

Abundance of Horseshoe Crabs in Long Island Sound



Why are Horseshoe Crabs Important?

- Horseshoe crabs blood is used in the medical field to detect microscopic bacteria, preventing millions of infections.
- Their eggs are an important food source for at least 11 species of migratory shore birds.

Spawning

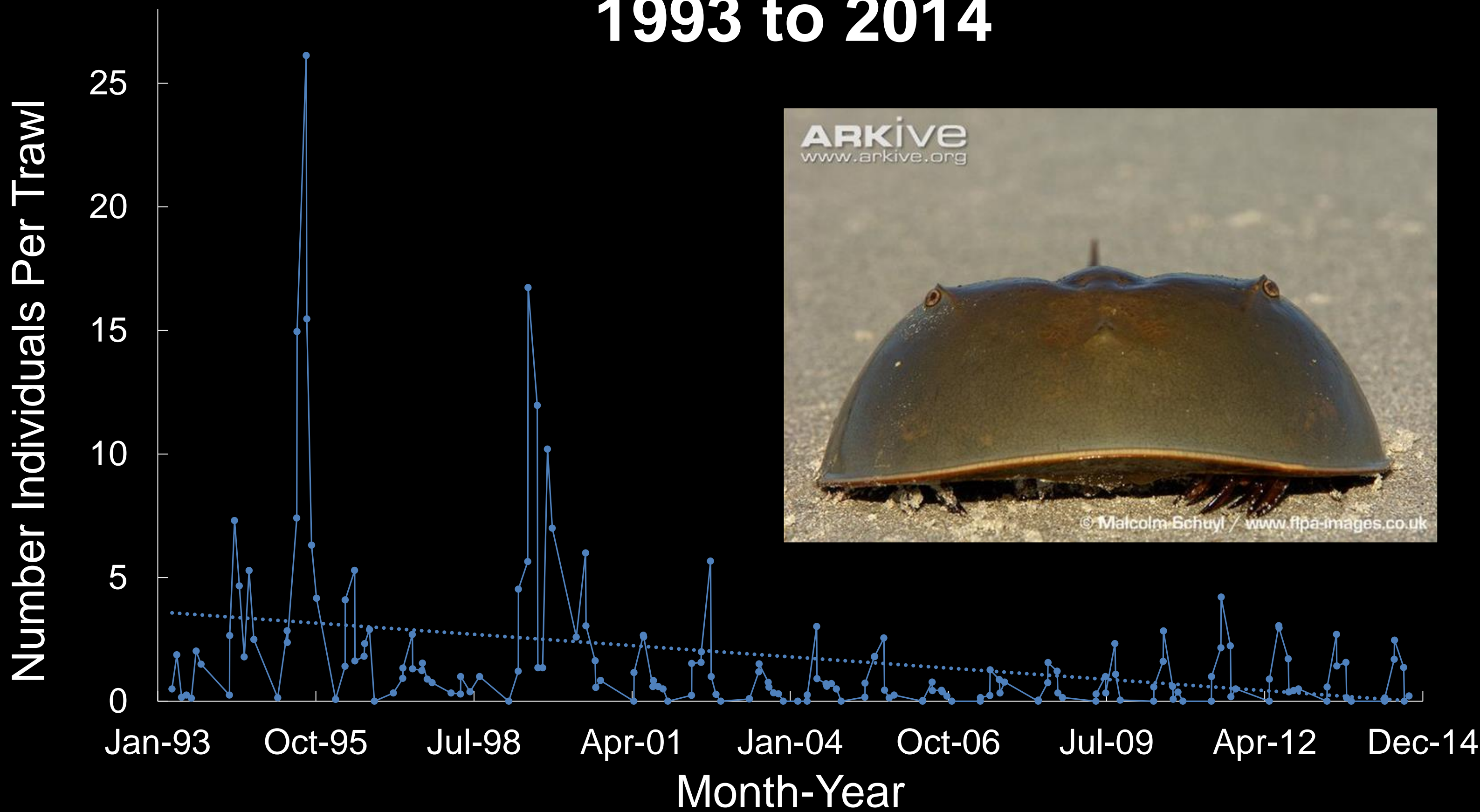
- Horseshoe crabs spend most of the year in deep water.
- Every spring, they migrate to the shallows, emerging from the sea to mate along the beaches on moonlit nights, when the tide is high.
- Females can lay 90,000 or more eggs per season.



Abundance

- According to the data collected by the Maritime Aquarium the abundance of horseshoe crabs are decreasing in the Long Island Sound.
- This negative trend could be caused by many factors, and should be analyzed carefully to avoid and loss of populations.

Horseshoe Crab Abundance 1993 to 2014



According to the data provided by maritime aquarium horseshoe crab population has been decreasing over time.

Ecological Characteristics & Importance

Typical lifespan: reach sexual maturity at around 10 years and can live to over 20 years.

Feeding

- They use their pincers to grab different food sources and push it toward the mouth.
- They feed at night, primarily on mollusks, crustaceans and worms on the ocean floor.

Importance to Ecosystems

- Without the horseshoe crab eggs, the shoreline ecosystem, from North Carolina south, wouldn't be able to survive.
- Adult horseshoe crabs are preyed upon by sharks, sea turtles, gulls and humans for use as bait or fertilizer.

- Their blood is valued at \$60,000/gallon and is a \$ 50 million industry in the U.S.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires that intravenous drugs and any medical equipment coming in contact with the body must first pass through the crab's blood.

Why is Horseshoe Crab Blood Important?

Gabriel Gonzalez, Stamford High School



Natural Resources Conservation
Academy

The Maritime Aquarium
AT NORWALK

UConn | COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE,
HEALTH AND NATURAL RESOURCES

NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT