The Honorable Kathleen C. Hochul

Governor of New York

New York State Capitol Building

Albany, NY 12224

November 2, 2024

Dear Governor Hochul,

I am writing on behalf of the Linnaean Society of New York to urge you to sign into law the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act (S.3185A/A.10140).

Horseshoe crabs have existed for more than 400 million years.  They have survived the dinosaurs and the ice age.

Horseshoe crab eggs are a critical food source for the Red Knot, a migratory shorebird listed as Threatened by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Red Knots undergo an epic 9000-mile migration from South American to the Canadian Arctic where they nest and rear their young. During migration, they must stop at points along the Atlantic seaboard to rest and replenish their energy stores. Nutrient-rich horseshoe crab eggs are their main source of food.

The northward migration of Red Knots has evolved to coincide with the spring breeding and egg-laying of horseshoe crabs. When overharvesting of horseshoe crabs between 1980 and 2000 caused their numbers to drop dramatically, the loss of their eggs resulted in a 75% population decline in Red Knots, and led to the shorebird being listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Neither Red Knot nor horseshoe crab populations have recovered from these losses. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission rates the Horseshoe Crab stock in New York as “poor”.

The states of Connecticut, New Jersey, and Massachusetts have taken steps to reduce harvesting of horseshoe crabs, and New York should follow suit. Horseshoe Crabs are harvested for use as bait for eels, conch, and whelk, but alternative baits and traps are now available. Biomedical firms also harvest the crabs to extract a protein from their blood that is used to detect the presence of bacterial endotoxins in sterile pharmaceutical products. However, the protein used in these tests, Factor C, has now been cloned and can be produced in a laboratory, negating the need to collect crab blood.

The passage of the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act provides a way to protect both the crabs and the Red Knots and other shorebirds that depend on eggs as a precious food source for survival. Please sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Deborra Mullins

President