

LIONFISH ROATAN MARINE PARK

The RMP has been training both locals and tourists how to hunt lionfish since 2010. Initially it was only open to Dive Masters and Instructors, however with the ever-increasing lionfish numbers and the need for the dive professionals to focus on their customers, the licensing program was opened to the general public. Licensing 3,344 snorkelers and divers since 2010, we have been able to apply a constant fishing pressure on this invasive species and with numbers nowhere like they were at the start of the decade, the program is certainly working.

During the lionfish spearing workshop, participants not only learn about lionfish, but they are also informed about the RMP and our activities. Our key programs which include marine infrastructure, patrols, school's education, alternative livelihood, the responsible seafood campaign, and plastic reduction are explained, and participants are taught how they can help reduce their environmental footprint during their time on Roatan. The introductory talk originally took 45mins, but at the end of 2016, an educational video was introduced to the program which to date has had over 47,000 views and has helped speed up the licensing process. In the past year we have added 3 more trainers which has enabled our organization to license more divers and snorkelers around the island.

Currently the program costs \$70 which includes the workshop, spear, a 2-year license and the RMP user fee bracelet or token. If participants have their own spear which is 3ft or under then they are discounted \$30 and/or if they have already paid the user fee, they receive a \$10 discount. With not all dive shops supporting the RMP, this has been able to increase user fee sales by a small number. After the license expires, hunters simply need to pay \$5 and get a new card.

