

feature

Photo 1. Lionfish on reef (top right).
Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Nikon Macro 85mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, 85mm, f/8, 1/125s

Photo 3. Spiny lobster on reef (right). Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Nikon Macro 85mm lens at 85mm, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s

Photo 4. Smiling lemon shark (far right). Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens at 13mm, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/8, 1/125s



Photo 2. Scorpionfish on wreck.
Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens at 17mm, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/100s



with you when the advice of "Do Not Touch" is for our safety. There are numerous sea creatures that have spines, projections, stingers and teeth that serve them well as survival tools.

The lionfish in Photo 1 is a very beautiful creature that has spread throughout most of the Western Atlantic as an invasive species. They are very popular with photographers, because of their exotic beauty and they do hold very still while suspended in the water column or on the reef. I chose this photograph because it clearly demonstrates the location and severity of the venomous spines. Each lionfish has 18 spines—13 dorsal, two pelvic, and three anal. Each is coated with venom that is toxic to many species of fish. For humans, it is extremely painful and, in rare cases, can lead to

death. Do not let its beauty lure you in too close.

The cousin to the lionfish is the scorpionfish (Photo 2). They are both in the same family, although their behavior is quite different. Unlike the lionfish, the scorpionfish always blends into its surroundings—reef, wreck, boulders—and, to the casual eye, is invisible. It is covered with multiple short venomous spines. However, the venom is stronger, more painful and more toxic than that of a lion-

fish. Divers get in trouble when they inadvertently settle on them during dives on shipwrecks and reefs, particularly when they are holding on in a strong current.

Spiny lobsters have lots of pointy barbs and spines (Photo 3). Fortunately, they are not venomous. Whenever handling a spiny lobster, it is imperative to wear gloves, or you will suffer many small punctures and lacerations, with each having the potential of becoming



infected. Many a diver, trying to be macho by not wearing gloves during handling, have found themselves with marine microorganism infections.

One of my favorite photo subjects is the lemon shark (Photo 4). I am very lucky to have them in my backyard in Jupiter, Florida, all year long. During their yearly aggregation, which occurs from January to February, they become particularly frolicsome.

It is common to find oneself, literally, in a "sharknado." Although lemon sharks like to play, cavort, bump and nuzzle, all divers still need to pay attention to the many rows of long, triangular, pointy, sharp teeth.

At my Update in Diving Medicine Courses, I go into much more detail, including management of the above-mentioned injuries. Please visit: garyrosephotos.com

Look, But Do Not Touch

Text & photos by Gary Rose, MD

It all begins in our childhood. We are told, so many times, that we can look but we cannot touch. Most of the time, it was an adult who would admonish us. Later in life, when we could read, there were signs and placards. Of course, this warning usually increased our desire to touch, and we did. Most of the time, this warning was to protect the object from damage by our human fingers and hands.

Throughout our scuba instruction, and in every pre-dive briefing, we are told, "Do Not Touch." Most of the time, this is to protect the fragile sea life and delicate marine environment. I am now going to share

