

The Palm Beach Post

State agency wants help counting horseshoe crabs on South Florida beaches

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State wildlife biologists are asking the public this weekend to do a little peeping in the name of science: They want people to find horseshoe crabs caught spawning at local beaches.

The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission says the armored arthropods range from Maine to the Yucatan peninsula, but are rarely spotted on Florida's Atlantic beaches.

The best time to find spawning horseshoe crabs is around high tide, just before, during or after a full moon or a new moon, said Tiffany Black, a biological scientist with the FWC. She said the full moon around Sunday-Tuesday should be good.

If the busy crabs are spotted at night, don't use a flashlight, Black said. And if the crabs are spotted lying on their backs, don't use the long, spiked tail to right them; use the edges of the shell.

Biologists want to know the date, time, location, habitat type and environmental conditions, such as tides and moon phase. If possible, specify roughly how many are coupled and how many are juveniles 4 inches wide or smaller.

Report sightings through research.myfwc.com/horseshoe_crab and fill out an online survey; e-mail findings to horseshoe@myfwc.com; or call the FWC at 866-252-9326.
