

One in 50 million: Rare split-color lobster caught off Cape Cod

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A fishing crew off Cape Cod got more than it expected, hauling up a rare genetic anomaly.

On April 16, the crew of the fishing vessel Timothy Michael caught a striking split-colored lobster and brought it to the [Wellfleet Shellfish Company](#), a wholesale and retail seafood distributor based on Cape Cod.

The company announced in a [Facebook post](#) on Tuesday that it will donate the “rare beauty” to the Woods Hole Science Aquarium for public display.

In the meantime, because the aquarium is currently undergoing renovations, the crustacean will be cared for by a team at the Marine Biological Laboratory of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Woods Hole.

“Split lobsters like this are extraordinarily rare — caused by unique genetic variations that create their striking half-and-half coloring,” Wellfleet Shellfish Company wrote. “Moments like this are why we do what we do: supporting our fishing community, protecting the ocean and sharing its wonders with everyone.”

Split lobsters, also known as chimeras, resemble two individual lobsters cut lengthwise and spliced together, according to the [Seacoast Science Center](#) in Rye, New Hampshire. These rare specimens can have one half of their bodies display a specific color or biological sex, while the other side appears completely different.

With roughly a one-in-50-million chance of occurring, these unique creatures result when two zygotes fuse and develop into a single individual with two separate sets of genes, according to the center.

While environmental factors such as diet can enhance shell pigments, genetics remains the primary driver of such distinct coloration.

A diet rich in carotenoids, found in algae and shellfish, can create more vibrant red or orange hues, though displaying such bright colors often makes it difficult for lobsters to camouflage themselves from predators.