

Lionfish management on small islands... Lessons learnt from Anguilla, Bonaire and Curaçao

Gestión de pez león en las islas pequeñas... Las lecciones aprendidas de Anguila, Bonaire y Curaçao

Gestion de Poisson lion sur de petites îles ... Leçons tirées de Anguilla, Bonaire et Curaçao

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Since their introduction to the Caribbean, lionfish have continually grown in size, exceeding densities and sizes from the native range. Although considerable achievements have been made with limiting their growth thus far, with existing management tools and techniques, it is unlikely that lionfish will be completely eradicated. Throughout the invaded range, various management schemes have been applied, but with varying success. Anguilla, Bonaire and Curacao represent islands of similar size where lionfish were confirmed within the same time period, however the management of the island, involvement of divers and progression of the invasion differed considerably. Within Bonaire an immediate management response was enacted and utilised the abundance of divers, resulting in reduced lionfish size and density. Curacao however had a two-year delayed response compared to Bonaire, but over time, thanks to a large local dive and fishing effort, were successful in limiting lionfish populations. Anguilla like Bonaire had an immediate response but their education strategy was highly unsuccessful and created fear amongst Anguillans, including divers, leading to a major delay and reduction in lionfish removal and necessitating a new education and management scheme. Furthermore socio-economic questionnaires were conducted to determine the profile of the typical lionfish hunter, the motivations for their involvement and retention and a cost-benefit-analysis performed to assess what economic effect the invasion was having. Comparisons presented in this study highlight the value of an early, rapid response and a proper education strategy, as well as the involvement of the diving industry factors often overlooked in lionfish management.

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