

## **HORSESHOE CRAB RECOVERY COALITION LAUNCHES SCIENCE AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

May 2, 2022 – The Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition (HCRC), a group of 45 organizations concerned about the survival of this iconic species, today announced the start of a science and stewardship program to collect important data on horseshoe crab populations along the Atlantic Coast. Data collected from this initiative will be used to guide conservation and advocacy decisions vital to the horseshoe crab and species such as red knots and weakfish that depend on them.

“Since launching the coalition in 2020 we have been very successful in raising awareness about the threats facing horseshoe crabs, including the harsh and outdated practice of bleeding them for biomedical purposes,” said Larry Niles, Ph.D., wildlife biologist with Wildlife Restoration Partnerships and co-founder of the coalition. “In addition to our advocacy for the synthetic alternative in pharmaceutical testing, we also need to guard against threats by those seeking to loosen regulations and expand the harvest – further threatening the horseshoe crab’s ultimate recovery.”

Under the program, a number of state-based groups will be conducting horseshoe crab spawning surveys this year. The coalition will be working with partners along the Atlantic Coast to implement a standardized method of data collection, which will result in more easily aggregated and concise population estimates, and consistent and powerful data to estimate and manage horseshoe crab populations.

David Mizrahi, Ph.D., co-leader of the coalition and vice president, research and monitoring, New Jersey Audubon, pointed out that while Delaware Bay continues to be the epicenter of biological activity for horseshoe crabs and shorebird populations, more work is needed to understand where crabs may be living and breeding along the Atlantic Coast in order to develop an overarching strategy to better protect them.

“Our overall goal,” said Dr. Mizrahi, “is to establish a benchmark for efforts aimed at restoring horseshoe crabs to their natural abundance and providing feedback on the progress towards restoration.”

The Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition seeks full restoration of horseshoe crabs by end of this decade and has four primary goals:

- Manage horseshoe crab bait fisheries to ensure that populations are large enough to support the needs of other species like the Red Knot and weakfish that depend on horseshoe crab eggs as an essential food source.
- Institute policies that reform the horseshoe crab bleeding industry to reduce mortality and other impacts.
- Encourage pharmaceutical companies to adopt the use of rFC, the synthetic alternative to horseshoe crab-derived LAL, in their testing procedures.
- Raise awareness of the importance of the horseshoe crab by engaging volunteers in efforts to conserve crabs along the Atlantic coast.

“As horseshoe crabs begin their annual return to beaches across the country to reproduce, we see an awe-inspiring example of the nature: a 450-million-year-old creature’s eggs nourish shorebirds stopping over on migrations that are thousands of miles long,” said Zach Cockrum, Northeast Director of Conservation Projects for the National Wildlife Federation. “But this intersection of events faces multiple threats and also calls us to action – to protect and restore horseshoe crabs so they can continue to support the ecosystems and numerous other wildlife that depend on them for millennia to come. This new action month comes at a critical crossroads for the future of horseshoe crabs.”

HCRC’s diverse membership includes the National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon Society, Audubon state organizations along the eastern seaboard, Defenders of Wildlife, the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Revive & Restore, American Bird Conservancy, American Littoral Society and Wildlife Restoration Partnerships. A full list of coalition partners is available at [hscrabrecovery.org](https://hscrabrecovery.org).

If you are interested in learning more about horseshoe crab survey efforts, please email [info@hscrabrecovery.org](mailto:info@hscrabrecovery.org).

**Media Contact:**

John Bloomfield

[john.bloomfield@hscrabrecovery.org](mailto:john.bloomfield@hscrabrecovery.org)