

A day in the life of a fisher

by Ruby Arsenault

Fishers begin their day when most of the world is still sleeping. At 3 am, a lot of things run through their minds as they head to the harbour.

The captain is responsible for the safety of the crew, finding and catching the lobsters, operating the fishing vessel and all equipment, and maintaining the log book, which is sent to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

When the captain jumps aboard the boat, the first thing is to check all equipment to ensure everything is working before heading out to sea. When the one or two crew members are aboard, the boat is untied and the captain sails out of the harbour to the fishing grounds.

Some mornings can be very challenging, with gale-force winds, salt spray, and rough seas. Fishing is limited usually to 10 weeks in each of the spring or fall seasons.

Each lobster boat is allowed 300 lobster traps in the spring season and 250 in the fall. Each lobster trap can weigh up to 125 pounds each when wet. So in an average day, a fisher could lift up to 37,500 pounds!

Using an electronic device called a plotter and a keen eye, the captain sails out to find the bunches of traps tied together with a long rope and a buoy.

Once the traps are emptied, they are lined up on the washboard of the boat and released into the sea again. The second man carefully pushes each trap overboard while continuously monitoring the movement of the rope, so that his/her feet are not tangled in the rope.

The second man is responsible for maintaining a clean working area and continuously icing the seafood and banding the large market lobsters. The two most important things the fisher must do is to measure each lobster to determine if it should be released or kept.

Every female lobster has to be checked for spawn (eggs) and released immediately. She is carrying the eggs of the future lobster industry, so she must be handled carefully.



Market lobsters are placed in a tub of ice and their claws are banded. The smaller lobsters, called cannery lobsters, are kept in separate tubs of ice. All market lobsters caught and sold are tagged with a code number, so that anyone in the world purchasing one can trace where the lobster came from and what boat brought it in from the sea. When they arrive at the harbour, their catch is weighed and sold.

One captain says that the best invention is an escape mechanism fitted into each lobster trap. This small opening allows smaller lobsters, which must be thrown back anyways, to crawl out and make room for more larger lobsters to enter.

Fishing is much more than just a job or a way to make a living; it's a way of life. Most fishers will tell you that it's in their blood and they love it.

Many fishers have become part of the industry through their parents or relatives. Others work in this seasonal industry because they grew up in a community such as Tignish, where fishing was the main job available.

Fishing requires a tremendous amount of hands-on skills, mechanical abilities, and labour intensive work. These skills are transferable to other jobs such as in the Alberta oil fields, deep sea fishing in Nova Scotia, or in industries such as manufacturing and agriculture.



Fishing is now classified the second most dangerous job in North America

Many people do not release the dangers of working in this industry. The Holland College Marine Centre offers a variety of required safety training such as MED A1, which covers basic life saving techniques all fishers are required to know.

For a list of all **Holland College** courses related to the fisheries, visit www.hollandcollege.com/marine-training-centre/

For more about the fishing industry, visit www.peifa.org/members/

For the full article, visit www.employmentjourney.com and search **Fisher**.

Women in the fishing industry

by Ruby Arsenault

For as long as **Chelsey Gaudet** can remember, she wanted to be a fisherwoman. "Back in kindergarten when I was asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I said I wanted to go fishing with my parents," says Chelsey.

Chelsey and her brother Chad often joined their parents **Glen & Angela Adams** from Alberton in the boat during fishing season. Due to the early morning hours, their parents found it difficult to find a sitter, so they would often head out to work with their children aboard.

"When I graduated high school, the fishing industry was mostly made up of men who owned and operated their own vessel and fishing gear. I wanted to make sure I tried other options to see what I really liked as a career. I tried hairdressing, but that was not for me. Then I went to work at a daycare because I love being around children, but something was missing.

"I wanted to be on the ocean, fishing," says Chelsey, with a huge smile. "That is where I belong and I love it. My dad supported me, and at 19 years old I started fishing with him out of Howard's Cove in the fall lobster season. The following year I fished both the spring and fall seasons, and I bought my own gear in 2013."

Today Chelsey is the proud owner and captain of her own fishing vessel. She fishes mainly lobster and halibut.

"I love everything about fishing. I love being out in the boat, I love the ocean, and I love to see what weird creatures I might catch in my traps. I see and learn new things every day.

"If I am having a bad day, once I get out on the water I feel so much better. The beauty can take your breath away. Fishing relaxes me, although there are rough days and you can take a good beating when the wind rolls up some nasty waves. But I wouldn't do it any other way, and the good days outweigh the bad."

Chelsey says being self-employed is a great option on PEI, and she encourages other women who have interest in fishing to go after their dreams.

"More and more women are in the industry today," she says. "Many women also fish with their husbands."



Chelsey Gaudet, Fishing Vessel Owner and Captain.

She is very passionate about the industry, and participates in many fishing-related meetings and sessions throughout the year. She also took the radio communications course, MED A1 and marine first aid, which are offered through the Holland College Marine Centre in Summerside.

Chelsey and her husband have one daughter, Gemma. Chelsey plans to encourage her to fish if that is what she wants to do when she grows up. "I hope my daughter loves the industry, but I will encourage her to go after any career she would like. We are saving money so that one day she can attend college or buy her own fishing gear."

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