The red lionfish is an invasive species native to the Indo-Pacific Ocean. Their human-caused introduction and subsequent population increase are now causing negative impacts on marine ecosystems in the southeastern seaboard of the U.S. and the Caribbean Sea. Lionfish are efficient predators invading a variety of natural and artificial habitats, competing with native predator fish and consuming smaller fishes, including the young of large species. A similar species, the devil firefish, Pterois miles, has also been observed in the Atlantic.

**Affected Areas**

Observations of red lionfish have been recorded on coral patch reefs and deep reefs (up to 1,000 feet deep or 305 meters), wrecks, mangroves, seaways, docks, and estuaries ranging from the northeastern U.S. and Bermuda to the western Gulf of Mexico and throughout the Caribbean Sea.

**What Do Lionfish Eat?**

Lionfish are indiscriminate predators that will consume many prey small enough to fit in their mouth, including the young of important fishery species such as grouper and snapper and ecologically important species such as parrotfishes. Lionfish may impact fishery populations which may impact local economies.

**The Venomous Spines**

Lionfish have two grooves on each spine. These grooves are filled with venom-producing glands. After the spine punctures the skin, the venom glands release a poison reservoir that bleeds up the grooves into the wound. First aid for stings: Take a pain reliever and soak the wound in hot water. Consult a physician as soon as possible.

**How to Help**

- Never release aquarium fish into the wild.
- Report lionfish sightings to your local or national marine regulatory agency.
- Participate in lionfish tournaments to reduce local lionfish populations.
- Eat more lionfish. Their white, flaky meat is delicious.
- Wear thick gloves when handling to prevent injury. Venomous spines can be removed by carefully cutting with shears, making it easier to handle the fish safely.

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Poster Series, No. 7

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