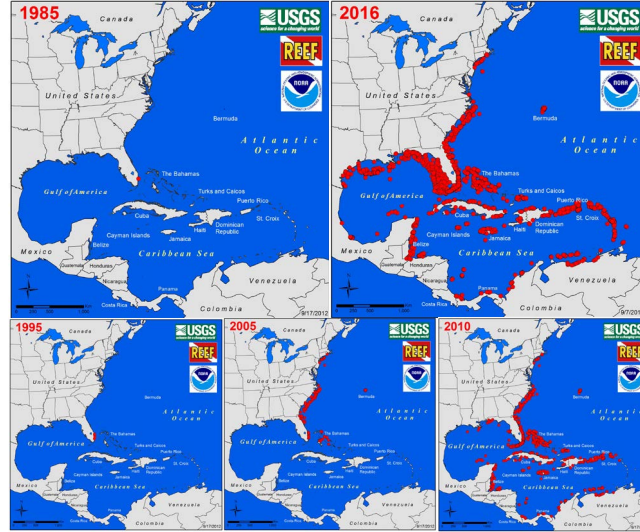


Nonnative lionfish

have successfully invaded Florida waters, which introduces a potential threat to native marine life and habitat. You are the current primary means of population control. Be the predator and remove lionfish from Florida waters whenever you can!



History of Invasion / Ecological Threat

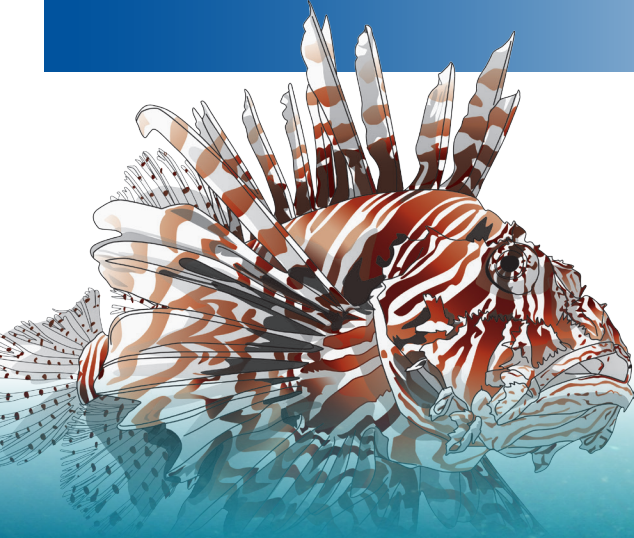


Lionfish (*Pterois volitans* and *P. miles*) were introduced to the coastal waters of southern Florida over 30 years ago. The source of the invasion is unknown, but it was likely from an aquarium release of some kind. Though sometimes blamed, it is unlikely that a release from ballast water was the culprit, as very little shipping from the lionfish's native range to our water occurs without the exchange of ballast water beforehand. In recent years, lionfish populations have rapidly grown and spread throughout the Caribbean, Atlantic and Gulf of America.

Often referred to as the worst marine invasion to date, lionfish have the potential to alter the population dynamics of our native marine species, impacting recreational and commercial fishing and the overall economy of Florida. You can help control lionfish by removing every one you encounter.

Report Lionfish Sightings

1. USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species (nas.er.usgs.gov/sightingreport.aspx)
2. NOAA accepts sightings and tissue samples (lionfish-invasion.blogspot.com)
- 3 Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF.org)



Lionfish control efforts, including regulatory changes, outreach and education, are a priority for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Visit MyFWC.com/Lionfish to learn more.

Interested in hosting a lionfish event?

FWC hosts events to engage a range of audiences.

- Invasive Lionfish Seminar: Educate the general public about lionfish, the invasion, and getting involved in control efforts.
- Become the Predator workshop: Educate and train divers to confidently and safely harvest lionfish. Also includes fillet demonstration.
- Lionfish Classroom Invasion: Guided dissections and activities for students of all ages.

FWC "Be the Predator" lionfish booth would love to be at your festival or event.

Submit event name, date, time, location and contact information to Lionfish@MyFWC.com

Search MyFWC on Social Media



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com

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Unless marked, all photos by FWC

Lionfish



Be the Predator!



MyFWC.com/Lionfish

Photo: Jason Arnold

Lionfish Facts

- Lionfish are slow moving and relatively easy to capture with dip nets or spears
- Currently have no significant predators in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of America
- Consume a wide variety of economically and ecologically important fish and invertebrates
- Can tolerate a wide range of water temperature, salinity and depth
- Have 18 venomous spines that can cause painful wounds
- Are not aggressive and use their venomous spines only for defense
- Can exceed 18 inches in length, but most are less than 15 inches
- Have free floating egg masses that are distributed by ocean currents
- Can release up to 30,000 eggs per spawn
- Spines are not hollow like snake fangs. Instead, venomous glandular tissue is housed in grooves along the spine
- Stalk predators and often use their fins to herd prey into a corner before consuming them whole
- Able to consume prey that are more than half of their own length



What You Can Do

Harvest by recreational and commercial divers is currently the best means of controlling lionfish and minimizing unwanted ecological impacts. Please safely remove lionfish whenever possible and consider participating in lionfish derbies and tournaments.



Photo: Jason Arnold

Lionfish can be speared, caught in hand-held nets or caught on hook and line.

There are no minimum size limits, closed seasons or bag limits for recreational or commercial harvest, and a recreational fishing license is not required to harvest lionfish when using dip nets, pole spears, Hawaiian slings or any spearing device designed and marketed exclusively for lionfish.

Care should be taken to not damage reefs when spear fishing.

The practice of feeding lionfish to other predatory species while diving should be avoided because it is dangerous and prohibited in state waters.

Food Quality

Lionfish are commonly used as a food fish in many parts of the world and are considered to be of excellent quality by most who have tried it. When cooked, lionfish fillets are firm, white and flaky with a very mild, non-fishy taste that is comparable to snapper, black sea bass or hogfish. Lionfish can be substituted in recipes for other non-oily fish and can be fried, broiled, baked, steamed or poached. While the spines of lionfish do contain venomous tissue, the flesh of a lionfish is not venomous or poisonous. Several Florida restaurants, seafood markets, and grocery stores are now serving limited amounts of commercially harvested lionfish.



Photo: Erin Spencer

Handling

Filleting a lionfish is similar to filleting any other type of fish, with the exception of using caution to avoid the spines located along the dorsal, pelvic and anal fins.



If you put the fish on its side, you can easily hold the fish by the gill plates or pectoral (side) fins without getting stuck. Some people choose to wear puncture-resistant gloves or cut off the spines completely prior to filleting. Use care when doing this as the venomous glandular tissue located within the grooves of the spines are present even at the spine's base.

It is important to note that even fish that have been on ice can still cause painful injuries.

Treat stings by immersing the wound in hot (not scalding) water for 30 to 90 minutes and seek medical attention if necessary.

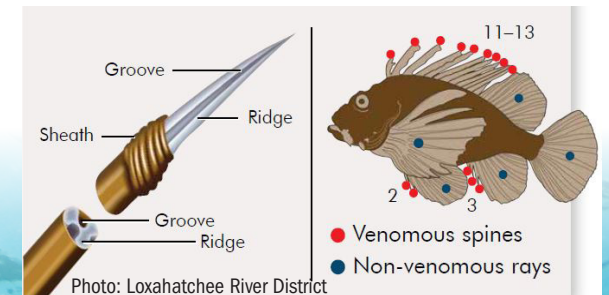


Photo: Loxahatchee River District