

## Oyster Gardening Stonefish Alert - 2 October 2017

Just a warning to all oyster gardeners to remember the instructions from their oyster gardening leaflets to **always** wear gloves when working on their gardens, and to keep a close eye out for nasties which may take up residence, like this 12 cm juvenile estuarine stonefish (*Synanceia horrida*) which the eagle eyed Graham Livingstone found tucked up in a corner of his oyster basket the other day. Stonefish are well camouflaged (they look like a stone) and have a row of highly venomous dorsal spines, which can cause an extremely painful and potentially life threatening injury. Because of this, they should never be handled by inexperienced persons (kids especially). If you do find one of these in your basket, simply tip the basket contents into a shallow tray or onto your pontoon deck and gently coax the fish back into the water with a stick or some longnose pliers.

Below are a couple of pictures of these deadly, yet fascinating creatures.



Figure 1. Front view of a juvenile estuarine stonefish showing the camouflage and large pectoral fins.



Figure 2. Side view of a juvenile estuarine stonefish showing the strong and highly venomous dorsal spines (arrow).