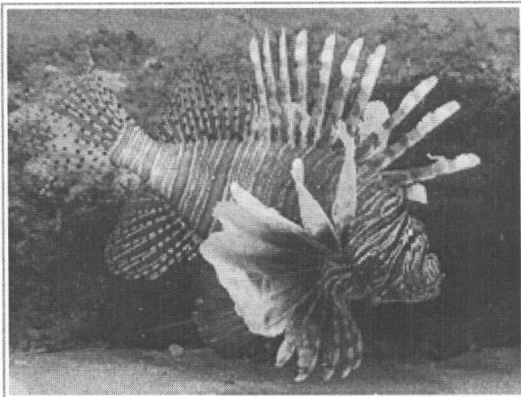


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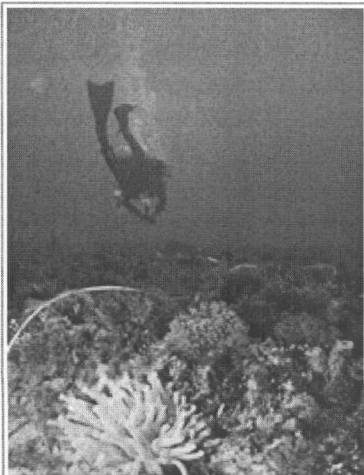
Lionfish invader of the U.S. Atlantic Coast



Lionfish photographed in 115 ft of water in North Carolina Hard Bottom habitat.

Lionfish research background

Native to the sub-tropical and tropical Indo-Pacific region, lionfish (*Pterois volitans* and *Pterois miles*) are often kept in both public and private aquariums. Since 2000, however, lionfish have been observed, primarily by SCUBA divers in coral, rocky and artificial reefs along the southeast coast of the U.S., from Florida to North Carolina and also throughout the Bahamas, Bermuda and Cuba. Juvenile lionfish are also routinely observed in the northeast region near Long Island NY, but do not appear to survive the cold winter temperatures. In more recent years lionfish have also been caught by bottom fishing anglers. Scientists expect lionfish to continue to disperse throughout the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and the Florida Keys. There is also increasing concern among fishery scientists that lionfish, having no natural enemies, may adversely impact native fish populations. In addition, this fish has venomous spines and may pose a danger to divers and anglers alike. Scientists at NOAA have been conducting research on the invasive lionfish to better understand lionfish distribution, density, life history, temperature tolerances and genetics. This information will now be used to determine and mitigate potential ecosystem and fisheries impacts due to the presence of lionfish.



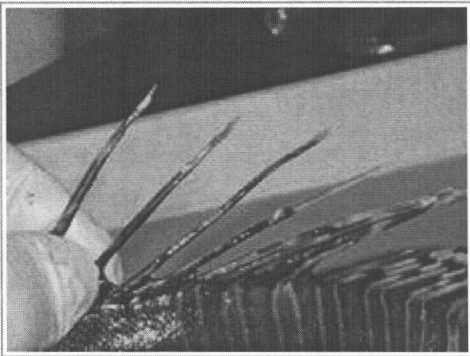
Goals of lionfish research:

Research diver
conducting visual
transect survey for
lionfish and native
fish community

- Estimate lionfish densities in offshore habitats to determine trend in lionfish population abundance.
- Characterize the ecology and biology of lionfish in their new habitat including thermal tolerances.
- Determine potential ecosystem and fisheries impacts, and make information available to resource managers.
- Encourage a proactive public outreach program to both warn and inform people about the threat lionfish may pose to the ecosystem and by their venomous spines.

Lionfish are identified by:

- Distinctive red or maroon and white stripes;
- Fleshy tentacles above the eyes and mouth,
- Fan-like pectoral fins, and
- Long separated dorsal spines.



(photo by Stephen P. Vives)

2006 Cruise Logs

2005 Cruise Logs

2004 Cruise Logs

Caution Statement:

NOAA would like to encourage everyone (divers and fishers) to be extremely cautious and avoid contact with the venomous spines of the lionfish and to help us spread the word to other anglers by posting and distributing the informational flyers.

If you or someone you know gets 'stung' by the venomous spines, (all the spines are venomous,) you are advised to immerse the wound in hot water for 30-90 minutes and seek medical attention as soon as possible. Hook and line or fishing-related lionfish catches can be reported to NOAA by emailing to reportlionfish@noaa.gov or calling (252)728-8714, or online at this web site.