

Covering Delaware's Cape Region

Lewes - Rehoboth Beach - Milton - Dewey

Hundreds pray for horseshoe crabs

Buddhists gather for blessing on Slaughter Beach

By Molly MacMillan | Jun 19, 2012



Buddhists gather to bless the horseshoe crab with a prayer led by Sangjie Tieba Rinpoche (Glenn Gauvry)

SLAUGHTER BEACH — More than 250 Buddhists recently gathered on a windy Slaughter Beach to bless horseshoe crabs in the midst of crab-mating season in the Delaware Bay.

Glenn Gauvry, known as Sangjie Tieba Rinpoche organized the fourth annual blessing of the crabs. He is also the founder of Dover-based Ecological Research & Development Group for the conservation of the world's four horseshoe crab species and the Dharmadhatu Buddhist Center.

Gauvry said he brought Buddhists and nature-lovers from Delaware and the surrounding metropolitan areas together for the only Buddhist event on Delmarva to bless the crabs, whose valuable blood is used in tests that screen vaccines for bacterial contamination and protect humans and animals from life-threatening toxins.

He estimated only one of 33 million horseshoe crabs will reach one-year old, and 10 percent of mature crabs die on the beach, stranded upside down. Since crabs don't begin to mate until midway through their 20-year lifespans, populations are difficult to rebuild. In the eyes of the Buddhists, their suffering is immense.

"We don't draw a distinction between small and large living beings," Gauvry said. "Their suffering is just as personal as the suffering of our mother or brother."

As many as 150 Vietnamese believers took buses from Fairfax, Va., to attend the blessing and pray for the crabs. Busloads also arrived from Gaithersburg, Md., and as far away as New York City to bring Buddhists to the event on Slaughter Beach.

Sangjie Tieba Rinpoche joined other Buddhist holy men in leading some of the prayers.

"We have completely taken refuge in the Buddha; we have completely taken refuge in the dharma; we have completely taken refuge in the sangha," he prayed, after the group found a crab and sprinkled holy water over it before proceeding with chants.

Dover Buddhist Mike Nielsen traveled to Slaughter Beach to attend the event and said he has traveled as far as Canada for a Buddhist event to release the last catch of lobster of the season, sparing their lives and generating good merit in the Buddhist belief system.

“The idea is to show the connection between humans and the natural world,” Nielsen said. “It’s beautiful in some ways. People originally from China and Vietnam are here. It shows the problems here are the same problems we have all over the world when people are disconnected from the environment.”

Philadelphia filmmaker Mitchell Smith also attended the event, shooting footage for a feature documentary he is filming about what he called the state of science in America and the denial of science in America.

“Global warming, horseshoe crab declines, they’re all connected,” Smith said. “Today was exciting. Good vibrations coming out of so many people gathered and a lot of energy.”

For more information on horseshoe crabs visit the Ecological Research & Development Group at www.horseshoecrab.org. For Buddhist resources in Delaware, go to the Dharmadhatu Center online at www.dharmadhatu-center.org.



Horseshoe crabs are stranded on Pickering Beach. Beachgoers are encouraged to flip the crabs by the shell when they see crabs stranded upside down before sea birds eat the crabs. (*Photo by: Submitted*)



Hundreds of Buddhists from surrounding cities arrived at Slaughter Beach June 2 to bless the horseshoe crabs of the Delaware Bay. (*Photo by: Molly MacMillan*)



Buddhist holy men sprinkle the coastline with holy water. (*Photo by: Molly MacMillan*)



Event organizer Sangjie Tieba Rinpoche (Glenn Gauvry) leads a prayer over a horseshoe crab on Slaughter Beach. *(Photo by: Molly MacMillan)*