

Scallops shown to swim into illuminated fishing pots

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Scallops are drawn to illuminated fishing pots like moths to a flame, new research shows.

The study examined the effect of LED lights on crab and lobster pots used by fishing boats off the coast of Cornwall, UK, and the research team—including engineering firm Fishtek Marine and the University of Exeter—were stunned by the results.

More than 500 scallops were caught—99.6% of them in pots with lights—and videos show the shellfish piling into the pots.

Wild-caught scallops are usually fished using dredges and trawls, so the findings present a chance to develop a new, low-impact fishing method for the high-price seafood.

"We were working on lights for crab and lobster pots and I gave some to a fisherman for testing," said Dr. Rob Enever, head of science and uptake at Fishtek.

"He told me the lights made no difference to crabs or lobsters, but he noticed quite a lot of scallops in his pots. We decided to test this properly in this study. When I saw the results, I couldn't believe my eyes.

"Boats that would only see two or three scallops in their pots annually were now seeing 20 or more in a single pot. We have found something really astonishing here.

"This could be a real opportunity for crab and [lobster](#) fishers, because the lights don't seem to reduce the number of crabs and lobsters they can catch—they just bring in an extra haul of scallops."

Further work is planned this summer to optimize this new method of fishing by trialing different lights and pot designs in different areas of the UK in order to establish a new, low-impact and commercially viable fishery for [scallops](#).

Dr. Phil Doherty, from the University of Exeter, says that they "are delighted to be working with an excellent local company to do the science that underpins innovation that could be good for fishers and the environment."

The paper is published in the journal *Fisheries Research*.

More information: Robert Enever et al, Scallop potting with lights: A novel, low impact method for catching European king scallop (*Pecten maximus*), *Fisheries Research* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.fishres.2022.106334](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2022.106334)

Provided by University of Exeter

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