

Conservation Concerns

The Delaware Bay has long been home to the largest concentration of spawning horseshoe crabs in the world. This population has declined drastically, due to over-harvesting and degraded habitat. Reduced numbers are not only an issue for the horseshoe crab population itself, but also for other species such as long-distance migratory shorebirds that depend on the horseshoe crab for survival.

In May and June each year horseshoe crabs use the Delaware Bay beaches to lay their eggs. At the same time, shorebirds are migrating from South America to Arctic breeding grounds. To complete this journey - up to 9,000 miles long - shorebirds stop over in the Delaware Bay region to refuel on the high-calorie horseshoe crab eggs.

As the horseshoe crab population struggles, the shorebirds are unable to fatten on crab eggs to continue to the Arctic. And now many of these shorebird populations - including Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Dunlins - are also struggling. In fact, the Red Knot was listed as 'threatened' under the federal Endangered Species Act in 2013.

You can help rescue horseshoe crabs on New Jersey beaches through our reTURN the Favor program, keeping horseshoe crabs and shorebirds in the Delaware Bay for many years to come.



reTURN the Favor Partnership

Steering Committee



Partner Organizations



reTURN the FAVOR

Rescue Stranded Horseshoe Crabs



Want to help save New Jersey's Horseshoe Crabs? Get involved at returnthefavornj.org

[reTURNtheFavorNJ.org](http://returnthefavornj.org)

The Issue

Each spring, hundreds of thousands of horseshoe crabs come ashore to lay their eggs on Atlantic coast and Delaware Bay beaches.

While coming ashore many of these harmless animals accidentally become overturned by waves, or become trapped in rubble, debris, or bulkheads.

Horseshoe crabs are vulnerable when their soft undersides are exposed to the sun and are easy targets for predators. Thousands of horseshoe crabs die each season due to stranding on beaches.



How to Help:

Returning crabs to their proper side will save their lives and help the horseshoe crab population thrive for many years to come.

reTURN the Favor :

To save stranded horseshoe crabs, we ask that you follow these simple guidelines:

1. Hold crabs by their sides, not the tail – crabs are harmless!
2. Gently place crabs on their feet pointing towards the water.
3. Leave crabs where you find them – do not remove live or dead crabs from the beach.
4. If you encounter shorebirds please do not disturb them – walk well away from flocks to allow them to feed and roost undisturbed.
5. Plan your outing around a falling or low tide. On closed beaches, please follow specific protocols.
6. Obtain permission before entering private property.

Our Lives Depend on the Crabs!

A component of their unique blue blood is used to test all injected drugs and implantable medical devices for contamination. Our lives literally depend on the crabs.
Let's help them out!

Do not enter a closed beach!

unless you are a sanctioned *reTURN the Favor* volunteer.



Get Involved

Join a *reTURN the Favor* Walk:

To sign-up for a *reTURN the Favor* walk, please visit our webpage (returnthefavornj.org) to register for a date and time.

Conduct a *reTURN the Favor* Walk:

If you are interested in conducting a walk, contact us at info@returnthefavornj.org. All walks must be confirmed in advance and follow *reTURN the Favor* protocol. For more information, visit returnthefavornj.org. Volunteer training workshops are mandatory and typically held in April each year.

Be Aware:

- New Jersey has a moratorium on possession of horseshoe crabs. Do not remove live or dead crabs from beaches.
- To protect shorebirds from human disturbance, many Delaware Bay beaches are closed from May 7 – June 7. Seasonally closed areas also occur on Atlantic Coast beaches to protect both migratory shorebirds and beach-nesting birds.
- Find a more information on seasonally closed beaches at: returnthefavornj.org/the-issue/return-the-favor-beaches www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/ensp/beachclozmap.htm