

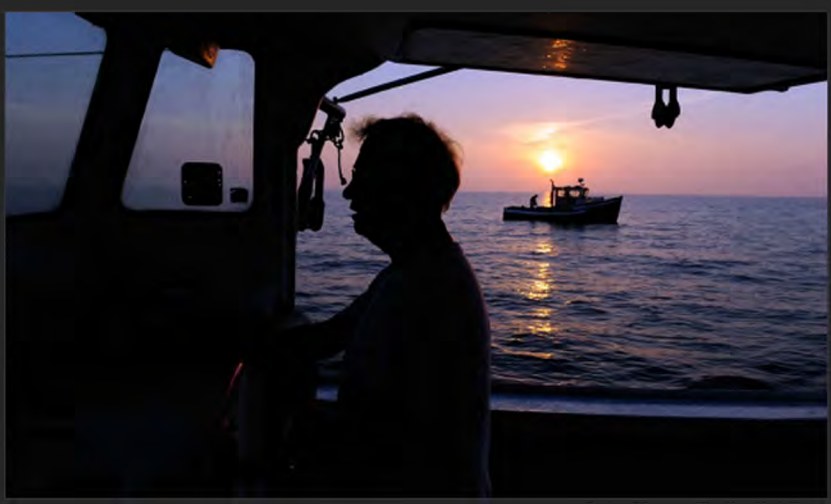
# LENS

PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO AND VISUAL JOURNALISM

August 7, 2011, 8:45 PM

## On Long Island, Disappearing Lobsters

By KERRI MACDONALD



Barton Silverman/The New York Times

Phil Karlin, who lives on Long Island, has been a lobsterman for more than 40 years.

Last fall, on a visit to his nearby Long Island fish shop, the New York Times staff photographer [Barton Silverman](#) placed an order for some lobster.

"I've just got a couple of Maine and Canadian lobsters," came the response.

"How come you don't have any local lobsters?" asked Mr. Silverman, a lobster lover who claims to have eaten the fiery-red crustaceans "morning, lunch and dinner" on a trip to Bar Harbor in Maine.

The answer was simple: "They don't exist

THE LONG ISLAND SOUND  
**Disappearing Lobsters**



Barton Silverman rode on a fishing boat with Phil Karlin, who has been a lobsterman for more than 40 years in Long Island.

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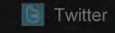
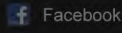
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So Mr. Silverman and his wife brought some Maine-born lobsters home. But he filed the conversation away. When his editors invited staff photographers to pitch photo stories for the Metro Section, Mr. Silverman returned to those words.

They don't exist anymore?

Some research online led him to articles on the Long Island Sound's huge, three-day [lobster die-off in September 1999](#). With the help of [New York Sea Grant](#), Mr. Silverman tracked down a group of lobstermen who meet at [Land and Sea Fish Market/Restaurant](#) in Mount Sinai, N.Y.

It took time for the lobstermen to welcome the photographer. But eventually, he earned their trust. They invited him to their June meeting. Some began calling him to tell him their stories. Mr. Silverman began to see the story from another perspective — not that of a hungry seafood connoisseur, but that of a struggling entrepreneur.



Barton Silverman/The New York Times  
Long Island lobstermen at Land and Sea Fish Market/Restaurant.

In the late spring, he arranged to head out on the water with Phil Karlin, a longtime lobsterman, and his grandson, Carl Nickerson. On the first trip, they didn't pull up any lobsters. On the second, there were only a handful of “keepers.”

“It's a labor of love,” Mr. Silverman said. “Even though they're not making a living, they love being out there.”

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*An audio slide show featuring Mr. Silverman's photos, produced by Kerri MacDonald and Sandra Stevenson, was published online in the Metro section Sunday night, alongside [an article written by Mike Wilson](#).*

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On Assignment, Barton Silverman, Economy, Fishing, Kerri MacDonald, Lobster, Long Island, Long Island Sound, Metro, Mike Wilson, On Assignment, Sandra Stevenson

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the finest and most interesting visual and multimedia reporting — photographs, videos and slide shows. A showcase for Times photographers, it also seeks to highlight the best work of other newspapers, magazines and news and picture agencies; in print, in books, in galleries, in museums and on the Web. Here are some suggestions for getting the most out of Lens. You can also send us an e-mail message.

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Photographs from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Libya.



Barton Silverman/The New York Times

Mr. Karlin and his grandson, Carl Nickerson, pull lobster pots.



Barton Silverman/The New York Times

Taking a lobster pot out of the water.



Barton Silverman/The New York Times

Tossing crabs.



Barton Silverman/The New York Times

Brianna, Mr. Karlin's boat.