

Critter Class Hodge Podge (Horseshoe crabs and Woolly Bears)

October 26, 2011



[Horseshoe Crab](#)



[Woolly Bear](#)

Comment:

Hi MVK! I was just looking at the Austr Sea Eagle nest and wondering about color changes. Are they like Bald Eagles.... go thru various changes until they reach maturity? Do they mature at 5 yrs old?

MVK:

The plumage of the immature is brown, speckled with white until the fifth (rarely fourth, very rarely third) year, when it reaches sexual maturity.[2][3] Immature Bald Eagles are distinguishable from the Golden Eagle in that the former has a more protruding head with a larger beak, straighter edged wings which are held flat (not slightly raised) and with a stiffer wing beat, and feathers which do not completely cover the legs.[5] The Bald Eagle has sometimes been considered the largest true raptor in North America (excluding the possibly unrelated California Condor), although the species overlaps in size with the American races of the Golden Eagle.[6] It is certainly a large bird, with a body length of 70–102 centimeters (28–40 in). The wingspan is typically between 1.8 and 2.3 m (5.9 and 7.5 ft) and mass is usually between 2.5 and 7 kilograms (5.5 and 15 lb).[6] Females are about 25 percent larger than males, averaging 5.8 kg (13 lb) and against the males' average weight of 4.1 kg (9.0 lb).[2][7][8] The size of the bird varies by location; the smallest specimens are those from Florida, where mature males may weigh as little as 2.3 kg (5.1 lb) and have a wingspan of 1.68 m (5.5 ft). The largest eagles are from Alaska, where large females may weigh up to 7.5 kg (17 lb) and span 2.44 m (8.0 ft) across the wings.[4] Per Wikipedia

Comment:

I don't believe any of the folklore on the wooly caterpillars! I've seen them all colors/shades for many many years. . Just try not to tramp on them.

Comment:

I always like to be prepared for class. :-) I would like to know more about horseshoe crabs as they are so important to migrating birds, and they have been around for so many years.

MVK:

Horseshoe crabs are arthropods that live primarily in shallow ocean waters on soft sandy or muddy bottoms. They will occasionally come on shore for mating. They are commonly used as bait and in fertilizer, and in recent years there has been a decline in number of individuals, as a consequence of coastal habitat destruction in Japan and overharvesting along the east coast of North America. Tetrodotoxin may be present in the roe of species inhabiting the waters of Thailand.[3] Horseshoe crabs are considered living fossils.[4]

Per Wikipedia

MVK:

Many times I have walked on the beach and their shells are everywhere.

MVK:

Horseshoe crabs are used as bait to fish for eels (mostly in the United States) and whelk. However, fishing horseshoe crab is temporarily forbidden in New Jersey (moratorium on harvesting) and restricted to only males in Delaware. A permanent moratorium is in effect in South Carolina. [11]

It is hypothesized that low horseshoe crab populations in the Delaware Bay endangers the future of the red knot. Red knots are long distance migratory shorebirds that feed on the protein-rich eggs during their stopover on the beaches of New Jersey and Delaware.[12] There is an ongoing effort to develop adaptive management plans to regulate horseshoe crab harvests in the Bay in a way that protects migrating shorebirds.

MVK:

The entire body of the horseshoe crab is protected by a hard shell. They have two large compound eyes and multiple smaller simple ones atop the carapace. Beneath the carapace they look quite similar to a large spider. They have five pairs of legs for walking, swimming and moving food into the mouth. The long, straight, rigid tails can be used to flip themselves over if they are turned upside down, so a horseshoe crab with a broken tail is more susceptible to desiccation or predation.

Behind their legs, they have book gills, which exchange respiratory gases and are also occasionally used for swimming. While they can swim upside down, they usually are found on the ocean floor searching for worms and mollusks, which are their main food. They may also feed on crustaceans and even small fish.

Females are larger than males; *C. rotundicauda* is the size of a human hand, while *L. polyphemus* can be up to 60 centimetres (24 in) long (including tail). The juveniles grow about 33% larger with every molt until reaching adult size.[5]

During the breeding season, horseshoe crabs migrate to shallow coastal waters. Males select a female and cling onto her back. The female digs a hole in the sand and lays her eggs while the male fertilizes them. The female can lay between 60,000–120,000 eggs in batches of a few thousand at a time. Many shore birds eat the eggs before they hatch. The eggs take about 2 weeks to hatch. The larvae molt six times during the first year.

It has proven to be difficult to raise horseshoe crabs in captivity. There is reason to believe that mating only takes place in the presence of the sand or mud in which the horseshoe crab eggs were hatched. It is not known with certainty what in the sand is being sensed by the crabs nor how they sense it.[8] Per Wikipedia

Comment:

Hi MVK, Great to see you as always. I used to love to pick up caterpillars when I was a kid and let them crawl up my arm. They were neat looking. Really tiny faces. I loved the Mr. McDonald story. Too too funny. Wings has a great mind.

MVK:

You said it !!!

Comment:

Good evening MVK and everyone! Well said, MVK. When we decide to love, whether it be humans or animals, we run the "risk" of losing that loved one. But we have to think about all of the joy we received from that love, even if loss is a possibility.

Comment:

LHN--One thing we have learned from WCV is that they never hide the truth, no matter how bad it is. They always tell it like it is, even if we don't like hearing it--

Comment:

Usually a lurker but had to share this, You might have all seen it but its worth watching again. Eagle Owl coming in for the kill -- right at the camera. Hypnotic little piece of film. The last two or three seconds are amazing, watching the feathers ruffle and the wings swell. Interesting to watch the corrections in the flight path as the bird comes in here is the site <http://www.dogwork.com/owfo8/>

Comment:

So if the woolly bear is a good predictor, I will be having a bad winter!! My woolly bears --a lot of them so far-- have been almost all black--just a small band of brown in the middle... sigh... Oh,btw, very funny EGS!! ♥☺

Comment:

The sea eagles in Scotland are the same colours as bald eagles - white head and tail, but they are bigger - an incredible 8ft wing span. I have seen them but did not realise how big they were (they were high up!)

Comment:

Evenin' MVK!! I used to see lots of horseshoe crabs growing up on Long Island near the beach--
-the water must be too cold for them up north here in Maine--don't recall ever seeing one
around here!

Comment:

Thanks so much for the info on horseshoe crabs. Living fossils....no wonder I like them. When I
was a kid in the Jurassic period we called them trilobites. LOL

MVK:

Trilobites???? Sounds like a name for a dessert! EGS you are so funny. I am happy to be a fossil
- so many don't make it this far and all those Senior discounts - wow.

Comment:

Good evening mvk, en/cn....just logged on, is there class tonight?? just have to say this gho is a
riot to watch..what a personality

MVK:

Well we have learned about wooly bears and horseshoe crabs.

Comment:

Trilobites: The horseshoe crab's ancestors. <http://youtu.be/tQGf0i2Zt80>

MVK:

Sure look like them.

MVK:

Bear cubs are very playful, rolling over logs, tearing into tree stumps and logs, playing with each
other, climbing trees, playing with their moms. They would do very good with hiding
food in things so they can find it. They tend to forage most of the day, of course in-
between those bear naps.

Comment:

Been lurking off and on. Wanted to say "Hey" to you MVK. I've always called the caterpillars
"Wooly Worms". Same thing I suppose. Last year my grandkids were here and we had
dozens of them in one area of the driveway. (Wooly worms, not grandkids) They took a
bucket to try to collect them and had 30 of them in there. Mom said they were NOT
going home with them! I just told them to leave the bucket in the yard and they would
find their way home. They did. I'm gonna keep lurking. You're always so interesting!
Have a good one! (((hugs)))

MVK:

LOL - I wouldn't touch them!

Comment:

Hey MVK, you haven't petted a Wooley Bear?????

MVK:

My mom told me they would sting you. LOL

Comment:

Evening EN/CN and MVK- trying to catch up but really tired! We have horseshoe crabs that wash up on shore every August. It's always a lot of them too.

MVK:

Yep seem to come in clusters here too.

Comment:

MVK...I've handled wooly worms since I was a kid. Never got stung even once. They do kinda tickle tho'! lol

Comment:

MVK, we always had horseshoe crabs on Cape Cod growing up but they were in sheltered water, not on the ocean side but in the bay or in inlets like Salt Pond. Had to stay away from those tails!