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The **Lobster** *NEWSLETTER*

11th International Conference & Workshop on Lobster Biology and Management Portland, Maine, USA | June 4 – 9, 2017



(photo: RW)

ICWL Celebrates its 40th year!

From: Rick Wahle and Kari Lavalli

For the first time in US Northeast, the University of Maine and Boston University hosted the 11th ICWL in Portland, Maine, June 4-9th, 2017, on the shores of some of the most productive lobster grounds on the planet! We welcomed 257 attendees from 14 countries. The Holiday Inn by the Bay in downtown Portland proved to be the perfect central venue to take advantage of the city's many restaurants and waterfront activities.

This year marked the 40th anniversary since the first ICWL gathered a cozy group of 35 in Perth Australia in 1977. Bruce Phillips (Western Australia Fisheries) and Stan Cobb of (University of Rhode Island) organized that first meeting. It was their vision to assemble scientists, fishery managers and industry members with common interests in the biology and management of lobsters of all stripes. We stand on their shoulders, a legacy of prolific scientific contributions and a virtual army of students who have gone on make significant contributions in their own right. This year's ICWL convened in recognition of the career of Jelle Atema (Boston University) who attended that first ICWL and retires this year after a long, productive and even musical career! Most notably, a distinguishing feature of the 11th ICWL was the large

number of new and young faces, with a huge increase in the number of female researchers. This bodes well for the future of lobster research and this conference.

Introduced by UMaine president, Susan Hunter, US Senator Angus King officially opened the meeting. His remarks underscored the need for the scientists who study these important creatures to disseminate their findings to help guide policy makers in their work. "Tell us how climate change will affect local economies and what we as policy makers need to do about it!" was his plea to energize the research community.

During the week, five plenary speakers led off the major themes: Jelle Atema (Boston University) gave an overview of the arc of his career using the American lobster as a model in research on behavior and neurophysiology. Paulo Prodöhl (Queens College Belfast, Northern Ireland) used his work with the European lobster to illustrate the power of molecular genetics in fishery science. Malin Pinsky (Rutgers University, USA) used large-scale data sets on the distribution and abundance of benthic species, such as lobster, to illustrate the concept of "climate velocity," the rate of poleward range shifts of marine species in a warming ocean, and the consequences for coastal communities. Bob Steneck (University of Maine) warned of "the gilded trap" so clearly manifest in the economies of Maine and Atlantic Canada which rely so heavily on the lobster fishery. Finally, Mark Edwards (New Zealand Rock Lobster Industry Council) spoke to the benefits of industry-science-manager collaboration in ensuring the sustainability of their lobster fisheries. In the sessions that followed, we had 157 oral presentations and 49 posters. At this writing, some 47 manuscripts are in review for the conference proceedings to appear in a special issue of the *Bulletin of Marine Science* in the spring of 2018.

Although the week started on the chilly and gray side, the sun came out as if on command for the mid-week outings. Wednesday afternoon excursions ranged from kayaking in Casco Bay, to an LL Bean shopping spree in Freeport, to a Portland Brew Bus tour, a guided tour of the Ready Seafood Co. plant, and as far afield as a boat tour of UMaine's Darling Marine Center and Damariscotta River oyster farms further down the coast. Then, after Thursday's Industry Day, we capped off the evening by crossing Casco Bay on the ferry for a traditional outdoor Maine lobster bake on Peaks Island with volley ball to boot. The conference closed Friday evening with a farewell reception with savory appetizers and music at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute's waterfront facility in Portland.

Whether spiny or clawed, lobsters are iconic world-wide in no small part because of their commercial importance. While the large clawed lobsters may comprise the most productive lobster fisheries, the spiny and slipper lobster fisheries are by far the most widespread and diverse globally. Some have become poster-children in their parts of the world for changing marine ecosystems. Although we did not formally declare a theme for the 11th ICWL, if we did, we might call it "*Lobsters-at-a-Cross-Roads*," because in 2017 we find ourselves at a cross-roads of unparalleled uncertainty. To be sure, climate change, overfishing and disease are central, long-standing issues. For the fishing industry, there is also the rising cost of the business of lobstering, and the opportunities and challenge of expanding global trade with Asia. In another corner we even see lobster as an invasive species! And now, at least in the United States, the very future of government support and leadership in scientific research on climate and fisheries is hanging in the balance. The uncertainties are also generational. As the fishing fleet ages, what does the future hold for the next generation? From Down-under to Downeast, it all begs the question, how do we confront the challenges facing the next generation of fishermen, scientists, and policy makers? Our hope is that at this 11th ICWL was a small step in addressing those

challenges. One advantage we should not underestimate: the iconic status of lobster as a powerful tool, a model organism, to study and communicate the prospects and perils of the new world we face.

The Holiday Inn by the Bay in downtown Portland proved to be the perfect centrally located venue to take advantage of the city's many restaurants and waterfront activities. Although the week started on the chilly and grey side, the sun came out as if on command for the mid-week outings. Wednesday afternoon excursions ranged from a Portland Brew Bus tour, a guided tour of the Ready Seafood Co. plant, and a boat tour of UMaine's Darling Marine Center and Damariscotta River oyster farms further down the coast. Then, after Thursday's Industry Day, we capped off the evening by crossing Casco Bay on the ferry for a traditional outdoor Maine lobster bake on Peaks Island with volley ball to boot. Jelle Atema even treated us to a lobster claw flute demo. The conference closed Friday evening with a farewell reception at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute's waterfront facility in Portland, sporting both savory appetizers and music.

We now look forward to the 12th ICWL in 2020 to be hosted again in Perth, Australia, this time by Nick Caputi of Western Australia Fisheries, and Matt Taylor of the Western Rock Lobster Council.

In closing, we express deep gratitude to our steering committee and subcommittees for all their hard work. Particular thanks are due to Curt Brown (Ready Seafood Co.) who, with the help of Patrice McCarron (Maine Lobstermen's Association), organized Industry Day and gave the tour of Ready Seafood's waterfront facilities. And a huge thank you to our sponsors, chief among them Maine Department of Marine Resources, Ready Seafood Co., New Zealand Rock Lobster Industry Council, Massachusetts Department of Marine Fisheries, the Northeast Regional Sea Grant Consortium, Boston University, the University of New England, and the University of Maine's Office of Research. And finally, we thank all of our section editors who have been working hard in ushering the submitted papers through the review process for our proceedings.

See you in Perth in 2020!

Many thanks,

Rick Wahle & Kari Lavalli
Co-chairs, 11th ICWL

Sunset over Casco Bay, Maine, from Peaks Island, the site of the 11th ICWL lobster bake. (photo: C. Davies)

