

## Juvenile Lionfish Found in Rhode Island Waters

Text & Photo by Bob Michelson

When the New England Aquarium Dive Club held its annual tropical fish hunt on Sunday, Sept. 17, participants expected the usual fun day of diving, snorkeling and collecting visiting tropical fish. What they didn't expect was the discovery and capture of a juvenile red lionfish (*Pterois volitans*), a "first" for New England waters. The native distribution of the red lionfish has historically been restricted to appropriate reef habitats of the Indo-Pacific.

Diving in the cool waters of Fort Wetherill, Jamestown, RI, Chris Benoit found the fish. "I was following a school of fish and this strange-looking fish just went by my face," he said.

"Wow, that does not belong here," was the reaction of Charles Benoit of Scituate, Mass., as his 15-year-old nephew uncupped his gloved hands to show his uncle the fish he had just captured in 6-8 feet of water.



**A NEW HOME:** The newly discovered lionfish awaits transfer into the tropical nursery tank at the New Hampshire Seacoast Science Center by aquarist Steve Engstrom.

"I knew this was a lionfish. I remembered reading that they had found their way into the Atlantic and knew this was a new invasive," the elder Benoit said.

The Rhode Island case is the first of its kind and the northernmost record of a red lionfish on record, noted George H. Burgess, ichthyologist with The Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida. Burgess is the Director of the Florida Program for Shark Research. He and his team are currently documenting the red lionfish population in the Bahamas to write a scientific paper on this subject.

The Rhode-Island bound lionfish was first discovered in the Atlantic four years ago, in August 2002 off the coast of North Carolina. Since then, the Gulf Stream have been moving them steadily northward.

The lionfish has been transferred to the New Hampshire Seacoast Science Center, in Rye, NH.



## DAN Tag Plus®

*The DAN Tag Plus® will assist you in a diving emergency and can help save your life!*

- Clips to your BCD.
- Provides emergency personnel with important information about you to assist in your emergency.
- Includes an emergency signaling mirror that will help you reflect sunlight at aircrafts, passing ships or search and rescue parties.



Manufactured by Palancar Industries, DAN Tags are available in 12 colors.

*Already have a DAN Tag? No problem!*

You can purchase the signaling mirror separately for \$12!

**To order a DAN Tag Plus®, visit [www.dantags.com](http://www.dantags.com).**

*Royalties from the sale of the tag are provided for support of the DAN mission.*

