



MLA-004-Lion Fish-Caribbean

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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Lionfish – *Pterois volitans*



Description



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Lionfish are marine fish that are mainly red, brown and white and have a striped, zebra-like appearance. They grow to approximately 12-15 inches in length; however they have been noted to be larger in areas where they are not indigenous. The pectoral fins are long and showy, and with a row of long, dorsal spines. Each spine contains a venom gland in the distal third of the spine (but not at the tip). Lionfish venom causes pain but is rarely lethal.



Lionfish are an invasive species that threaten Florida's saltwater fish and wildlife. FWC encourages people to remove lionfish in Florida waters to limit negative impacts to native fish and wildlife. Lionfish can be speared, caught in hand-held nets or caught on hook and line.

New rule change: FWC recently made changes that will increase lionfish harvesting opportunities, which are currently in effect through August 2013: a recreational fishing license is not required for recreational fishers targeting lionfish while using a pole spear, a Hawaiian Sling, a handheld

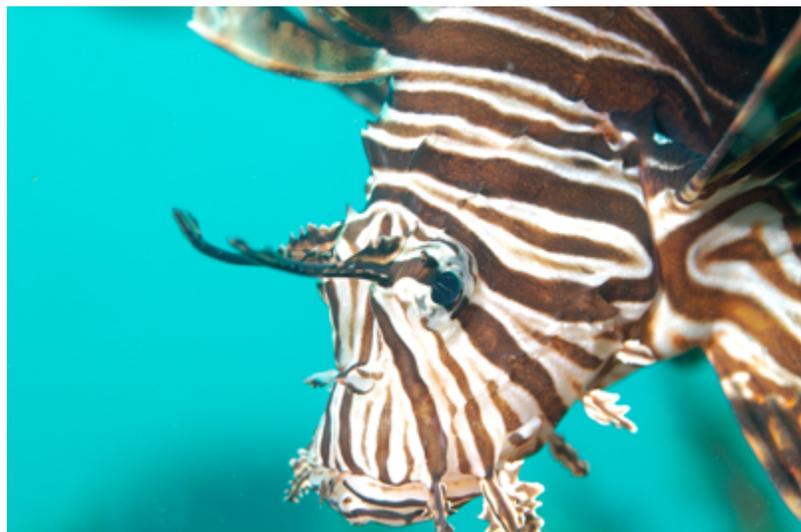
net or any spearing device that is specifically designed and marketed exclusively for lionfish. There is no recreational or commercial harvest bag limit for lionfish. Learn more about [harvesting lionfish](#). Read the new [Executive Order](#)  on lionfish harvesting.

Native Range

South Pacific and Indian Oceans

Florida Distribution

Lionfish were first reported off Florida's Atlantic Coast near Dania Beach in 1985; in the 1990s four reports were made near Miami, Boca Raton and Palm Beach and one report came from Bermuda. In 2000 the species began to be recorded off the Atlantic coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, while reports from Bermuda and Florida continued. By 2005 the first report was made from the Bahamas. The species has now been regularly recorded all along the east coast of Florida, with multiple observations throughout the Florida Keys, and they are widespread in the Caribbean. Individual lionfish have





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been collected or were observed in the northern Gulf of Mexico off Pensacola and Apalachicola in 2010.

Introduced Range Map
USGS

Impacts

Lionfish are a predatory reef fish. They eat native fish, which can reduce native populations and have negative effects on the overall reef habitat as they can eliminate organisms which serve important ecological roles (e.g. herbivorous fish which keep algae in-check on the reefs.) Lionfish also compete for food with native predatory fish such as grouper and snapper.



Current Status

Lionfish are spreading throughout Florida's waters, undoubtedly from the established populations in the Caribbean. Juvenile lionfish have been caught, and it is likely that the species is reproducing at hospitable reef sites in Florida. They have been found in shallow waters to depths of 1000 ft.

More Information

- [Lionfish Frequently asked questions](#)

- [Harvesting and Reporting Lionfish](#)
- [Lionfish Brochure](#) 

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