

# Florida's Popular Marine Animal... Spiny Lobsters

Lobsters are a popular marine crustacean found in Florida, Bahamas, and Caribbean. The Florida spiny lobster, *Panulirus argus*, is one of the most valuable commercial and recreational species in Biscayne Bay. It gets its name from the sharp spines covering its outer shell and antennae. Lobsters live near shallow coral reef and seagrass environments. They tend to be cryptic, hiding in rock crevices during the day and coming out at night to feed. Lobsters usually feed on small invertebrates such as small snails, shrimp, and crabs, but occasionally feed on algae. Lobsters always have to be on guard from predators like nurse sharks, octopus, groupers, large rays and triggerfish.



Millions of people look forward to lobster season each year in South Florida, which annually runs August 6 through March 31. State and Federal regulations must be adhered to in addition to bag limits, size limits, and season restrictions. These laws and regulations exist due to the over harvesting of lobsters within the past 20-30 years. Scientists are studying ways to protect immature lobsters so they can grow and reproduce before being removed from the population.

