



Horseshoe crabs stranded upside-down on a Delaware Bay beach. New Jersey Audubon will partner with ERDG this spring to introduce the Just flip 'em!® campaign, which encourages beachgoers to flip over stranded horseshoe crabs so they can get back to the water. Photo by Linda Vanderveer.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Jersey Audubon Society to lead horseshoe crab conservation walks; partners with the Ecological Research & Development Group (ERDG) to promote Just flip 'em!® campaign

Goshen, NJ–April 29, 2013–New Jersey Audubon will offer beach walks in May designed to educate attendees about simple steps beachgoers can take to promote horseshoe crab conservation along the Delaware Bay. The walks will address the interconnected ecology of horseshoe crabs and shorebirds and will demonstrate simple steps that beachgoers can take to protect horseshoe crab populations by turning over stranded horseshoe crabs when they are found upside-down on the beach.

The walks will introduce the Just flip 'em!® campaign, begun in 1998 by Dover, Delaware-based ERDG, a non-profit wildlife conservation organization whose primary focus is the conservation of the world's four remaining horseshoe crab species.

Beachgoers visiting the Delaware Bay during horseshoe crab spawning season (May and June) may encounter large numbers of horseshoe crabs, sometimes hundreds at a time, that have been flipped over on their backs as the tide goes out. Horseshoe crabs that are unable to right themselves risk death from exposure to extreme heat, from desiccation, or from predators such as gulls. By flipping the horseshoe crabs over and allowing them to walk back down to the water, a person strolling on the beach can allow a horseshoe crab to continue its life cycle.

Jean Lynch, Stewardship Project Director at New Jersey Audubon, said, "It takes about ten years for a horseshoe crab to reach maturity and be able to reproduce; very few of those eggs

will ever become adult horseshoe crabs. A study conducted in New Jersey in 1986 estimated that as many as 10 percent of adult horseshoe crabs along the Delaware Bayshore may die from stranding. Saving a mature horseshoe crab is a fun and easy step that beachgoers can take to contribute to conservation at the Delaware Bay.”

The correct way to flip a horseshoe crab, noted Lynch, is to push it over from its side. “They need the tail for navigation, and the tail is the main tool that they have for turning themselves back over on their own. Carrying a horseshoe crab by the tail can damage it, so it’s best to flip the animal over from its side.”

Said **Glenn Gauvry, President of ERDG**, “Our Just flip ‘em!® program is designed to bring attention to the hundreds of thousands of horseshoe crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*) who die each year from stranding (stuck upside down) during their yearly spawning ritual and to encourage individuals, through a simple act of compassion, to take the time to assist and appreciate these remarkable creatures, who will not survive public indifference.”

The Delaware Bay is the world’s largest spawning ground for horseshoe crabs and one of the most significant stopover sites worldwide for migrating shorebirds, which rely on the horseshoe crab’s eggs to fuel them on their long migration north. Due mainly to overharvesting for bait in the 1980s through the early 2000s, Delaware Bay horseshoe crab populations have seen steep declines, and with them so have populations of migrating shorebirds. A moratorium on horseshoe crab harvesting for bait has been in effect in New Jersey since 2008.

John Cecil, Vice President for Stewardship at New Jersey Audubon, stated, “These walks complement New Jersey Audubon’s long history of horseshoe crab and shorebird conservation on the Delaware Bay, including leadership on New Jersey’s 2008 horseshoe crab harvest moratorium; long-term research on shorebird populations and ecology; restoration and protection of shorebird and horseshoe crab habitat; and education. This is one of the few opportunities available to the public to have a direct interaction with and impact on the conservation of an important species and a critical link in a larger ecosystem process.”

Interested participants are invited to attend any of the walks listed below:

Where: Participants will meet at David C. Douglass Sr. Memorial Rotary Park, corner of Beach Drive and Lincoln Boulevard, North Cape May.

When: Friday, May 17, 5:30 p.m.-7p.m.

Tuesday, May 21, 8 a.m.-9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, May 28, 7 a.m.-8:30 a.m.

Participation is free. Participants should dress for the weather, bring sun protection, and be prepared to walk for up to 1.5 hours on soft sand.

For any questions please contact Jean Lynch, Stewardship Project Director, at 609-861-1608 ext. 24, or jean.lynn@njaudubon.org.



Rescued horseshoe crabs make their way back down to the Delaware Bay after being turned upright by beachgoers. Photo by Linda Vanderveer

For more information on the New Jersey Audubon, please visit njudubon.org.

For more information about The Ecological Research & Development Group (ERDG), please visit horseshoecrab.org/

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About New Jersey Audubon

The New Jersey Audubon Society is a privately supported, not-for profit, statewide membership organization. Founded in 1897, it is one of the oldest independent Audubon. New Jersey Audubon fosters environmental awareness and a conservation ethic among New Jersey's citizens; protects New Jersey's birds, mammals, other animals, and plants, especially endangered and threatened species; and promotes preservation of New Jersey's valuable natural habitats. For more information about New Jersey Audubon, please visit www.njudubon.org.