

# Data on lionfish juvenile growth patterns from tagged lionfish in the Bahamas, Guam, and Philippines from 2009-2012 (Lionfish Invasion project)

**Website:** <https://www.bco-dmo.org/dataset/4015>

**Data Type:** Other Field Results

**Version:** 1

**Version Date:** 2013-09-06

## Project

» [Ecological Release and Resistance at Sea: Invasion of Atlantic Coral Reefs by Pacific Lionfish](#) (Lionfish Invasion)

| Contributors                    | Affiliation   | Role                        |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <a href="#">Hixon, Mark</a>     | Oregon State University (OSU)                       | Lead Principal Investigator |
| <a href="#">Cure, Katherine</a> | University of Guam Marine Laboratory (UOGML)        | Scientist                   |
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## Abstract

Data on lionfish juvenile growth patterns from tagged lionfish in the Bahamas, Guam, and Philippines from 2009-2012.

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## Coverage

**Spatial Extent:** N:23.81251 E:144.800067 S:9.06084 W:-76.16756

**Temporal Extent:** 2009-06-14 - 2011-08-09

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## Dataset Description

Data on lionfish tagged for an assessment of juvenile growth patterns in the native Pacific (Guam and the Philippines) vs. invasive Atlantic (Bahamas and Caymans). Data from the Cayman Islands are in separate dataset: see the [comparative lionfish growth - Caymans](#) dataset.

### Related Publications:

Cure, et al. (2012); Pusack, et al. (2016)

## Methods & Sampling

This sub-project aimed to compare native vs. invasive populations of lionfish, in order to assess some of the potential factors responsible for the invasive success of lionfish in the Atlantic. Assessment in the native range

included analysis of behaviour and juvenile growth patterns, at two general locations: Guam and the Philippines. To assess growth, juvenile fish found mostly at shallow water sites, were individually identified with the use of fluorescent elastomer tags (different colors and body positions) and measured to the nearest mm. Individually tagged fish were later relocated and remeasured at 2 week intervals, in order to obtain estimates of in-situ growth. Observations in the native range were then compared to those at invaded locations (Bahamas and Caymans). Data were QA/QCd by spot checking against original field data sheets.

## Data Processing Description

BCO-DMO Processing Notes:

- Changed parameter names to conform with BCO-DMO naming conventions.
- Added lat and lon for each site from the metadata sheet.
- Replaced blanks with 'nd' to indicate 'no data'.
- Replaced commas with semi-colons in the columns containing text.
- Moved comments about site, fish, etc. to a single column ('notes').
- Re-arranged data so that date, day\_num, and len\_tot are in separate columns.
- 27-Dec-2017: removed embargo on dataset.

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## Data Files

| File  |
|---|
| <b>comp_lionfish_growth.csv</b> (Comma Separated Values (.csv), 95.46 KB)<br>MD5:3f5ba06efa853932d53e5a0a482869a6 |
| Primary data file for dataset ID 4015   |

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## Related Publications

Cure, K., Benkwitt, C., Kindinger, T., Pickering, E., Pusack, T., McIlwain, J., & Hixon, M. (2012). Comparative behavior of red lionfish *Pterois volitans* on native Pacific versus invaded Atlantic coral reefs. *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, 467, 181-192. doi:[10.3354/meps09942](https://doi.org/10.3354/meps09942)  
*Methods*

Pusack, T. J., Benkwitt, C. E., Cure, K., & Kindinger, T. L. (2016). Invasive Red Lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) grow faster in the Atlantic Ocean than in their native Pacific range. *Environmental Biology of Fishes*, 99(6-7), 571-579. doi:[10.1007/s10641-016-0499-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10641-016-0499-4)  
*Methods*

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## Related Datasets

### IsRelatedTo

Hixon, M., Cure, K. (2021) **Data on lionfish juvenile growth patterns from tagged lionfish in the Cayman Islands from 2010-2011 (Lionfish Invasion project)**. Biological and Chemical Oceanography Data Management Office (BCO-DMO). (Version 1) Version Date 2013-08-19 doi:[10.26008/1912/bco-dmo.4016.1](https://doi.org/10.26008/1912/bco-dmo.4016.1) [[view at BCO-DMO](#)]

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## Parameters

| Parameter      | Description  | Units           |
|----------------|--|-----------------|
| location       | Country name.  | text            |
| fish_id        | Code to identify individuals based on site initials and fish number.   | alphanumeric    |
| site           | Name of reef site.   | alphanumeric    |
| lat            | Latitude of the reef site.   | decimal degrees |
| lon            | Longitude of the reef site.  | decimal degrees |
| date_found     | Date in which lionfish was first observed.   | mm/dd/YYYY      |
| date_tagged    | Date in which lionfish was first tagged.   | mm/dd/YYYY      |
| time_tagged    | Time when elastomer tag was applied in 24 hr. format. For some sites only am or pm are designated.   | HHMM (or am/pm) |
| depth_ft       | Describes approximate depth at which lionfish was found (estimated or measured with dive computer).  | feet            |
| spines_clipped | Describes dorsal spines clipped as a way to double tag individuals in case elastomer tag failed; for some individuals none were clipped and either specified or left blank.            | alphanumeric    |
| tag_code       | Describes combination of letters used to identify elastomer tag placement along body (e.g. L-GM means tag is on the left side with green color and in the mid region).                 | text            |
| date           | Date of recapture.   | mm/dd/YYYY      |
| day_num        | Number of days since lionfish was tagged (integer; # days on reef= recapture date - tagged date).  | integer         |
| len_tot        | Total length measured on recapture date (cm) or either P (for present; if lionfish was not recaptured and measured) or A (for absent; if site was visited but lionfish was not found). | centimeters     |
| notes          | May refer to data entry related or QA/QC related notes or notes about the particular observation.  | text            |

## Deployments

### Guam Reef Surveys 09-10

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Website</b>     | <a href="https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/59049">https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/59049</a>  |
| <b>Platform</b>    | shoreside Guam   |
| <b>Start Date</b>  | 2009-09-24   |
| <b>End Date</b>    | 2010-03-19   |
| <b>Description</b> | Coral reefs were surveyed/studied near Guam from 2009 to 2010 as part of the project "Ecological Release and Resistance at Sea: Invasion of Atlantic Coral Reefs by Pacific Lionfish" (NSF OCE-0851162). |

### LSI Reef Surveys 09-12

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Website</b>     | <a href="https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/59019">https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/59019</a>   |
| <b>Platform</b>    | Tropical Marine Lab at Lee Stocking Island  |
| <b>Start Date</b>  | 2009-05-30  |
| <b>End Date</b>    | 2012-08-18  |
| <b>Description</b> | Locations of coral reef survey dives and sightings, or collections of the invasive red lionfish, <i>Pterois volitans</i> , near Lee Stocking Island, Bahamas for the projects "Ecological Release and Resistance at Sea: Invasion of Atlantic Coral Reefs by Pacific Lionfish" and "Mechanisms and Consequences of Fish Biodiversity Loss on Atlantic Coral Reefs Caused by Invasive Pacific Lionfish" (NSF OCE-0851162 & OCE-1233027). All dives were made from various small vessels (17' to 24' l.o.a., 40 to 275 HP outboard motors, 1 to 7 GRT). Vessel names include, Sampson, Orca, Potcake, Lusca, Lucaya, Zardoz, Parker, and Nuwanda. |

### Philippines Reef Surveys 10-11

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Website</b>     | <a href="https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/59050">https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/59050</a>   |
| <b>Platform</b>    | shoreside Philippines   |
| <b>Start Date</b>  | 2010-06-29  |
| <b>End Date</b>    | 2010-07-16  |
| <b>Description</b> | Coral reefs were surveyed/studied near the Philippines during June and July 2010 and August 2011 as part of the project "Ecological Release and Resistance at Sea: Invasion of Atlantic Coral Reefs by Pacific Lionfish" (NSF OCE-0851162). |

## Project Information

### Ecological Release and Resistance at Sea: Invasion of Atlantic Coral Reefs by Pacific Lionfish (Lionfish Invasion)

**Website:** <http://hixon.science.oregonstate.edu/content/highlight-lionfish-invasion>

**Coverage:** Bahamas; Cayman Islands; Mariana Islands; Philippines

Invasive species are increasingly introduced by human activities to new regions of the world where those species have never existed previously. In the absence of natural enemies (predators, competitors, and diseases) from their homeland, invasives may have strong negative effects on invaded ecosystems, especially systems with fewer species ("ecological release"), and may even drive native species extinct. However, if native natural enemies can somehow control the invaders ("ecological resistance"), then ecological disruption can be prevented or at least moderated. Most of the many invasive species in the sea have been seaweeds and invertebrates, and the few documented invasive marine fishes have not caused major problems. However, this situation has recently changed in a stunning and ominous way. In the early 1990s, lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) from the Pacific Ocean were accidentally or intentionally released from aquaria to the ocean in the vicinity of Florida. Camouflaged by shape and color, protected by venomous spines, consuming native coral-reef fishes voraciously, and reproducing rapidly, lionfish have subsequently undergone a population explosion. They now range from the mid-Atlantic coast of the US to the Caribbean, including the Bahamas. Native Atlantic fishes have never before encountered this spiny, stealthy, efficient predator and seldom take evasive action. In fact, the investigator has documented that a single lionfish is capable of reducing the abundance of small fish on a small coral patch reef by nearly 80% in just 5 weeks. There is great concern that invasive lionfish may severely reduce the abundance of native coral-reef fishes important as food for humans (e.g., grouper and snapper in their juvenile stages) as well as species that normally maintain the integrity of coral reefs (e.g., grazing parrotfishes that can prevent seaweeds from smothering corals). There are far more species of coral-reef fish in the Pacific than the Atlantic, so this invasion may represent a case of extreme ecological release with minor ecological resistance. Dr. Hixon and colleagues will study the mechanisms of ecological release in lionfish, as well as examine potential sources of ecological resistance in the heavily invaded Bahamas. Because very little is known about the ecology and behavior of lionfish in their native Pacific range, he will also conduct comparative studies in both oceans, which may provide clues regarding the extreme success of this invasion. In the Bahamas, the investigator will document the direct and indirect effects on native species of the ecological release of lionfish, both as a predator and as a competitor. These studies will be conducted at various scales of time and space, from short-term experiments on small patch reefs, to long-term experiments and observations on large reefs. Whereas direct effects involve mostly changes in the abundance of native species, indirect effects can be highly variable. For example, lionfish may actually indirectly benefit some native species by either consuming or outcompeting the competitors of those natives. The project will explore possible ecological resistance to the invasion by determining whether any native Bahamian species are effective natural enemies of lionfish, including predators, parasites, and competitors of both juvenile and adult lionfish. Comparative studies of natural enemies, as well as lionfish ecology and behavior, in both the Atlantic and the Pacific may provide clues regarding the explosive spread of lionfish in the Atlantic.

Regarding broader impacts, this basic research will provide information valuable to coral-reef and fisheries managers fighting the lionfish invasion in the US, the Bahamas, and the greater Caribbean, especially if sources of native ecological resistance are identified. The study will fund the PhD research of U.S. graduate students, as well as involve assistance and participation by a broad variety of undergraduates and reef/fisheries managers, including women, minorities, native Bahamians, and native Pacific islanders. Participation in this project will promote education in marine ecology and conservation biology directly via Dr. Hixon's and graduate students' teaching and outreach activities, and indirectly via the experiences of undergraduate field assistants and various associates.

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## Funding

| Funding Source   | Award                       |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <a href="#">NSF Division of Ocean Sciences (NSF OCE)</a> | <a href="#">OCE-0851162</a> |

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