

# Horseshoe Crab

## Larvae



Larvae begin developing within days after the eggs are fertilized. The larvae emerge about two to four weeks after fertilization. Some larvae delay emergence until the following spring.

### Characteristics

By the sixth day, the larva begin to molt inside the egg. Inside the egg, each larva attaches to a sac, which provides food. Its miniature legs are visible when viewed through a microscope. After hatching, larvae are about 3 mm (1/8 inch) and resemble tiny adults without the tail.



### Habitat

#### Shoreline to intertidal areas

When hatched, larvae dig out of the sand and float down the shoreline slope to the water. For the first week, they swim around, then settle into the sediments, shedding their shells as their body expands.



### Interactions

*Larvae* feed on worms.

*Large invertebrates* and fish such as sand shrimp and local crabs eat larvae as a major planktonic food source.

*Shorebirds* eat larvae.

*Coastal storm erosion* damages habitat.



### Conservation

Protect beachfront slopes from development

Prevent toxins and chemicals from spills at shoreline

