



European Lobster Fishery

While there is some targeted creel fishing for lobsters (*Homarus gammarus*), they are largely caught as bycatch in the crab fisheries, which are regulated via creel limitations.

Data from SSMO logbooks show an initial period of decline in landings from 2000 to a low of around six tonnes in 2005 (based on a mean lobster weight of 0.8 kg; Figure 1). This was followed by a period of increase to 36 tonnes in 2017, followed by a drop to just below 25 tonnes in 2018-2020. The increase in landings observed between 2008 and 2017 coincided with a period of increased observations of undersized lobsters entering the fishery.

Effort, calculated as the total number of creels fished where lobsters were recorded in the landings data, has shown a steady decrease since a peak in 2009. The decrease observed in 2018 was greater than that seen in recent years. However, effort has risen in 2019 and 2020, equivalent to 2017 levels (Figure 1). Landings per unit effort (LPUE) remains well above the mean at 8.8kg/100 creels.

The lobster fishery is widespread (Figures 2-4) with areas of the highest LPUE observed around the north isles and north Mainland. While overall distribution remains similar between years, some inter-annual variation is seen around Foula and Fair Isle.

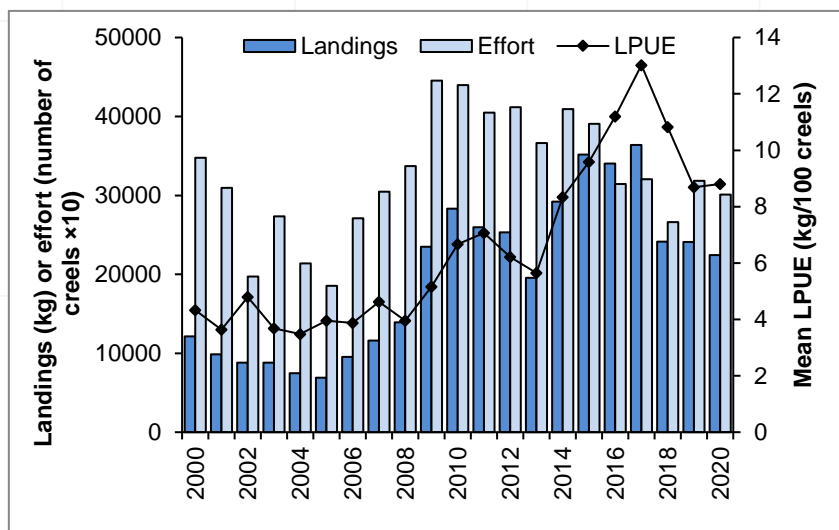


Figure 1 Total European lobster landings (kg), total numbers of creels and the average LPUE obtained from SSMO logbook data with 95% confidence intervals shown.

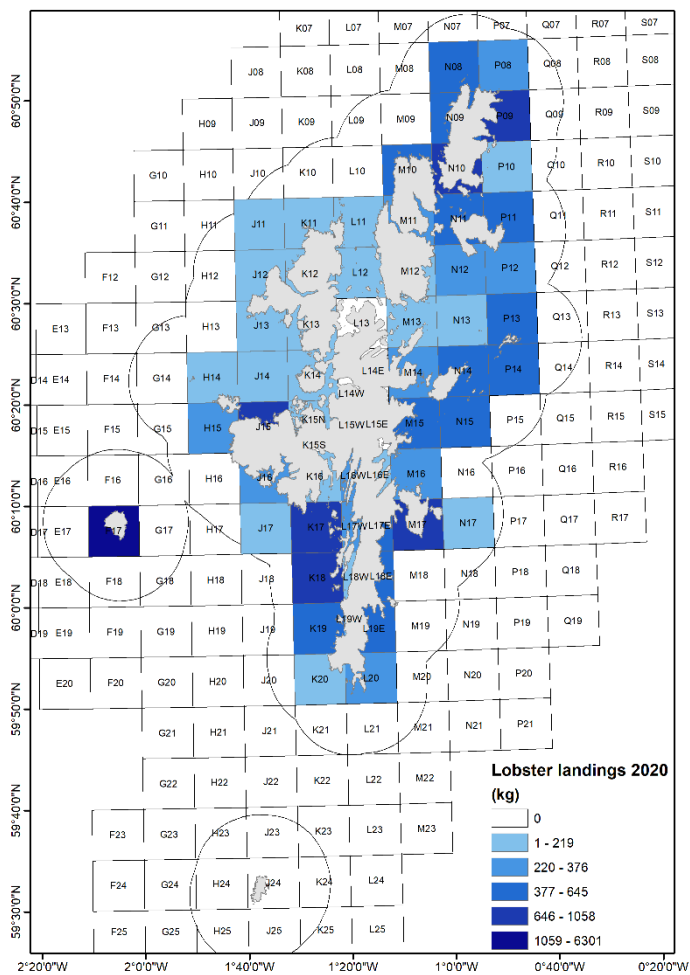


Figure 2 Geographic distribution of European Lobster landings (kg) per SSMO statistical square in 2020.

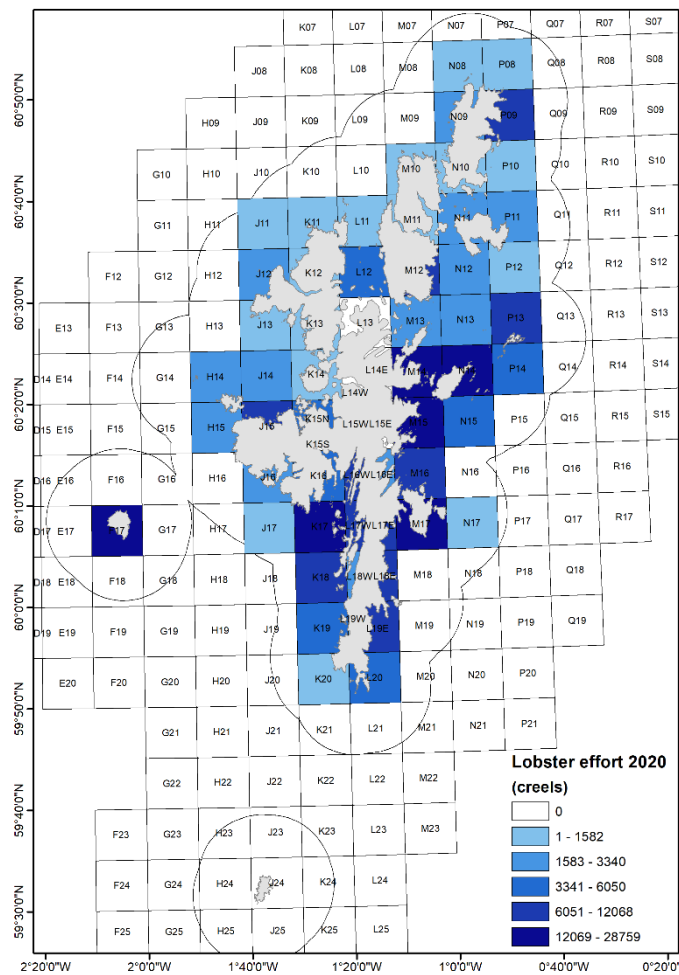


Figure 3 Geographic distribution of European Lobster effort (creels) per SSMO statistical square in 2020.

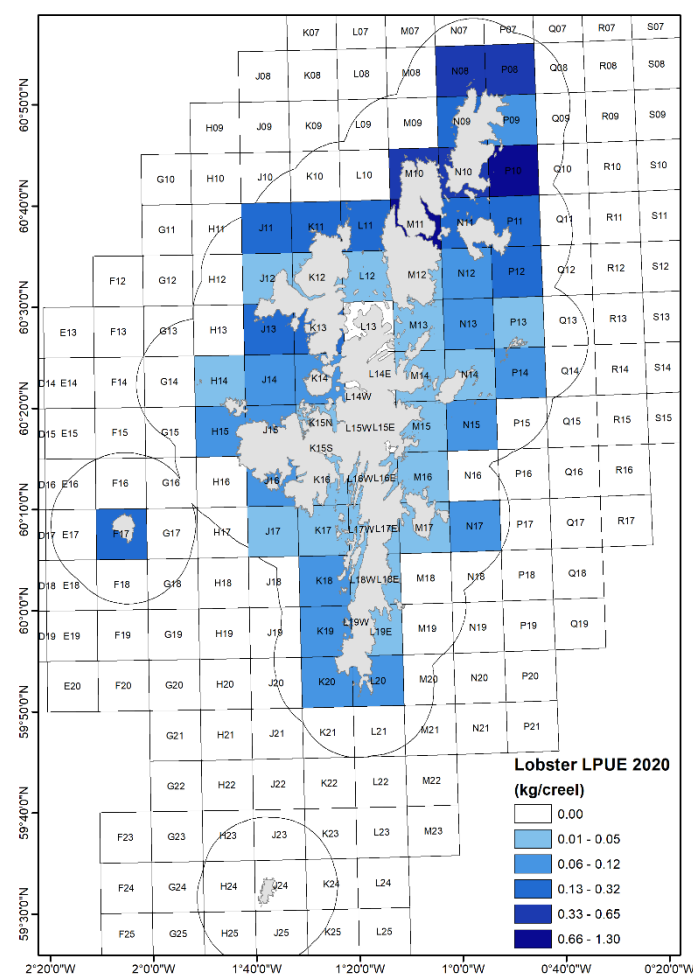


Figure 4 Geographic distribution of European Lobster LPUE (kg/creel) per SSMO statistical square in 2020.