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# Why Invasive Lionfish Are So Hard To Eradicate From South Florida Waters

By [PATRICIA SAGASTUME](#) ([PEOPLE/PATRICIA-SAGASTUME](#))



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Credit OceanGate, Inc. [Enlarge image](http://mediad-publicbroadcasting.net/p/wlrn/files/201307/Antipodes_blue_screen_0.JPG) ([http://mediad-publicbroadcasting.net/p/wlrn/files/201307/Antipodes\\_blue\\_screen\\_0.JPG](http://mediad-publicbroadcasting.net/p/wlrn/files/201307/Antipodes_blue_screen_0.JPG))

The latest tool in the battle against Florida's lionfish invasion is the Antipodes, a five-person manned submersible operated by OceanGate, Inc.

### Listen

1:29

Reporter Patricia Sagastume has the audio version of this story.

A team of scientists from around the country recently spent two days off the coast of South Florida to investigate the explosion of lionfish.

What they found was shocking. Why?

Because there's a war going on and the indomitable lionfish are winning.

These voracious predators are known to invade the shallows of coral reef. They're dangerous because they ruin the habitat and eat juvenile spiny lobsters, snappers, groupers, tarpon and bonefish - all valuable marine species humans rely on.

Currently, spear fishing roundups are the only way scientists have to stop the invasion.

Stephanie Green from Oregon State University says her research shows lionfish roundups do work but for how long, nobody knows. Green was one of five scientists who emerged from a deep sea expedition aboard the Antipodes, a manned submersible.



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What they found off the Florida coast was disturbing.

*Credit NOAA's National Ocean Service/Plickr*  
The invasive lionfish.

David Kerstetter is a research scientist with Nova Southeastern University. He was also also onboard. He noted that hunting lionfish occurs in waters about 100 feet deep but they saw lionfish in much deeper waters.

"If we're finding lionfish at 300 feet and down to 1000 feet, then there's always going to be that reservoir of the population (that can) still breed and grow," Kerstetter says.

Recently the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission ruled divers could spear lionfish without a license as long as they use appropriate gear.

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