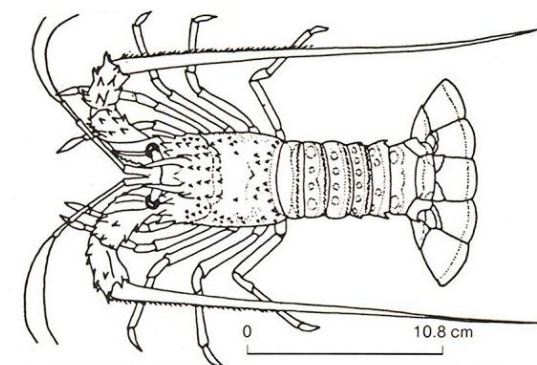


# Spiny lobster

*Panulirus argus*  
*Langosta comun*



## Description

**Range:** A decapod crustacean of the family Palinuridae, the spiny lobster is found along the western Atlantic coast from North Carolina to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and throughout the Gulf of Mexico. This species is abundant off the southern Florida coast, from Fort Pierce to the Dry Tortugas.

**Habitat:** These benthic invertebrates occur on reefs and rubble areas from the shore to depths of 80 meters or more. They tend to be found in crevices and dens that provide shelter from other predators. The larval stages are planktonic. Post larvae and juveniles utilize shallow coastal waters of bays, lagoons, and reef flats.

**Feeding and Behavior:** An omnivore, this species feeds on molluscs, algae, worms, sponges, and carrion found on the coral reef substrate. Spiny lobsters are solitary predators that forage for food at night.

**Reproduction:** Spawning grounds are offshore in open Gulf waters. Spawning season extends from March to July, peaking in April, with some spawning occurring year-round. Juveniles move inshore to seagrass and mangrove nursery areas until they reach maturity, when they move out to deep reef habitats.

**Movement:** Local movements are reported in response to temperature and food availability. Mating triggers an inshore migration, and spawning is preceded by offshore movement. Offshore movement is also prompted by periods of cold temperatures.

**Fisheries:** Commercial trap fishing for spiny lobster is active in south Florida, the area accounting for the largest harvest. A smaller fishery occurs along Florida's east coast. In Mexico, commercial trap fishing grounds are located at Alacran reef, and along the northwestern and northeastern Yucatan Peninsula. Spiny lobster are harvested recreationally throughout the Gulf, particularly in south Florida and the Keys.

**References:** Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 1981a; Idyll, C.P., 1971; Simmons, D.C., 1980; Smith, F.G.W., 1954.

- Adult Area (Year-round)
- Nursery Area (Year-round)
- Occurrence
- Rare Occurrence
- Commercial Fishing Ground\*

Spawning, from March to July, occurs throughout adult area. In the Yucatan, nursery areas are inshore in areas of seagrasses and mangroves.

\*Seasons for commercial fishing are as follows:  
A. Eastern coast of Florida – Fall, Winter and Spring  
B. Southern coast of Florida – Fall, Winter and Spring  
C. Northwest Yucatan Peninsula – Year-round  
D. Alacran Reef – Year-round  
E. Northeast Yucatan Peninsula – Summer, Fall and Winter

## References

Davis, G.E., pers. comm.; Lyons, W.G., pers. comm.; Robinson, R.K., and D.E. Dimitrou, 1963.

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