

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Reef Builders Tournament & Lionfish Round-Up

Jessica Meinardi holds a 14-inch lionfish caught by Gary Guzzardo of Stuart up to be photographed by MCAC Reef Fund director Curt Croteau (not pictured) on Saturday afternoon during the fifth annual Reef Fund Fishing Tournament in Port Salerno. This year featured the first lionfish round up for divers.



Jessie Rehe of Stuart tells MCAC Reef Fund director Curt Croteau (not pictured) the depth of water she caught her dolphin in on Saturday afternoon during the fifth annual Reef Fund Fishing Tournament in Port Salerno. This year featured the first lionfish round up for divers.

## Applegate's cobia takes top honors at Reef Builders Fishing Tournament

By Jennifer Schroeder

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STUART — The Reef Builders Fishing Tournament, which took place Saturday, offered area anglers and divers a unique tournament experience.

The fifth annual event presented by the MCAC Reef Fund allowed anglers to fish from their own boats or from the Safari I. All the anglers were looking to catch the day's largest dolphin, kingfish, wahoo, grouper, snapper and cobia and earn \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second and \$250 for third.

Frank Applegate's 25.4-pound cobia was the largest fish to hang from the scales at Finz Waterfront Grille on Saturday. Applegate fished aboard Day Maker along with Dave Applegate, who caught the second-place dolphin, a 9.4 pounder, giving Day Maker and Capt. Pat Price Top Boat honors.

For the first time the Reef Builders tournament allowed area divers to compete in the lion fish roundup spear fishing for the most, largest and smallest lion fish.

Kurt France caught the most, 40, and the smallest, 3½ inches, lion fish on the day, earning a total of \$750 in prize money, while Gary Guzzardo caught the largest, 14 inches, to take home \$250.

Twenty-nine divers combined to remove just under 400 lion fish from Treasure Coast reefs from Fort Pierce to Jupiter inlets.

"The lion fish are really becoming a threat here," explained MCAC director Curt Croteau, "If we can get ahead of it before it becomes a big problem like in the Bahamas and in the Keys that would really help. They decimate life on the reef."

While divers are free to take as many lion fish off the reef as they want, Croteau reminds them to be careful.

"This is a way for people to help, but they have to be careful of the toxins in the dorsal and pectoral fins, but warm water will break down the toxins and you'll just have some tingling." Croteau added. "We really appreciate all the people who supported us again this year and we are already looking toward next year."

## MCAC Reef Fund results

### Cobia

1. 25.4, Frank Applegate, Day Maker
- 2 .14.5, Mark Hamilton, Gentleman Jack

### Kingfish

1. 12.7, Andy Long, PrimeTime
2. 7.4, Joe Lloyd, Boo's Cruise
3. 5.8, Bill Fay, Belton

## Dolphin

1. 15.4, Robert Carlson, Miss K
2. 9.4, Dave Applegate, Day Maker
3. 7.0, Jessie Rehe, Safari I

## Snapper

1. 4.9, Bob Gemmill, Fore Reel
2. 4.3, Bryan Williams, "No Name"
3. 2.8, Ed Ginderske, Boo's Cruise

## Grouper

1. 17.3, Pedro Medina, "No Name"

## Sailfish Release

1. 2, Van Wichers

## Top Junior Angler

1. Christopher Blakeslee

## Top Boat

## Day Maker