

On July 16th 2010 the first lionfish was reported in Saba waters. It was quickly captured by SCF staff.



Saba lionfish capture



## LIONFISH FACTS

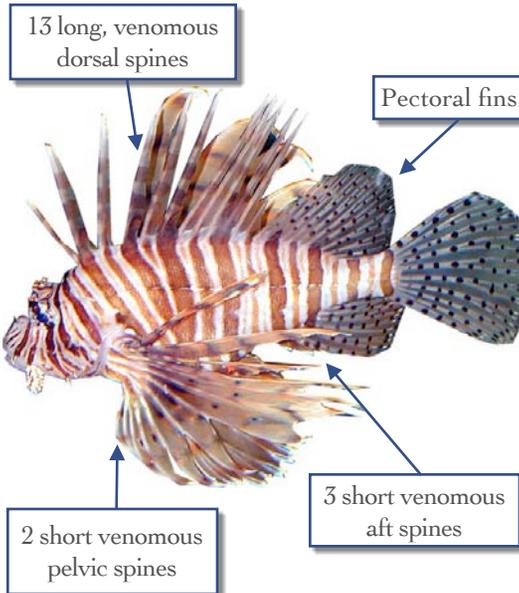
Lionfish are non-aggressive venomous fish. A lionfish will not attack you but you may accidentally touch one. The threat to local swimmers and snorkelers is similar to that of the scorpionfish. Lionfish usually stay in one area on the sea floor near crevices. If you see one, be able to describe the exact location or put a colorful marker on the site and notify the SCF.

Lionfish are not native to the Caribbean and can have serious detrimental affects to the island's marine environment, particularly to the populations of both ecologically and economically important fish species. In particular our coral reef ecosystems may experience degradation due to predatory stress caused by lionfish on coral reef grazers such as parrotfish. The SCF has been aware of the threat and rapid spread of the species through the Caribbean, and in October 2009 compiled a Lionfish Response Plan. The plan is available at the Marine Park office in Fort Bay.

## LIONFISH WOUND CARE

Lionfish have venomous spines over the length of their body which can inflict a painful sting. If you are stung by a lionfish spine you should immediately run hot water over the wound for 15 to 20 minutes (as hot as you can stand but not more than 100-110 F). Repeat if pain returns.

Lionfish venom contains proteins that are denatured by heat, thus preventing them from spreading in the bloodstream. Since envenomation is painful, over-the counter painkillers could also be taken for additional pain relief. Also seek medical attention as soon as possible. Fishermen have a greater threat of getting stung while removing lionfish out of traps and need to take extra care when handling them.



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# LIONFISH FACT SHEET FOR SABA FISHERMEN



The venomous Pacific red lionfish has been sighted in our waters. This pamphlet discusses the capture, handling and cleaning of lionfish.



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## CAPTURING LIONFISH

Lionfish are slow moving fish and often found stationary. This allows them to be relatively easily captured. There are two methods commonly used in capturing lionfish; netting and spearing.

Pairs of clear fine meshed hand held nets are used for capturing lionfish. Position the first net behind the fish, while using the second net to chase the fish into the other.

In spearing, a Hawaiian sling can be used, however, a pole spear with a paralyzer-tip is safer as it prevents the fish from sliding back along the spear.

For research purposes, netting is the preferred method as it preserves the specimen and allows the fish to be killed in a humane manner. Lionfish may sometimes be taken by hook and line.

**Please note that only trained and SCF sanctioned persons are permitted to remove lionfish from the Saba National Marine Park.**



paralyzer tip  
for pole spears

## HANDLING LIONFISH

The only proper way to handle lionfish is CAREFULLY!!

Heavy gloves should be worn at all times when handling lionfish. This will also protect your hands from the irritation the fleshy tentacles on the head may cause. Hold the fish by its head to avoid all spines.

## CLEANING LIONFISH

The spines to be most mindful of are the long dorsal spines along the back of the fish.

Begin removing the dorsal spines by cutting into the flesh along each side of the row of spines moving towards the tail (image 1).

After loosening the spines pry them off completely (image 2).

Remove the anal and pelvic spines (see diagram on opposite page) by cutting from the base and remove the cartilaginous ventral fins. These are not venomous. The scales on the lionfish are quite small and easily removed in the usual way.

Fillet the fish as usual. With smaller fish, it would be simpler to remove the spines by snipping them with kitchen shears or clippers.



Image 1



Image 2

