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## THE SECRET LIFE OF LOBSTERS

How Fisherman and Scientists are Unraveling  
the Mysteries of Our Favorite Crustacean

Trevor Corson

For generations, Maine fisherman have harvested lobsters from the cold ocean waters along their craggy coastline, and the predominance of these clawed creatures has done much to shape the economy and culture of the Pine Tree State. Indeed, no trip to Maine would be complete without a fresh lobster dinner. Over the past few decades, recurring fears over the decline in the lobster population have incited battles among hidebound lobstermen, renegade scientists, zealous environmentalists, and entrenched government officials. But, as Trevor Corson chronicles in **THE SECRET LIFE OF LOBSTERS: How Fisherman and Scientists are Unraveling the Mysteries of Our Favorite Crustacean** (HarperCollins; June 2004; \$24.95), the controversy over protecting this sustainable resource also has led to a cooperative search for answers.

Part science, part social history, **THE SECRET LIFE OF LOBSTERS** grew out of an essay Corson wrote for *The Atlantic Monthly*, which was later included in *The Best American Science Writing 2003*, edited by Oliver Sacks, M.D. Now a journalist, Corson spent his boyhood summers in Maine dreaming of becoming a marine biologist and commercial fisherman. As an adult, he worked for two years aboard the lobster boat *Double Trouble* out of Little Cranberry Island, immersing himself in the day to day life of the lobstering community. His firsthand experience working alongside the rugged lifers has provided him with a unique perspective, and he offers indelible portraits of the hardworking people whose livelihoods depends on the survival of the lobster.

Corson also takes readers inside labs, aboard research vessels, and even on undersea scuba explorations as he details the lives and work of a quirky band of scientists who have dedicated their careers to uncovering the secrets of this elusive predator. Using unorthodox methods like underwater vacuum cleaners, robots, lasers, scent electrodes, and even superglue, these dedicated men and women have methodically studied lobsters, attempting to understand their life cycle. They have made many surprising discoveries about the homely crustacean's dramatic sex life and survival skills, and are applying these findings to better understand whether the lobster's future is at risk.

The central mystery in **THE SECRET LIFE OF LOBSTERS** is why Maine's lobster catch has tripled over the past fifteen years, while the lobster population in other Northeastern waters off Rhode Island and Long Island has been shrinking or dying off. Will Maine's lobster catch continue to rise in 2004 and beyond, or will it be hit with a devastating decline? It is a question that once again has the lobster community divided, and Corson's evenhanded assessment of whether lobsters can be harvested sustainably draws on both the biology and behavior of the mysterious arthropods, and on the concerns of the lifelong lobstermen who are bemused and uneasy as they are forced to confront change.

Witty, inquisitive, and painstakingly researched, **THE SECRET LIFE OF LOBSTERS** introduces a fresh talent to the ranks of today's nature writers. "Like the first man who decided a lobster was edible, the reader of this book is in for a surprise: It's fantastic!" says noted naturalist Richard Ellis, author of *The Empty Ocean*. "This is the way natural history is supposed to be written — engaging, fascinating, brilliant."

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