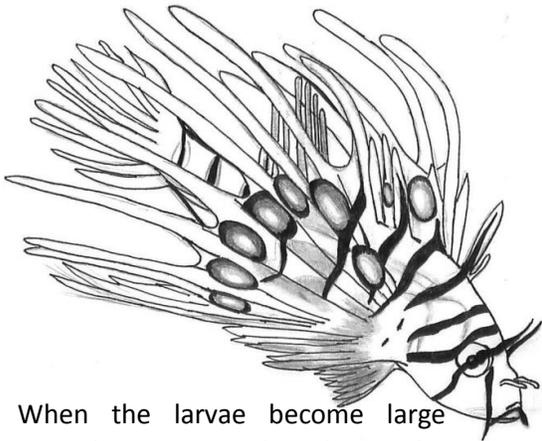
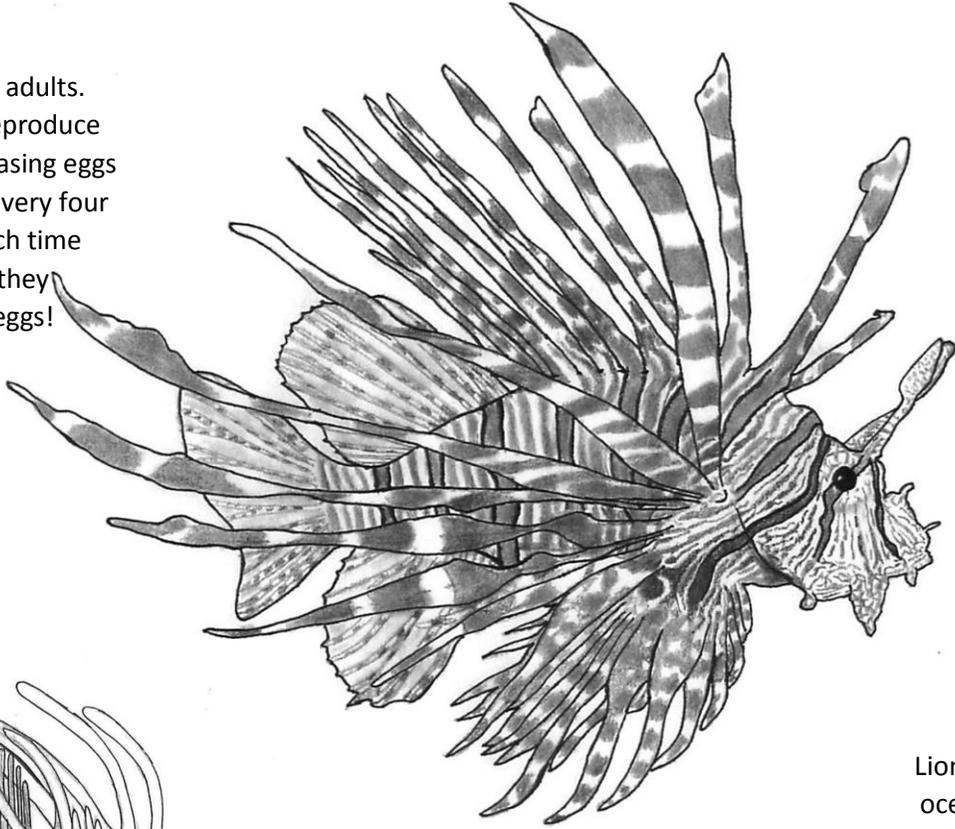
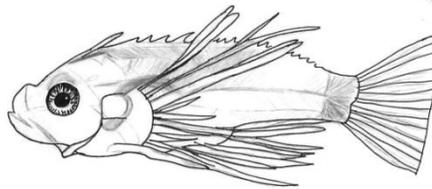


The Invasive Lionfish

Lionfish quickly become adults. Once they are able to reproduce they are capable of releasing eggs into the water column every four days. It is estimated each time these sacs are released they contain around **15,000** eggs!



When the larvae become large enough to swim they leave the plankton, descend to the seafloor, and hide among rocks and corals. Usually, they will remain in the same habitat their entire lives (5 to 10 years).



These eggs hatch into larvae which drift along in ocean currents until they become strong enough to swim.

Lionfish eggs float in ocean currents with plankton for approximately 25 days.



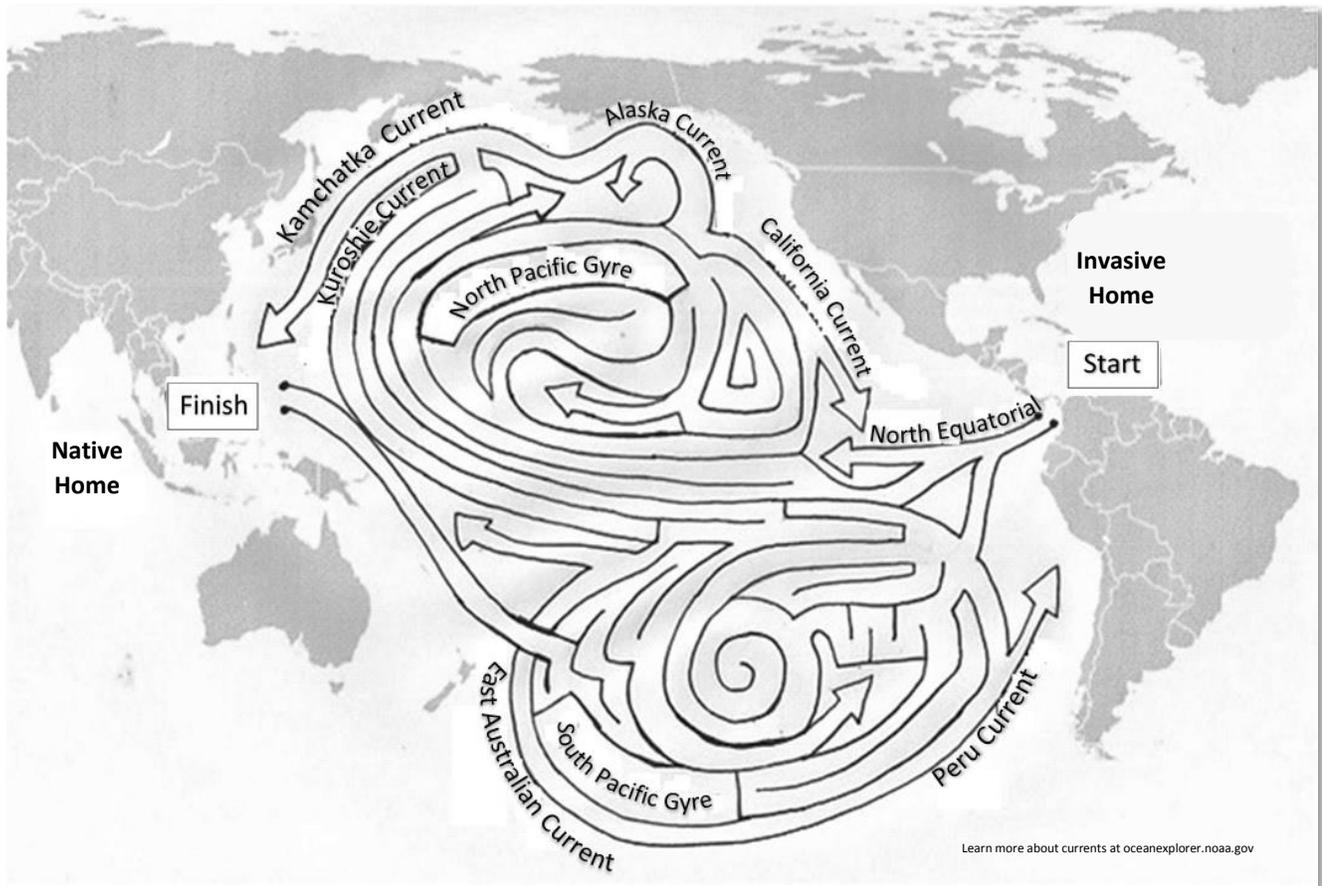
How did they get to the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico?

Lionfish are native to the Indo-Pacific. They were first found in the Atlantic Ocean in the 1980's. It is likely that lionfish in aquariums were released into the wild. They spread from the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. Because lionfish reproduce quickly and in large numbers, they rapidly invaded this new territory and began eating our native fish, shrimp, lobsters, etc... Because the invaded waters lack predators and other things that can keep the population from growing, humans are trying to fill that role.



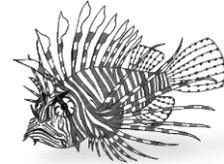


Help Louie the Lionfish find his way back to the Indo-Pacific!



Why does Louie need to go back to the Indo-Pacific?

Louie and his lionfish relatives are eating our native Gulf of Mexico fish. Lionfish can populate an acre of marine habitat with up to 200 adults. Adult lionfish can eat over 70 species of fish and other native marine life. They can grow to 19 inches in length and consume fish up to half their body length. These large lionfish populations can consume more than 460,000 prey fish per acre every year!!! Female lionfish can lay eggs every 2-4 days and produce over 2 million eggs every year! In order to save our native fish and habitats we need to remove as many invasive lionfish as possible. Please report lionfish in your area at: www.MyFWC.com/Lionfish.



Be a responsible pet owner.

If you have fish as pets please check into buying local species of fish! Not only will you learn more about them, but you will be a responsible pet owner. If you already own species that are NOT local to our area and need to give them a new home, please try contacting local pet shops or other fish owners. Do not release them into the wild.

Color Louie!

Lionfish are also sometimes called zebra fish. They can be found in a variety of colors; black, brown, red, and orange with white stripes. What kind of color combinations can you come up with?

