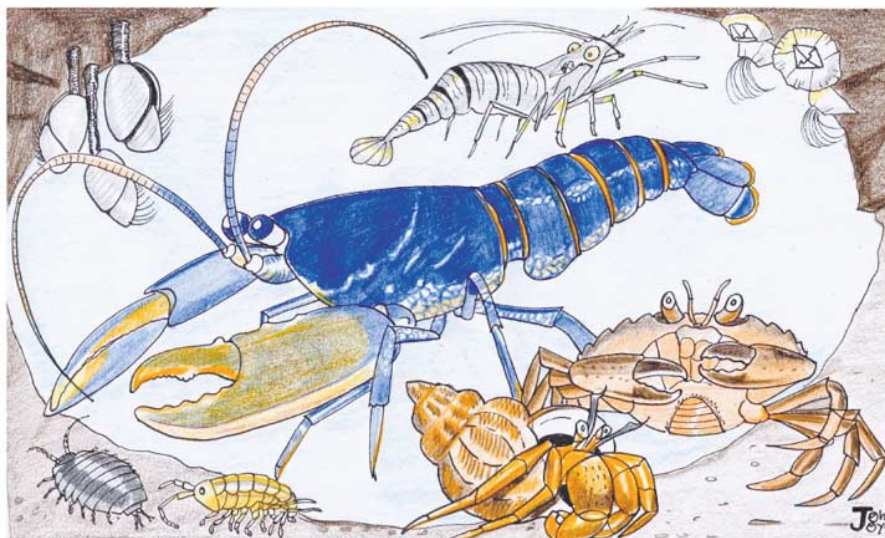


The Crusty Crustacea . . .

Lobsters, crabs, prawns, shrimps, sand hoppers and even barnacles all belong to a class of animals called Crustacea (pronounced "crust - asia". They probably share common family ties with insects in that they belong to the same major division of the animal kingdom, the Arthropoda (animals with jointed feet).

Of the crustacea found around the Irish coast, the most valuable are the lobsters, crabs and crayfish, which are caught with baited pots laid on the seabed. The Dublin Bay Prawn (served in restaurants as "scampi") lives in muddy burrows in the seabed and is caught with nets.

Some crabs in tropical countries have managed to climb out of the sea to make a living on land. In the South Seas of the Pacific, the robber crab, is said to actually climb trees and cut down coconuts. While the largest animals in the world – the great whales – feed almost exclusively on huge swarms of flattened shrimps called "lobster krill" which they filter out of the sea by the ton.



Crusty on the outside – soft on the Inside . . . ?

Unlike you and I, lobsters, crabs and all crustaceans do not have a bone in their body. Their strength comes from an outside skeleton (or "exoskeleton") to which their muscles are attached.

As a crab (for instance) grows, this rigid exoskeleton becomes too



small and the animal has to split its old shell, climb out of it like an ancient knight climbing out of a suit of armour, and then quickly hide somewhere safe until a new exoskeleton grows around it (see left).



Buoy Zone

Fishermen, yachtsmen and other water users can all receive real-time weather information from a network of offshore databuoys on their mobile phones using the text messaging system SMS, thanks to an innovative service pioneered by the Department of Communication, the Marine and Natural Resources, the Marine Institute, Met Eireann and the UK Met Office.

This service complements the on-line weather information by the Marine Institute at www.marine.ie/databuoy

Captain Cockle's Log



Welcome aboard shipmates!

Together, we'll be taking a look at the world's greatest natural resource - the sea!

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