

Horseshoe Crabs

Horseshoe crabs are considered living fossils. They have not changed much in the last 250 million years. They get their name from their horseshoe shape. Nothing on Earth looks like these ocean dwellers.

The horseshoe crab looks unique. Horseshoe crabs are not actually crabs at all. They are closely related to arachnids. Arachnids are related to spiders and scorpions. They are brown and slender. They have a hard exoskeleton that is like a crab. It has a long spine-like tail. People should not fear horseshoe crabs because of their sharp tails. Horseshoe crabs are harmless. The tail of a horseshoe crab is used to flip them right side up if they are overturned for any reason. They swim upside down in the ocean. What color is your blood? A horseshoe crab's blood is blue.

They lay eggs on beaches in Maryland and Delaware. The horseshoe crab can be found on beaches during high tides. They are visible during a new or full moon. Horseshoe crabs will nest in groups. A mother horseshoe crab can lay up to one hundred and twenty thousand eggs at a time. This is good for migrating birds. They eat many of the eggs. Many of the eggs hatch. They will make it into the ocean.

Horseshoe crabs are nocturnal animals. They eat at night. They come out of the shadows of the ocean to hunt for food. They are not picky eaters. Horseshoe crabs comb through the ocean water for sea worms and small mollusks. They also eat clams. They are carnivorous animals. Horseshoe crabs do not eat plants.

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1. Why are horseshoe crabs considered living fossils?

2. How do horseshoe crabs get their name?

3. What else on Earth looks like horseshoe crabs?

4. Describe a horseshoe crab to someone who cannot see.

5. What color are horseshoe crabs?

6. What is interesting about a horseshoe crab's blood?

7. Where do horseshoe crabs lay their eggs?

8. By using context, what does the word nocturnal mean?

9. Why did the author mention in paragraph four that horseshoe crabs are not picky eaters?

10. What does a horseshoe crab eat?

11. How many eggs do they lay? Why is this good for migrating birds?
