

Kinmen to use horseshoe crab breeding season to educate residents

Central News Agency

2009-07-31 10:50 PM

Taipei, July 31 (CNA) The Kinmen County government will begin to send experts to horseshoe crab breeding grounds on Sunday to give lectures on the "living fossil" and ways to protect the species, a county official said Friday.

County Bureau of Cultural Affairs Director Lee Hsi-lung said the program, to be held every weekend and holiday until Sept. 30, was conceived to promote horseshoe crab conservation and preserve the breeding grounds of the ancient creature.

The horseshoe crab's breeding territory in the island county, which lies just off the coast of southeastern China, has been eroded in recent years by wharf construction and expansion to accommodate increasing marine traffic between Kinmen and southern Chinese ports.

As part of its efforts to preserve the marine species, the local government has listed the sea area surrounding the small Jiankong islet off the western coast of Greater Kinmen as a conservation area.

Lee said the local government has invited the public to participate in the free lecture and tour on Jiankong islet, hoping local residents will then join in efforts to preserve the unique species.

Kinmen is one of only a few breeding areas in Taiwan for the horseshoe crab, a hard-shelled invertebrate that lives in coastal waters on the sea floor but breeds on shore. Its breeding season falls between June and October.

According to Kinmen County Fisheries Research Institute data, the horseshoe crab is known as a "living fossil" because it has been around for 400 million years.

Despite their common name, they are not crabs but rather related to spiders, scorpions, ticks and mites. Kinmen residents have nicknamed the horseshoe crab the "helmet fish" because it is shaped like a military helmet.

(By Elizabeth Hsu)

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