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# Study reveals lionfish invasion has rapidly spread in the Mediterranean Sea, threatening biodiversity

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

## A new study details the rapid spread of lionfish invasion in the Mediterranean and its potential ecological impacts

A new study from Wageningen University and Research indicates that the lionfish species *Pterois miles* has significantly expanded its territory in the Mediterranean since the invasion began around 10 years ago. The invasive species has established a presence in the eastern Mediterranean, with observations extending to colder waters previously believed to be unsuitable for the species.

Originating from the Indo-Pacific region, the lionfish species *Pterois miles* and *Pterois volitans* are regarded as the most effective invasive fish in marine environments, significantly harming local fish populations and biodiversity wherever they go.

Lionfish are adaptable predators that harm ecosystems by eating large numbers of local fish, including some crucial for conservation. Native fish don't recognize lionfish as a threat, so they don't try to escape from them.

"After years studying these predators, I find it amazing how they can easily adjust to so many different



A new study indicates that the lionfish species *Pterois miles* has significantly expanded its territory in the Mediterranean since the lionfish invasion began around 10 years ago. Photo credit: Pierre mkrs, via Wikimedia Commons.

environments and be successful in areas that are so different from the ones where they evolve,” said lead author Davide Bottacini. “It is always impressive to see how such a flamboyant and—to us—conspicuous predator can approach its prey without being noticed.”



(<https://link.chtbl.com/aquapod>).

The Mediterranean Sea, the largest enclosed sea in the world, is a unique ecosystem with rich biodiversity. It hosts over 11,000 animal species, including some that exist nowhere else. Genetic research shows that the lionfish in the Mediterranean came from the Red Sea and likely entered through the Suez Canal.

## Undervalued and invasive species hold value for products consumers want, say researchers



BlueCC is developing ways to use undervalued and invasive species to manufacture consumer products like cosmetics and dietary supplements.



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Through a detailed review of existing scientific data, the researchers identified gaps in the understanding of the lionfish's interactions with Mediterranean ecosystems and have proposed future research directions to address these challenges. Such information provides insights vital for biodiversity conservation and will have practical implications for policymakers aiming to devise sound and efficient mitigation plans.

The study also highlights the crucial role of citizen science initiatives in tracking and reporting lionfish sightings, providing valuable data that supports ongoing research efforts. Such community involvement is essential for enhancing understanding of the invasion dynamics and devising effective control measures.

**[Read the full study \(https://neobiota.pensoft.net/article/110442/\)](https://neobiota.pensoft.net/article/110442/)**.

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