

Biodegradable golf balls made from lobster shells

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Researchers from the University of Maine have created biodegradable golf balls, made from waste lobster shells.

Golf balls may be small and the ocean may be huge, yet traditional plastic-skinned balls that are whacked into the sea are nonetheless a source of pollution, and a potential hazard to marine life – anyone remember the *Seinfeld* episode where a whale got one of Kramer's golf balls down its blowhole? It would certainly stand to reason that biodegradable balls would be the logical choice for golfers who want to use the ocean as their driving range, and such balls do already exist. A team from the University of Maine, however, have recently created golf balls made from lobster shells ... and they have a couple of advantages over similar products.

The balls were created by Chemical Engineering Professor David Neivandt and undergraduate student Alex Caddell, via UMaine's wonderfully-named [The Lobster Institute](#). They are made from crushed waste lobster shells, combined with a biodegradable binder and coating. A by-product of the lobster canning industry, the shells would reportedly otherwise end up in a landfill.

Not only do the UMaine balls make use of an otherwise unused waste material, but they're also cost-effective – whereas traditional biodegradable golf balls cost a bit less than one U.S. dollar a piece, raw materials for one of the lobster shell balls adds up to about 19 cents.

Intended for use on cruise ship driving ranges, the balls can be used with both drivers and irons. Although they don't fly quite as far as regular golf balls, they are said to offer similar performance to other biodegradable balls.

The university has filed a provisional patent on the lobster shell material, and is now looking into using it for other products, such as plant pots and surveying stakes.