

Lionfish Facts



- ◇ Lionfish is native to the Indian and Pacific Oceans
- ◇ Invaded the Caribbean and Atlantic Region via the Aquarium Trade
- ◇ Has spread throughout the entire Wider-Caribbean region with no natural predators
- ◇ Reproduces every 4 days, all year round, each female produces 2 million eggs per year
- ◇ Lionfish are venomous, but can be safely consumed in most countries
- ◇ Consumes large quantities of juvenile fish and crustaceans, and other marine life
- ◇ Can reach up to 20 inches (500mm) in length

ABOUT THE CRFM

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) was officially inaugurated on 27 March 2003, in Belize City, Belize, where it is headquartered.

The CRFM It was established following the signing of the “Agreement Establishing the CRFM” on February 4, 2002 and is an inter-governmental organization.

The CRFM’s mission is to “To promote and facilitate the responsible utilization of the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources for the economic and social benefits of the current and future population of the region”.



THE CARIBBEAN REGIONAL FISHERIES MECHANISM (CRFM)

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CARIBBEAN REGIONAL FISHERIES MECHANISM



Lionfish Control and the Private Sector



The Source of the Problem

In the 1980's and '90s, the lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) was a popular and highly sought aquarium pet fish. Persons paid high prices to import these Pacific fish into the United States. Undocumented releases of these pet fish resulted in the first documented specimen in the wild in Florida, 1985. Hurricane Andrew in 1992 also contributed to this when an aquarium facility in Florida was damaged and several lionfish escaped. Since then, the lionfish has spread rapidly mainly via water currents throughout the region, as far north as New York and as far south as Brazil.

The Impacts

As a confirmed marine invasive species, the Lionfish has shown negative impacts of native fish and crustaceans consuming large quantities each day. Many of these species are highly value commercial species, negatively impacting the fisheries of the invaded country. Additionally, persons have been severely stung by these venomous fish with the associated negative public health and economic impacts. With no natural predators in this region, these negative impacts may continue to escalate to intolerable levels.

Lionfish and the Private Sector

The main impacts on the private sector have been in the fisheries and tourism entities.

Fisheries Impact

Lionfish has been found to consume as many as 30 juvenile reef fish per day. These range from groupers, snappers, grunts, parrotfishes to up to 50 other species. The consumption of these species not only removes the commercially important fish, but also the ecologically important ones such as the herbivores and cleaners on the reef. Naturally, this also causes an impact on the food web as food for carnivores and top predators are removed. This will lead to decreased revenue from the sale of these commercially important fish.

Tourism Impact

The lionfish has dominated several reefs, displacing the native marine life. Many visitors to the Caribbean enjoy SCUBA diving and snorkeling on these reefs. With the diversity of marine life being decreased on many reefs because of the lionfish, the attraction of these visitors to our reefs diminishes. Incidence of tourists being severely stung by the lionfish while swimming has also caused a fear in these persons.



Private Sector Involvement

Numerous private sector entities have come on board in the fight against the lionfish. Here are a few examples:

◇ Lionfish Culling Events

Sponsored competitions for persons to hunt and remove lionfish from the reefs. Prizes are usually given for largest lionfish, smallest lionfish and most lionfish by one team. This is often a highly publicize event which adds to the value of the events towards control.

◇ "Eat them to Beat Them" Campaigns

Many countries have shown high success with control by promoting the consumption of the lionfish. Restaurants and hotels have started featuring the lionfish on their menus, and even at culinary events.

◇ Direct Support to Control

Some private sector companies have contributed funding, as well as in-kind resources such as boat use towards control activities.

◇ Mobilization of hotels' dive teams

Hotels with dive teams have trained their teams in lionfish removal and implemented a programme to routinely remove lionfish from the reefs they regularly dive on.

◇ Public Education

One of the most powerful tools against the invasion is sensitizing persons on lionfish. Many companies have used their resources to promote the cause in the media as well as special events they host.