

Lionfish Population Control Pilot Program

The FWC and ECRA have partnered to launch an aggressive lionfish population control program.

Participation Information

- Participation is voluntary and divers accept all liability for their boating, diving, lionfish killing and handling activities.
- Remove 100 lionfish from the Gulf of Mexico.
- LF may be removed from State or Federal waters
- To qualify for native 10 tags, you must turn in 100 lionfish heads to the same turn-in location.
- At the turn in, there will be a form that records your catch and the tags issued to you.
- Native Fish tags ONLY valid in State Waters
- You must have a valid Florida fishing License to use the fish tags.
- Tags must be secured between the mouth and gill of the native fish **PRIOR** to placing them in your cooler.
- Any participant caught with out-of-season or above-the-bag limit of native fish that do not have the tags secured will be subject to ticketing, fines and will be barred from further participation in the program.
- Tags are good in-or-out of season. In season, you may take up to 2 extra fish of each species only. Out of season, you may take a maximum of 2 of each species per dive trip.
- You MUST follow the simple turn-in procedures
- To earn more tags, turn in another 100 lionfish
- **There is NO limit to the number of lionfish you may turn-in!**
- All qualifying divers agree to have their names and photos posted online to help promote the program's success.

Lionfish Turn-in Information

For updates & added locations, dates and times, or to schedule or attend a FREE Lionfish Workshop go to: www.ecreef.org or www.myfwc.com/lionfishpilotprogram

- Keep the bags of lionfish heads on ice or in the freezer before bringing them to the collection location. **Rotten, stinky heads will NOT be accepted.** (Sorry, no exceptions!)
- Cleanly cut the heads off and place them in a Ziploc bag so they will lay flat, in a single layer and label the bag with your name. This will allow us to count them, while they are inside the bag.
- Put tiny heads in a separate bag w/ your name
- There is a minimum of 25 fish for each turn-in visit. You may keep heads frozen in your freezer.
- To qualify for 10 native fish tags, you must turn in 100 lionfish heads to the same turn-in location.
- Once you qualify, you will be issued 2 tags for each of the following native fish species:
Red Snapper, Gag Grouper, Red Grouper, Triggerfish and Greater Amberjack.

Escambia County

Turn-in Locations

Okaloosa County

Turn-in Locations

Bay County

Turn-in Locations



www.ecreef.org

REWARD

100 Lionfish Heads



Earns You:

10 Native Fish Tags

Good in-or-out of season!

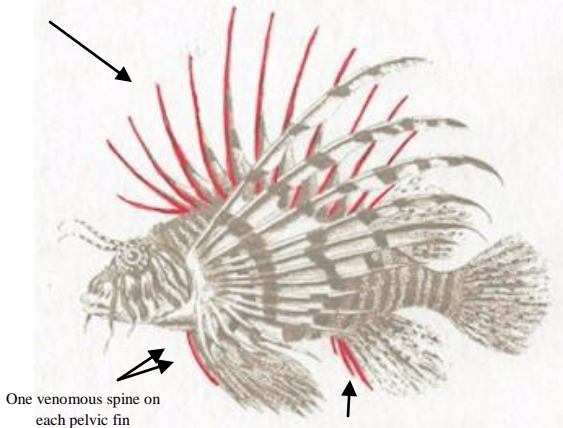
ECRA is a 501 c3 non-profit dedicated to improving the fishery in the Gulf of Mexico by providing habitat & evaluating the effectiveness of Artificial Reefs and protecting our native fishery from predation by invasive species.

Donations to ECRA are Tax Deductable!

ECRA ~ P.O. Box 273 ~ Niceville, Florida 32588

Safety First

Beware: Venomous Dorsal, Pelvic and Anal Spines!



18 Spines highlighted in RED are venomous

The Sting can be painful. Sting can cause swelling, numbness and in **very** rare cases, temporary paralysis. We know of no deaths attributed to lionfish stings but there is no way to know how your body would react if you are severely allergic.

Best way to PREVENT Stings

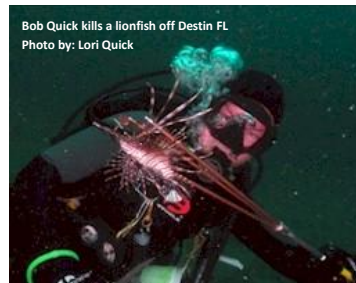
- Use a collection device that allows you to bag your lionfish without getting your hands near the lionfish. **(Most stings are to the hands)**
- Use a collection device that prevents spines from poking through the sides of the device so you won't get stung taking the fish to the surface.
- When handling the lionfish, use puncture resistant gloves (**HexArmor® gloves**) or hold the lionfish by the head with your thumb and fingers on either side of the head, below the eyes.
- **Lionfish spines remain venomous after the fish is dead.** If you place a lionfish in your cooler with the spines attached, be VERY careful reaching into the cooler because you could be stung.
- Remove the spines using shears prior to filleting your lionfish.
- Dispose of removed spines in a jar, can or box so that nobody gets stung picking up the garbage bag.

Lionfish Hunting

Equipment

- **!!! Take a thermos of very hot water on the boat with you in case you get stung** and a small bucket or bowl you can use, to soak your sting for 15-20 minutes to deactivate the venom. Air activated instant heat packs are also useful in the event of a sting but these take about 15 minutes to heat-up. Reusable heat packs can be taken underwater to begin treatment while at your safety stop.
- Pole spear (Paralyzer tips are popular because it will hold the fish still, after they're shot)
- Spine proof collection bag or container. (Watch those spines; bagging is when most stings occur!)
- Some people use needle/puncture resistant gloves to help protect them from the venomous spines. Often, divers wear only one glove on their non-dominant hand because they decrease your dexterity. A lot of divers don't use gloves.

Hunting



- Lionfish have no fear of divers; you can get very close if you approach them slowly
- They are the easiest fish to spear
- Lionfish are site specific so they usually stay within 300' of their home reef
- Sharpen your spear tips to improve penetration
- Good buoyancy control and situational awareness is important (Don't forget, sharks are attracted to blood.)
- **It is best for our native fishery if you KILL EVERY LIONFISH YOU CAN, EVERY TIME YOU DIVE!**

First Aid



In the event you are stung underwater, resist the urge to race to the surface. The sting may hurt but DCS (The Bends) can kill you!

How to treat a lionfish sting

- Hot, (100° -110°) **not scalding** water denatures the venom and should give you relief in 15-20 minutes. Hot water will prevent the venom from spreading in the bloodstream & decrease sting severity
- Use tweezers to gently remove a spine that is broken off in your skin. Grip the spine as close to your skin as possible
- Clean the wound with an antiseptic.
- All divers should keep their tetanus shot up to date!
- **Any sign of infection or serious reaction should be evaluated by a Medical Professional a.s.a.p.**

From 2010-2014, ECRA has had no reports of serious sting reactions requiring a Doctor visit. Still, it is wise to avoid stings because they can be quite painful. The faster you submerge the sting in hot water, the quicker you will get relief. If you don't have hot water in a thermos, you could use engine exhaust water just be careful that you don't scald yourself! **Be Careful and Be Prepared!**

Emergency Contact Numbers

Divers Alert Network -DAN Emergencies: 1-919-684-9111
Dan Non-Emergencies: 1-800-446-2671 (7:30-4:00 pm CT)
Florida Aquatic Toxins Hotline ~ 1-888-232-8635 (open 24/7)

Lionfish Sting Statistics

From: <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/770764-overview#a0199> In one series of 101 described cases of captive lionfish (genus Pterois) envenomations in the United States:

- 92% of patients experienced local pain,
- 60% experienced edema (swelling)
- 13% experienced systemic symptoms
- There were no fatalities



This Brochure is for general information only. It is not intended as medical advice. Hunt & handle Lionfish at your own risk.