

# Atlantic Horseshoe Crab

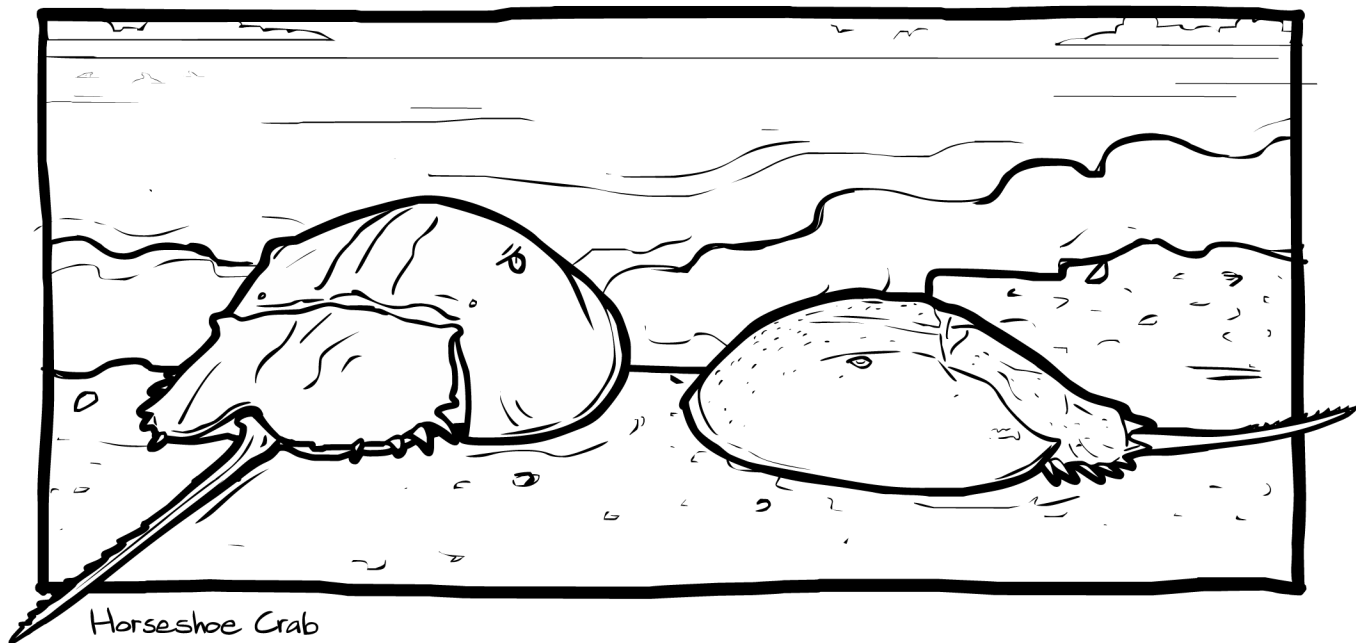
(*Limulus polyphemus*)

## Instant ID

- A crab-like, gray-brown marine (sea) animal up to 24 inches
- Has a semi-circular, domed shell with a joint half-way to the tail
- Portion after the joint has saw tooth-like spikes on both sides
- Tail roughly equal to body length and is slender and pointed
- Body inside the shell has 10 legs and book gills (appear similar to pages)

## Native Niches

- Commonly seen breeding in May and June on beaches of the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico from Maine to the Yucatan Peninsula
- Lives in benthic (sea floor) regions up to 34 miles from the coast, yet little is known about its life in open water



# Atlantic Horseshoe Crab

(*Limulus polyphemus*)

## Favorite Foods

- Eats clams and other benthic invertebrates

## Critter Characteristics

- Blood is blue because it is copper-based
- Females are dramatically larger than males
- Swims upside-down at a 15° angle, aided by flapping its gills
- Unique eye structure and blood make it valuable for research

## Population Protection

- Bycatch (accidental netting), medical research, harvesting for bait and getting stuck on its back are common threats to horseshoe crabs



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