

SCORPAENIDAE

scorpionfishes

Pterois miles

(Bennett, 1803)

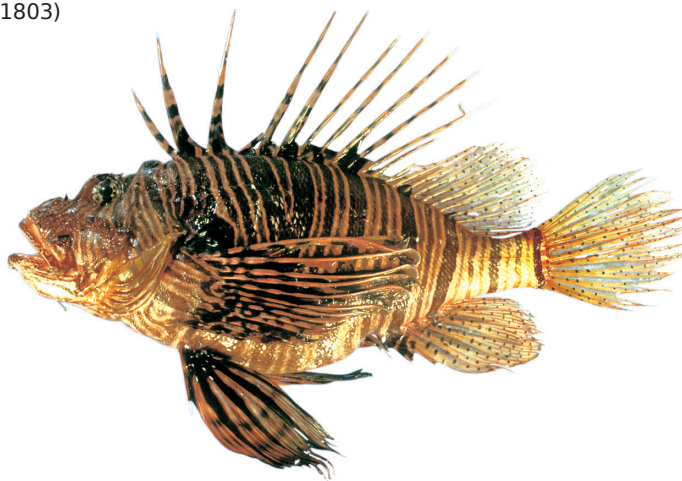


Photo : David Darom

Relevant synonyms: None

Misidentification: *Pterois volitans*

Meristic formula: D, XII + I+9-11 ; A, III+6-7; P, 13-15; V, I+5; GR, 14-16.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Body moderately compressed. Dorsal spines very long, longer than body depth, their membranes incised almost to the base. Dorsal rays much shorter with complete membrane. Anal and caudal fins rounded. Pectoral rays very long reaching at least the midpoint of anal fin base, their membrane deeply incised, especially in the upper rays. Pelvic fin long. Head with feeble spination and fleshy flaps and cirri, the most prominent being the pair above the eyes, often finely banded or spotted. Large mouth with villiform teeth. Small cycloid scales.

color: body with alternating wide black and narrow white and red bands. Dorsal spines, pectoral and ventral fins are alternately banded with black, red and pink. Dorsal soft rays, anal and caudal fins with series of dark spots along the rays on a light pink background.

common size: 15-35 cm (max. 50 cm)

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Unique, does not resemble any indigenous species of the Mediterranean.

BIOLOGY / ECOLOGY

Crepuscular piscivorous species, active mainly at sunset and sunrise. Hunts solitarily or in small groups either by "sit and wait" or by using pectoral fins to force small fishes to rocks. The dorsal spines are highly venomous. When provoked by a diver, it often threatens the intruder by directing its spines and even by overt movements.

habitat: coral reef (in the original habitat) and rocky shores to depth of 50 m.

DISTRIBUTION

Worldwide: Red Sea and western Indian Ocean.

Mediterranean: Recorded first in Israel (Golani and Sonin, 1992) with no further observations until 2012, when the species was spotted again in Lebanon (Bariche *et al.*, 2013). Soon after new individuals were reported from Rhodes (Turan *et al.*, 2014), Turkey (Turan and Öztürk, 2015) and Cyprus (Kleitou *et al.*, 2016). The species has rapidly increased its abundance and distribution, with sightings recently reported from Tunisia and southern Sicily (Kleitou *et al.*, 2021).

MODE OF INTRODUCTION

Via the Suez Canal.

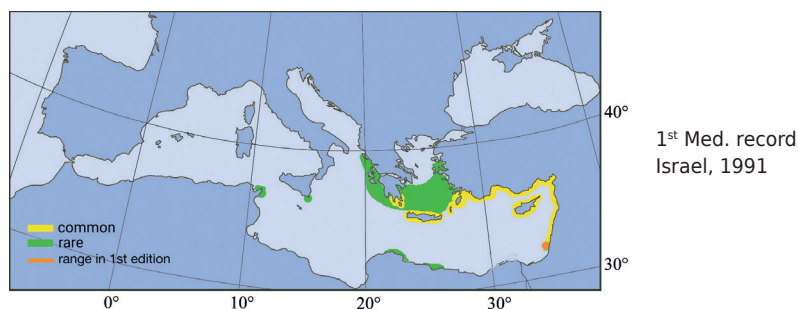
ESTABLISHMENT SUCCESS

Common.

speculated reasons for success: environmental tolerance, reduced competition, no predators.

IMPORTANCE TO HUMANS

Edible, popular as aquarium fish.

**KEY REFERENCES**

- Azzurro E., Stancanelli B., Di Martino V., Bariche M. 2017. Range expansion of the common lionfish *Pterois miles* (Bennett, 1828) in the Mediterranean Sea: an unwanted new guest for Italian waters. *BioInvasion Records*, 6(2): 95-98.
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- Golani D. and Sonin O. 1992. New records of the Red Sea fishes, *Pterois miles* (Scorpaenidae) and *Pteragogus pelycus* (Labridae) from the eastern Mediterranean Sea. *Japanese Journal of Ichthyology*, 39(2): 167-169.
- Kleitou P., Hall-Spencer J. M., Savva I., Kleitou D., Hadjistrylli M., Azzurro E. and S. E. Rees 2021. The Case of Lionfish (*Pterois miles*) in the Mediterranean Sea Demonstrates Limitations in EU Legislation to Address Marine Biological Invasions. *Journal of Marine Science and Engineering*, 9(3): 325.
- Ounifi-Ben Amor K. and Ghanem M. 2016. New record of the lionfish *Pterois miles* in Tunisian waters. *Mediterranean Marine Science* 17(2): 612-616.