

PRESENCE OF GENUS *PTEROIS* (Oken, 1817) (Scorpaeniformes, Scorpaenidae): EXTENSION OF INVASIVE RANGE IN CARIBBEAN SEA AND FIRST PUBLISHED RECORD FOR LOS FRAILES ARCHIPELAGO

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Abstract: The present work reports the presence of Lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) in Los Frailes Archipelago, Venezuela. This is the first published record of Lionfish presence for this location and the extension of their invasive range to the South-East of the Caribbean Sea.

Keywords: Lionfish, Invasive range expansion, Caribbean Sea, Los Frailes Archipelago

Öz: *Pterois* (Oken, 1817) (Scorpaeniformes, Scorpaenidae) Genusunun Bulunması Üzerine: Karaib Denzinde İstila Alanının Genişlemesi ve Los Frailes Takımadaları İçin Yayınlanan İlk Kayıt

Bu çalışma, bir İskorpit balığı türü olan *Pterois volitans*, Venezuela Los Frailes takımadalarındaki varlığını bildirmektedir. Karayip Denizi'nin güneybatı sınırındaki bu bölge için *Pterois volitans*'ın varlığı ve istilacı yayılım alanını genişletmesi açısından yayınlanmış ilk kayıttır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İskorpit, İstila alanı genişlemesi, Karaib Denizi, Los Frailes Takımadaları

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Introduction

Lionfishes (family Scorpaenidae) are the first marine fishes to invade the Western Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea; both the Red Lionfish *Pterois volitans* (Linnaeus, 1758) and the Devil Firefish *Pterois miles* (Bennett, 1828) have established in this region, beyond their native range in the Indo-Pacific, and spread with remarkable speed (Hamner et al. 2007; Schofield 2010). *Pterois miles* is usually less abundant and studies based on analysis of mitochondrial cyt b, have demonstrated that only 7% of specimens analyzed in the invaded area represented that species, identifying the other 93% as *P. volitans* (Hamner et al. 2007).

The first documented capture of lionfish in the Atlantic waters was in 1985 southeastern of the Florida Peninsula (Morris and Akins 2009). Later in 1992, after Hurricane Andrew, a private aquarium was destroyed releasing several lionfish into Biscayne Bay, Florida (Hare and Whitfield 2003). Since then, several authors have confirmed an alarming dispersion along the Gulf of Mexico (Aguilar-Perera and Tuz-Sulub 2010; Santander-Monsalvo et al. 2012), the northwestern Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea (Guerrero and Franco 2008; Lasso-Alcalá and Posada 2010; Alexander and Haynes 2011). In 2010, Schofield dated the geographic spread of lionfishes using USGS-NAS database not differenti-

ating between the two invasive species of *Pterois* genera (*P. volitans* and *P. miles*).

Materials and Methods

In this context, a specimen of *Pterois volitans* was photographed and recorded *in situ* underwater during SCUBA dives in Los Frailes Archipelago in July 2011 (Figure 1). The species was identified retrospectively using the original description, video and photographs, alongside with other published photographs (Schultz 1986; Froese and Pauly 2012). Due to the lack of a permit this specimen was not collected.

Results and Discussion

This is the first published record with photograph of Lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) presence for this location and the extension of their invasive range to the south-east of the Caribbean Sea (Figure 2).

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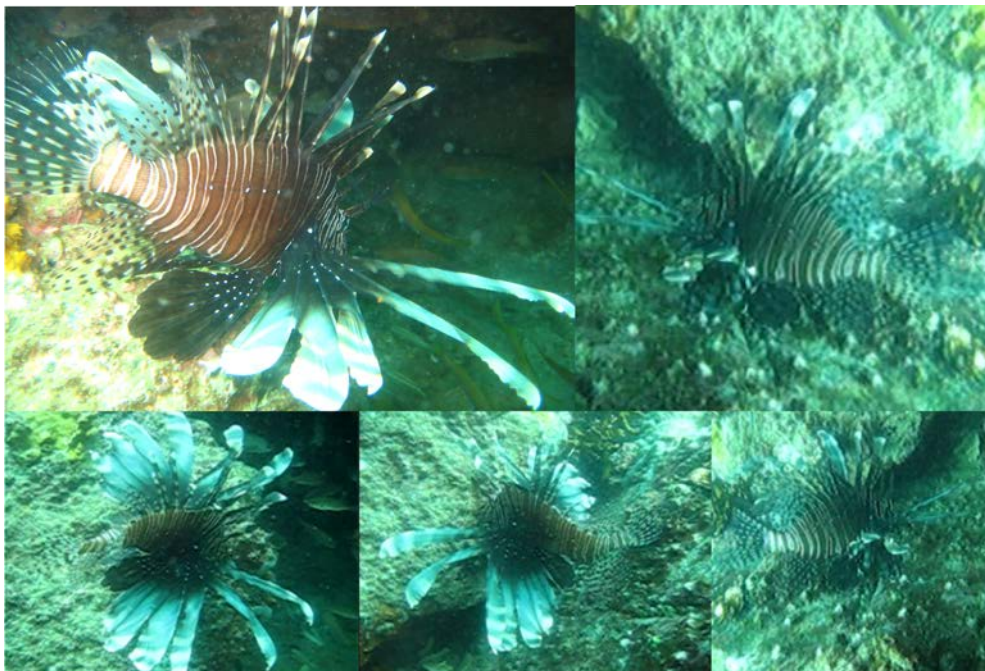


Figure 1. Photographs taken of a specimen of Lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) during SCUBA dives in Los Frailes Archipelago, Venezuela.

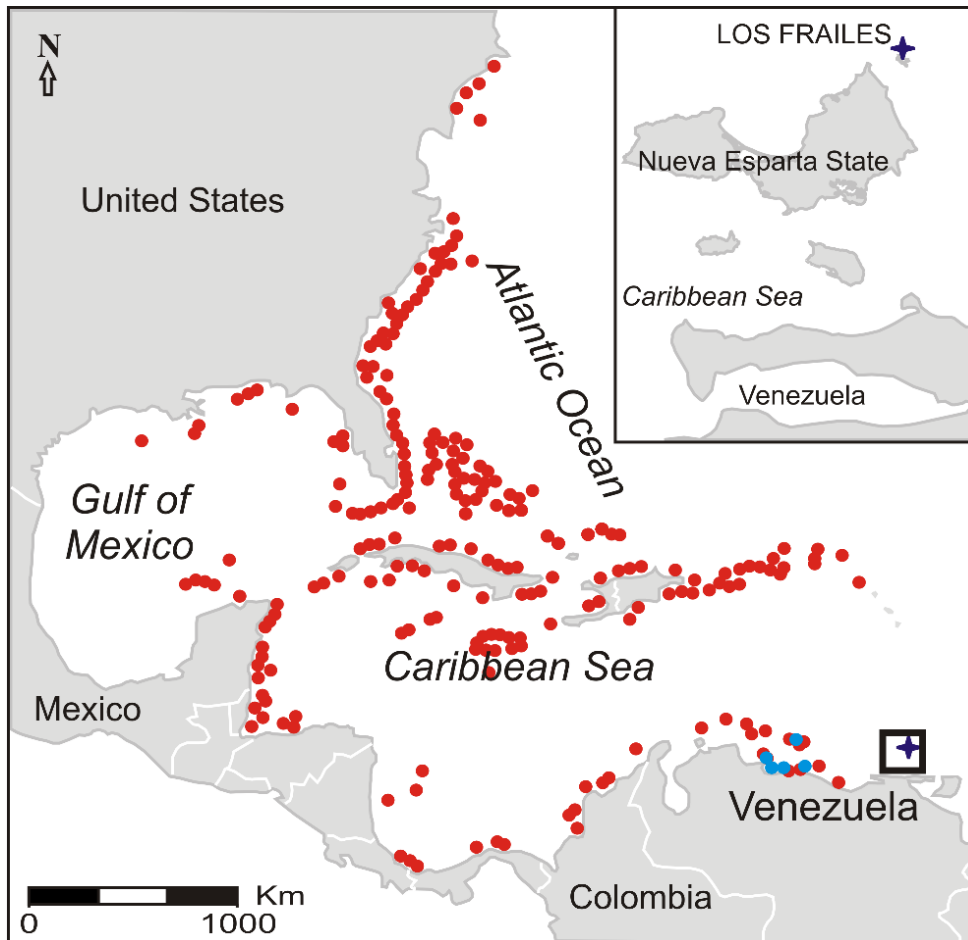


Figure 2. Range expansion of Lionfish (*Pterois* sp.) in the Caribbean Sea and Western Atlantic Ocean. Red circles show confirmed Lionfish (*Pterois* sp.) occurrences in the northwestern Atlantic and Caribbean Sea (Schofield 2010); Light blue circles show confirmed *Pterois volitans* on the coast of Venezuela (Lasso-Alcalá and Posada 2010); and the blue star represents the new South-Eastern record for the Caribbean Sea.

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