

ASSEMBLY, No. 997

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman JOANN DOWNEY

District 11 (Monmouth)

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District 11 (Monmouth)

SYNOPSIS

Designates horseshoe crab as State Arthropod.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **AN ACT** designating the horseshoe crab as the New Jersey State
2 Arthropod and supplementing chapter 9A of Title 52 of the
3 Revised Statutes.
4
5 **WHEREAS**, The horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*) is an ancient
6 arthropod, which is defined as an invertebrate animal of the Phylum
7 Arthropoda; and
8 **WHEREAS**, Horseshoe crabs have a hard shell, or exoskeleton, a
9 segmented body, five pairs of jointed legs, and a long and rigid tail;
10 and
11 **WHEREAS**, Horseshoe crabs are often called "living fossils" because
12 scientists have estimated that the fossils of their prehistoric
13 ancestors date back millions of years; and
14 **WHEREAS**, Horseshoe crabs are important for both public health and
15 the ecosystem, especially migrating shorebirds; and
16 **WHEREAS**, Biomedical companies catch horseshoe crabs for their
17 blood, from which they produce Limulus Amebocyte Lysate
18 (LAL), a substance used to detect contamination of injectable drugs
19 and implantable devices and the presence of endotoxins such as *E.*
20 *coli* and *Salmonella*; and
21 **WHEREAS**, Migrating shorebirds, including the endangered red knot,
22 rely heavily on the eggs spawned by breeding horseshoe crabs to
23 supply energy required to complete their migration from the
24 southern tip of South America to the Canadian Arctic; and
25 **WHEREAS**, Over the past two decades or so, there has been a decline
26 in the number of horseshoe crabs due to the loss of sandy beaches
27 needed to lay eggs, overharvesting, and use of the horseshoe crabs
28 as eel and conch bait; and
29 **WHEREAS**, Although horseshoe crabs are not considered in great
30 danger right now, they have been previously, and therefore ongoing
31 efforts are in place to prevent them from becoming endangered or
32 extinct; and
33 **WHEREAS**, The preservation of horseshoe crabs is a particularly
34 important issue in New Jersey since the Delaware Bayshore is the
35 center of horseshoe crab spawning on the Atlantic coast; and
36 **WHEREAS**, The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
37 has taken steps to protect these arthropods, such as issuing a harvest
38 moratorium and conducting beach replenishment projects; and
39 **WHEREAS**, In 2008, the Legislature enacted a statutory moratorium on
40 the taking and possession of horseshoe crabs or their eggs in the
41 State; and
42 **WHEREAS**, In order to pay recognition to the importance of the
43 horseshoe crab, it is fitting and proper to designate it as the State
44 Arthropod; now, therefore,
45
46 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
47 of New Jersey:

1. The horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*) is designated as the New Jersey State Arthropod.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill designates the horseshoe crab as the official State Arthropod of New Jersey. Horseshoe crabs have a hard shell, or exoskeleton, a segmented body, five pairs of jointed legs, and a long and rigid tail. Horseshoe crabs are often called "living fossils" because scientists have estimated that the fossils of their prehistoric ancestors date back millions of years.

Horseshoe crabs are important for both public health and the ecosystem, especially migrating shorebirds. Biomedical companies catch horseshoe crabs for their blood, from which they produce Limulus Amebocyte Lysate (LAL), a substance used to detect contamination of injectable drugs and implantable devices and the presence of endotoxins such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. Migrating shorebirds, including the endangered red knot, rely heavily on the eggs spawned by breeding horseshoe crabs to supply energy required to complete their migration from the southern tip of South America to the Canadian Arctic.

Over the past two decades or so, there has been a decline in the number of horseshoe crabs due to the loss of sandy beaches needed to lay eggs, overharvesting, and use of the horseshoe crabs as eel and conch bait. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has taken steps to protect these arthropods, such as issuing a harvest moratorium and conducting beach replenishment projects. In addition, there is a statutorily-imposed harvest moratorium.

By designating the horseshoe crab as the State Arthropod, New Jersey would be recognizing the important role that this species plays with respect to public health and in the ecosystem.