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2024 AFSC Seminar Series

Melanie Esch, University of Michigan

Tuesday, March 26th @ 10 am Pacific

Assessing the invasion risk of the Indo-Pacific regal demoiselle to reefs of the western Atlantic



Alien species have had dramatic negative impacts in marine habitats around the world and are an additional stressor for Caribbean coral reefs that are experiencing dramatic health declines due to other anthropogenic effects. For example, the release of carnivorous lionfish onto reefs in the Caribbean has led to predation on native species, competition with native mesopredators, and potential effects on benthic assemblages. The Indo-Pacific native *Neopomacentrus cyanomos*, was first documented on several reefs near Coatzacoalcos, Mexico in 2013. This population rapidly spread throughout the northern Gulf of Mexico with the invasion front now in South Florida and the Florida Keys. We investigated the habitat preferences and thermal physiology of *N. cyanomos* to assess potential range expansion and impacts on native fish communities in the Caribbean. Our results can be used by interested stakeholders to efficiently monitor for the arrival of *N. cyanomos* into new areas and aid potential removal efforts to try and slow the spread of this new invader.



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