
Lionfish Fact Sheet

Common Name:

Red lionfish, lionfish, turkey fish.

Scientific Name:

Pterois volitans

(Pisces: Scorpaenidae)



Photo by Paula E. Whitfield,

Identification: Distinctive red, maroon and white stripes; fleshy tentacles above eyes and below mouth; fan-like pectoral fin; long separated dorsal spines; dorsal spines 13; dorsal soft rays 10-11; anal spines: 3; anal soft rays: 6-7; scales:cycloid.

Native Range: Indo-Pacific: western Australia and Malaysia to the Marquesas Island and Oeno (Pitcairn Group); north to southern Japan and southern Korea; south to Lord Howe, Kermadec, and Austral Island; throughout Micronesia. Lionfish reside near coral reefs and rocky outcrops.

Southeastern United States Observations: Lionfish have been observed along the southeastern United States Coast from Florida to North Carolina. Juvenile lionfish have been collected in waters off Long Island NY and Bermuda. Off the coast of North Carolina 49 lionfish have been reported at nineteen different shipwreck and natural hardbottom locations at depths of 85 to 260 feet between 2000 and 2002. Previous reports of lionfish include six that were accidentally released in Biscayne Bay, Florida from a home aquarium during Hurricane Andrew (1992), and diver reports of lionfish off Palm Beach and Boca Raton, Florida in the early 1990's.

Maximum size: 17 in. / 38.0 cm.

Remarks: This species can give a painful, venomous sting with its dorsal, anal and pelvic spines. This is a popular marine aquarium fish.

References:

Courtenay, WR. 1995. Marine fish introductions in southeastern Florida. Newsletter of the Introduced Fish Section of the American Fisheries Society 14(1):2-3.

Eschmeyer, WN. 1986. Scorpaenidae. In: Smith MM, Heemstra PC (eds) Smiths' sea fishes. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, p 463-478.

Schultz, ET. 1986. *Pterois volitans* and *Pterois miles*: two valid species. Copeia 1986: 686-690.

USGS. 1999. Nonindigenous Fish. Available at: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/fishes/>. [last date verified 9 January 2002]

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