

Cuomo Signs Bill to Benefit Horseshoe Crabs



SoFo volunteers measured horseshoe crabs in Westhampton last June.

While one town on Long Island is pushing Albany for a ban on the harvesting of horseshoe crabs, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed two new horseshoe crab protection bills Aug. 13.

The new laws extend the DEC's authority to regulate the horseshoe crab fishery for two years, and also limits the harvest of female horseshoe crabs, mating horseshoe crabs and crabs found at shorebird-feeding beaches.

Long used as bait for conch and eel fishing, [horseshoe crabs populations](#) have been on the decline due to the use of their blood in biomedical testing. A threatened shorebird known as the red knot, which feeds on horseshoe crab eggs, has also been impacted by the decline in horseshoe crab populations.

The new law also requires fishermen to use bait bags when using horseshoe crab for bait for conch and eels.

Last month, due to the declining population, the Brookhaven Town Board voted to ask the DEC to ban horseshoe crab harvesting within its waters, though Town Supervisor Ed Romaine told [Newsday](#) it is likely the DEC will throw out their request.

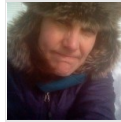
The Long Island wildlife conservation group [Seatuck](#), which helps organize citizen

science projects monitoring horseshoe crab populations, was thrilled with the news of the governor's action this week.

“These laws hold the promise of ushering in a new era in the way horseshoe crabs are managed in New York,” they said in the statement. “They’ll move the state towards the goal of reducing the overall horseshoe crab harvest and safeguarding their important role in the coastal ecosystem (including for migratory shorebirds), while minimizing impacts to local conch and eel fisheries that currently rely on the crabs for bait.”

Seatuck thanked State Assemblyman Steve Englebright and Senators Michael Venditto and Ken LaValle for sponsoring and championing the bills in the New York Legislature.

Bills proposing a [moratorium](#) on horseshoe crab harvesting while their populations are studied was introduced by State Senator Brad Hoylman and Assemblyman Englebright this spring, but they have been referred to the Department of Environmental Conservation.



About [Beth Young](#)

Beth Young has been covering the East End since the 1990s. In her spare time, she runs around the block, tinkers with bicycles, tries not to drown in the Peconic Bay and hopes to grow the perfect tomato. You can send her a message at editor@eastendbeacon.com

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