

TCPALM

Staff reports

Outdoors notebook

Jun 1, 2015

LIONFISH ROUNDUP

A record 579 lionfish were speared by 57 divers in the Lionfish Roundup, out of Jupiter Pointe Marina in Tequesta, on Saturday. The fifth annual event was organized to benefit the Martin County Artificial Reef program. The 57 divers were a record for participants, up from the previous entry record of 34 in 2014.

Lionfish are a species of saltwater fish that are not native to U.S. waters, but have become established in recent years. State and federal fishing regulations allow for and encourage the harvest of these fish as they are destructive to the native fishes that live on reef systems throughout coastal waters.

Jessica Garland, co-organizer of the event, said many of the divers' logs indicated most of the lionfish were collected in 60 to 110 feet of water within a few miles of Jupiter Inlet. Although easterly winds kicked up choppy sea conditions, divers reported good visibility below.

After divers brought coolers filled with lionfish back to the weigh-in, attendees sampled freshly prepared cooked lionfish fillets.

Prizes were awarded for largest, smallest and most lionfish caught.

For more information on the Martin County Artificial Reef program go to www.martinreefs.org. For more information about local efforts to remove lionfish go to www.mclionfish.com.

LIONFISH ROUNDUP

Largest: 17.5 inches, Team Mongoose, \$250

Smallest: 4.25 inches, Gabriel Arrington, \$250

Most, team: 134, Team Guanabanas, \$500

Most, individual: 52, Todd Schoppe, \$500