

# Press Release

## **Legislation Bans Horseshoe Crab Harvest in NJ**

### **NJ Legislators Pass Important Act to Save Shorebirds from Extinction**

Assemblyman John McKeon – 973.275.1113  
Assemblyman Douglas Fisher – 856.455.1011  
Senator Robert Gordon - 201.703.9779  
Senator Joseph Vitale - 732.855.7441  
Eric Stiles, NJ Audubon Society – 908.240.9316  
Tim Dillingham, American Littoral Society – 732.245.8332  
Jeff Tittel, Sierra Club – 609.558.9100  
Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper – 215.801.3053

Trenton, NJ: New Jersey legislators overwhelmingly pass legislation to save the Red Knot and other shorebirds from extinction. The legislation will protect the critical shorebird food supply – Horseshoe Crab eggs - by banning the harvest of Horseshoe Crabs in NJ. The bill now moves to the desk of Governor Jon Corzine who has been a strong proponent for conservation of the Red Knot and horseshoe crab.

“New Jersey is part of an intercontinental community that shares the responsibility to sustain migratory shorebirds like the Red Knot by preserving their vital food source,” said Assemblyman John McKeon (D). “It is outrageous that we would allow these ancient species to be driven to extinction when the ability to halt their decline is so readily at our grasp.”

The legislation cleared the Assembly on Thursday, March 10 by a vote of 70 to 6 and the Senate on Monday, March 17 by a vote of 39 to 0.

“New Jersey plays a vital role in the centuries-old relationship between Horseshoe Crabs and Red Knot birds,” said Senator Joseph Vitale (D). “Without the ability of the Red Knot to feed on our state’s beaches along their journey from South America to the Arctic, their numbers will continue to shrink adding to their eventual extinction. We have a sacred obligation to save these species and an immediate opportunity to do so.”

Red Knots, a robin-sized shorebird, come to the Delaware Bay each spring after flying non-stop from Brazil. Knots rely on a superabundance of excess horseshoe crab eggs to nearly double their body weight in less than 2 weeks, before flying non-stop to their breeding grounds in the Arctic.

“New Jerseyans are proud of the Garden State’s natural heritage,” said Senator Robert Gordon (D). “We need to take swift action to ensure the Red Knot can be enjoyed by future generations on the Bayshore instead of history books.”

Due to the reckless overharvest of horseshoe crabs and a subsequent rapid decline of their eggs, the Red Knot population has plummeted from over 100,000 to only 14,800 currently wintering in Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of South America.

“Over twenty leading scientists from four continents agree that the Red Knot is facing imminent extinction unless we take strong measures to secure their food supply,” said Assemblyman Douglas Fisher (D). “Conservation is critical to the economy of the Garden State. Each year thousands of wildlife watchers descend on the Delaware Bay to view shorebirds contributing millions of dollars to local businesses.”

“The Delaware Bay, home to the largest horseshoe crab population and one of the largest shorebird assemblages in the world, is our Serengeti,” said Eric Stiles, Vice President of Conservation at NJ Audubon Society. “We applaud the successful efforts of legislators to secure this treasure and ensure we don’t cook the golden goose by destroying a multi-million dollar wildlife watching tourism industry.”

“The legislature has really stepped up to protect the natural resources of the Delaware Bay,” said Tim Dillingham, Executive Director, American Littoral Society. “This action will help pull the Red Knot back from the brink of extinction.”

“We commend the legislature to overturn the outrageous act of the NJ Marine Fisheries Council taking special interests over the public interest,” said Jeff Tittel, Executive Director, Sierra Club – New Jersey Chapter. “For a few thousand dollars worth of permits you can no longer destroy an entire species and an ecosystem.”

The Delaware Riverkeeper Maya van Rossum commented that “the legislators saw the clear and compelling need to protect this vital natural treasure. I commend the strong bipartisan support and leadership.”

“The action of the New Jersey legislature to protect the Red Knot is the only responsible course,” said Darin Schroeder, American Bird Conservancy’s Executive Director for Conservation Advocacy. “New Jersey is demonstrating real leadership, doing what other states and the federal government should be doing. Conserving horseshoe crabs gives the Red Knot a chance to rebound.”