

# THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Canada



WelcomeBC



Lobster

Photo by Roberto Rodriguez, Public Domain

## How old is a lobster?

Adapted from The Vancouver Sun

Level 1

Now scientists know the age of a lobster.

They count the lobster's rings.

We do this with trees.

We count the rings in the wood.

## How old are they?

Nobody knows how long lobsters live.

Some people think they live to 100.

Before now, scientists guessed their age.

They looked at their size and other things.

## New information

Lobsters, crabs and shrimp grow one ring a year.

And they grow them in places inside the animal.

So, the rings cannot be seen.



Crabs and shrimp

Photo by Vera Kratochvil, Public Domain

## Other sea life

For years, scientists knew a fish's age.

They counted the rings in a fish's ear.

They counted a shark's rings

in its backbone.

The rings on a clam shell tell how old it is.

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The rings on a clam shell tell its age.  
Photo by Peter Griffin, Public domain

### **The problem**

Animals like lobsters, crabs and shrimps have shells on their bodies.

These animals are called **crustaceans**.

The animal grows. Its shell gets too small.

So, the shell cracks. It falls off.

This is called moulting.

Scientists thought that these shells had the rings.

The rings fell off, they thought.

So, they could not count them.

This is why they did not know their ages.

### **A surprise**

Scientists looked at lobsters closely.

They found growth rings are on the eye stalk.

An eye stalk is like the stem of a flower.

The stem holds up the flower.

A lobster's eye stalk has an eyeball on the end of it!

Scientists also found growth rings in the stomachs of lobsters. So, the shell of a lobster or shrimp comes off.

But the rings stay.

Soon we will know. Do lobsters live to 100?

### **Vocabulary:**

– **crustaceans:** (krus - tay - shuns)

### **Links:**

Some interesting facts about lobsters for teachers:

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/lobster/>

Crustaceans, like lobsters and shrimp:

<http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Crustacea/pictures/>