

# Lionfish

*Pterois* sp.

**Order:** Scorpaeniformes

**Family:** Scorpaenidae

**Size:** Up to 14 inches.

**Description:** Lionfish are easily recognized by their elongated venomous dorsal spines and bright stripes. Appendages on the head and around the eyes mask the mouth and eyes. Lionfish appear to hover in the water column. They have been observed hanging motionless at the crest of a reef or ledge waiting for prey to approach.

**Range and Habitat:** Temperate and tropical Indo-Pacific Ocean. Commonly seen in openings of coral or around pilings in harbors and bays.

**Wild Diet:** Crustaceans, worms, smaller fish. Usually prefers live prey.

## Notes:

- There are more than 300 species in the Scorpaenidae family.
- Due to their striking appearance and venomous sting, lionfish are also known as dragonfish, turkeyfish, zebrafish, scorpionfish and firefish.
- Lionfish are primarily nocturnal hunters. These voracious feeders will try to swallow anything they can get into their mouths.
- Lionfish often use their large pectoral fins to trap and corner smaller fish. When feeding on benthic (bottom-dwelling) prey, these fins spread like a net to trap prey.
- The venomous dorsal spines of lionfish are used as a defense mechanism. Lionfish often point these spines toward a predator.
- The sting of a lionfish can be painful, but it is rarely fatal to humans unless multiple stings are inflicted and help is not sought immediately. For immediate treatment, apply very hot water to the afflicted area.