

The Virgin Islands Consortium

The Lionfish, An Invasive Predator, Is Subject Of NPS's Upcoming Lecture

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ST. CROIX -- Stephanie Green, a fellow at the Center for Ocean Solutions at Stanford University, will be presenting about the ongoing invasion of predatory lionfish in the Western Atlantic and Caribbean, at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday at the Christiansted National Historic Site in the Danish West India & Guinea Company Warehouse, the National Park Service announced Monday.

The lionfish invasion now occurs at a scale beyond the resources available for eradication, according to NPS. Local areas are setting up for a long term battle for local lionfish population control.

How much effort is needed to suppress lionfish below densities that impact invaded coral reef fish communities? To answer this question, Dr. Green will share the results of a culling experiment conducted in collaboration with volunteer divers from St. Croix and researchers from the University of the Virgin Islands, Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and National Park Service on coral reefs within Buck Island Reef National Monument, according to the release.

In 2013 and 2014, the team evaluated the effort and success rate of bi-monthly culling by divers and the response of native fish communities to removal of this invasive predator. Dr. Green will also discuss how this research is informing activities to manage lionfish in the region, and also leading to new research on lionfish movement and distribution around Buck Island to target culling activities.

The collaborative project with NPS, UVI, VI-EPSCoR, the Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and Dr. Green will begin June 19th, 2017. The project goals are to understand: 1) how environmental and ecological characteristics of reefs affect lionfish habitat use, and 2) whether lionfish removal affects rates and patterns of movement between sites.

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