



HORSESHOE CRABS AND THEIR CONSERVATION : ENVIRONMENT

NEWS: The blue-blooded sea creature on Odisha's coastline

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS ?

Horseshoe crabs have been around for millions of years, but their habitats are increasingly being degraded. While scientists have now begun tagging them to track their movements and study them better on the beaches they come to nest on, The Hindu finds that they are also in demand for the medical industry.



Horseshoe Crabs and Their Conservation:

Ancient Species: Horseshoe crabs have existed for 445 million years without significant morphological changes. They belong to the class Merostomata, also known as "living fossils."

Species in India: Two species found on Odisha's coast:

- *Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda* (Mangrove horseshoe crab)
- *Tachypleus gigas* (Coastal horseshoe crab)

Habitat and Reproduction:

- Tides and sandy beaches with specific grain sizes are crucial for their spawning.
- Females lay 400-500 eggs during high tides on beaches like those of Balasore.
- Eggs take about 40-42 days to incubate.

Conservation Efforts:

- Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and Odisha Forest Department began tagging horseshoe crabs in August 2024 to study their population.
- The species is listed in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.



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Threats:

- Habitat destruction due to human activities like beach fortifications, fishing nets, and mangrove degradation.
- Biomedical exploitation for their blue blood, used for testing drug toxicity.

IUCN Status: Horseshoe crabs are listed as 'Data Deficient' by the IUCN, indicating a lack of comprehensive information about their population.

Source : <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-blue-blooded-sea-creature-on-odishas-coastline/article68736825.ece>

