fewer numbers. By contrast, lobsters found in deeper waters are greater in number, but smaller in size. Researchers are trialling moving deep-water lobsters to shallower waters.

The Process: More than 20,000 lobsters have been relocated from deep waters around Maatsuyker Island and Sandy Cape, and distributed to nine, shallow-water sites around the State:

- ❖ Lobsters from Maatsuyker Island are now at Ketchum Island and Whale Head (off the South Coast); Reidle Bay (Maria Island); Anson's Bay and Georges Rock (off the East Coast); Gull Island (off Flinders Island) and Taroon Reserve.
- ❖ Lobsters from Sandy Cape are off Stanley and King Island.

Every released lobster is tagged and information on location, colour, size and sex taken.

PhD student Arani Chandrapavan has been monitoring lobsters at the Taroon Reserve. Every two or three months she recaptures lobsters and records changes in colour, size and maturity. She also takes blood samples and photographs, then analyses the data.

The Results: Deep water rock lobsters grow faster and become redder once in shallower water. Within one moult (or one year) the colour change is complete; within one or two moults, body changes take place.

When moved, deep water lobsters reach legal size and enter the fishery which could increase productivity of the entire fishery.

Research published recently by Dr Caleb Gardner indicates that the translocation of rock lobsters is economically viable.

Ms Chandrapavan recently detailed Tasmania's progress in translocation in a paper given to the International Lobster Conference in Canada.