

# 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

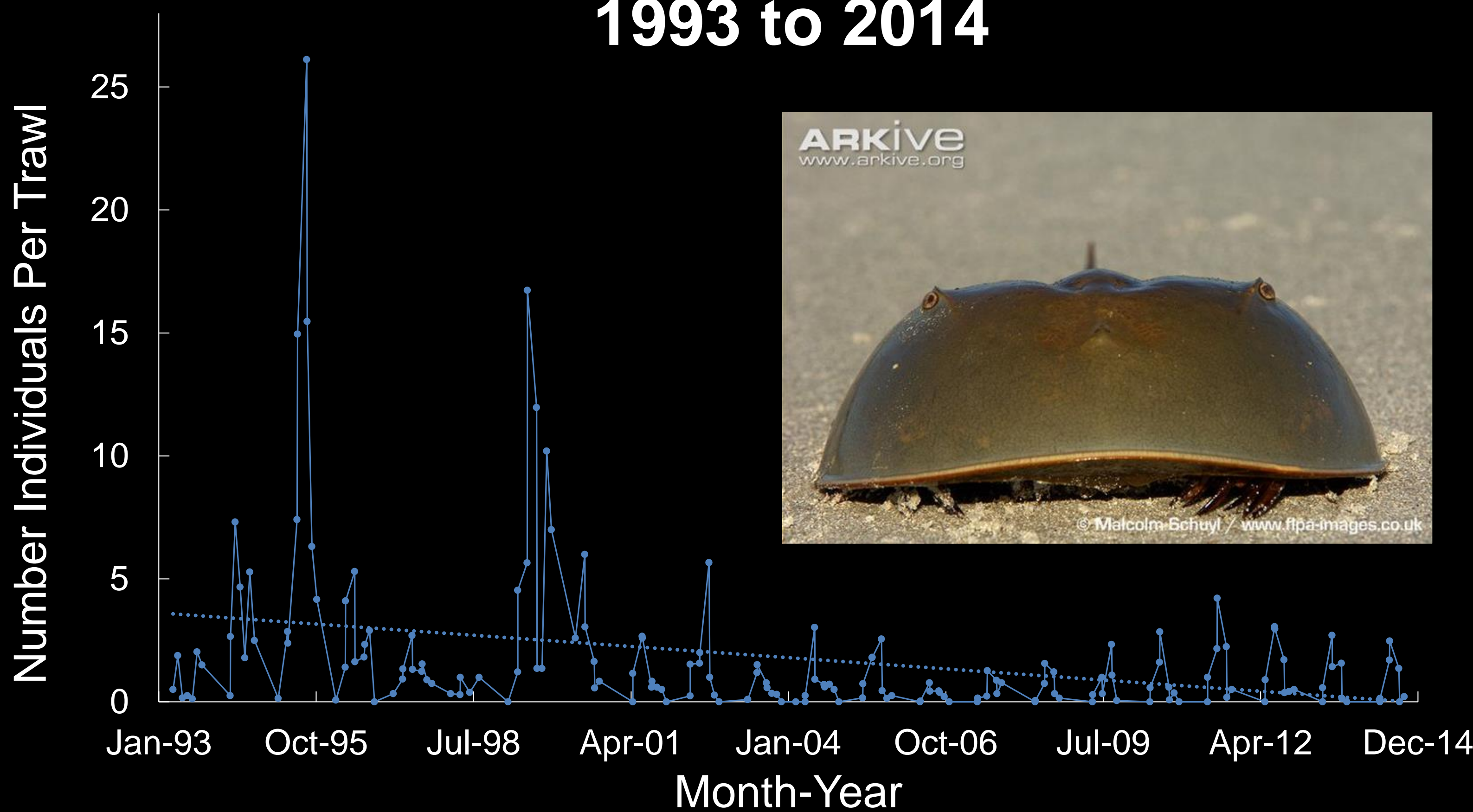
- Horseshoe crabs spend most of the year in deep water.
- Every spring, they migrate to the shallows, emerging from the sea to mate along the beaches on moonlit nights, when the tide is high.
- Females can lay 90,000 or more eggs per season.



## 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?

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