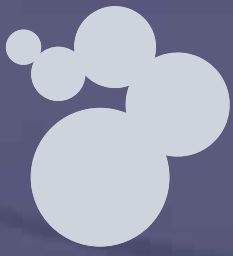


Horseshoe Crab



Adult



Horseshoe crabs have existed since before the dinosaurs. Some horseshoe crabs live for 20 years. Their blue copper blood contains a clotting agent that can detect infectious bacteria.

Characteristics

Horseshoe crabs molt in order to grow. They will molt 16 to 17 times until they are fully mature and able to mate, at about 9 to 11 years. Adult females are bigger than males. They have at least 10 eyes, two compound eyes and eight others that are sensitive to light.



Habitat

Deep coastal waters to sandy beach.

Beginning in late May when daylight hours get longer, adult horseshoe crabs travel from the water toward the upland shore to dig nests, lay and fertilize eggs.



Interactions

Horseshoe crabs eat marine worms, clams and mussels.

Barnacles and flatworms attach to shells.

Gulls eat horseshoe crabs stranded upside down.

Medical researchers extract its blue blood to test for bacteria.

Fishermen catch horseshoe crabs for bait.



Conservation

Participate in monitoring and tagging programs, which provides information on migration patterns.

Advocate for sustainable fishing practices.

Turn a crab over and keep a distance from mating crabs.

