
Lionfish Fact Sheet

Common Name:

Red lionfish, lionfish, turkey fish.

Scientific Name:

Pterois volitans

(Pisces: Scorpaenidae)

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 softrays 10-11; anal spines: 3; anal soft rays: 6-7; scales:cycloid. Maximum size: 17 in. / 38.0 cm.



Photo by Paula E. Whitfield,

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 reported 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 at least 49 lionfish have been reported at nineteen different shipwreck and natural hardbottom locations at depths of 85 to 260 feet between 2000 and 2003. As of January 2004 lionfish numbers appear to be increasing from Florida to North Carolina. 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.

WARNING!: This species can give a painful, venomous sting with its dorsal, anal and pelvic spines.

References:

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

Biological Invasion of the Indo-Pacific lionfish *Pterois volitans* along the Atlantic coast of North America (2002) Paula E. Whitfield, Todd Gardner, Stephen P. Vives, Matthew R. Gilligan, Walter R. Courtenay, Jr., G. Carlton Ray, and Jonathan A. Hare. Published in Marine Ecology Progress Series. 235: 289-297

For more information or to report additional sightings please contact: Paula Whitfield, at the NOAA Beaufort Laboratory, 101 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort, NC 28516; phone: (252) 728-8714; FAX: (252) 728-8784; email: paula.whitfield@noaa.gov. or contact Jon Hare (252) 728-8732; jon.hare@noaa.gov

