

## Waitt Institute Hosts 3<sup>rd</sup> Lionfish Tournament on Barbuda

Friday, 7 August 2015

### **Washington, D.C. (Waitt Institute)**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Last week marked the end of the July Lionfish Tournament on the Caribbean island, Barbuda. This was the third tournament hosted by the Waitt Institute to remove the invasive lionfish from coastal waters around Barbuda.

Over the course of the month of July, Barbudan fishermen caught and killed 56 lionfish for the tournament. Sizes of fish ranged from 22-40cm. Fish were brought to Barbuda Fisheries for an official count Friday afternoon held by Barbuda Fisheries staff and the Waitt Institute. Each team was awarded \$1,250 EC and a winning plaque. The event also included a demonstration for how to safely prepare lionfish, followed by a free tasting of lionfish.

“The lionfish tournament is a great way to encourage local fishermen to go out and catch lionfish as it is beneficial for all of us in the future,” said Rishma Mansingh, Barbuda Fisheries Officer. “Lionfish are invading the ocean and this could turn into a major disaster.”

Lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) are native to the Indo-Pacific region, but have been in the Caribbean since the mid 1990’s, and have been present in the coastal waters of Barbuda for several years. Lionfish are slow moving, but voracious hunters capable of eating so many juvenile reef fish that the populations of grouper, snapper, and other key fisheries species can plummet. Lionfish grow quickly and females can produce 10,000-20,000 eggs every 3-4 days year-round. Lionfish have no known predators in the Atlantic/Caribbean region.

"Throughout the region, lionfish culling has proven an effective means of managing, though not eliminating, populations on Caribbean reefs," said Andy Estep, Waitt Institute Science Manager. "It's great to see fishermen of Barbuda actively protecting the island's fishing grounds to safeguard their reef fish catches from the effects of this invasive predator."

For Barbuda, the implications of lionfish establishing a community within the lagoon are potentially very serious. The lagoon serves a vital ecological role as a nursery habitat for fish and lobsters, both of which key fisheries, but also a common component of the lionfish diet.

### **Additional information and resources:**

Lionfish Factsheet: <http://bit.ly/WI-lionfish>

Waitt Institute: <http://www.WaittInstitute.org>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WaittInstitute>

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YouTube: <youtube.com/waittinstitute>

Tumblr: <http://waittinstitute.tumblr.com/>

Dropbox folder with press photos: [bit.ly/WI-PressReleasePhotos](http://bit.ly/WI-PressReleasePhotos)

**For more information or to set up interviews, contact:**

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**Waitt Institute:** The [Waitt Institute](http://waittinstitute.org) endeavors to ensure ecologically, economically, and culturally sustainable use of ocean resources. The Institute partners with governments committed to developing and implementing comprehensive, science-based, community-driven solutions for sustainable ocean management. Our goal is to benefit coastal communities while restoring fish populations and habitats. Our approach is to engage stakeholders, provide the tools needed to design locally appropriate policies, facilitate the policymaking process, and build capacity for effective implementation and long-term success.