

Regulators allow horseshoe crab harvest

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The New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council has declined to extend a moratorium on horseshoe crab harvesting aimed at protecting migrating shore birds.

Environmentalists blame the increased catch of horseshoe crabs for a decline in the numbers of the red knot. The birds, which migrate from the southern tip of South America to the Arctic, make a pit stop on the Delaware Bay while the crabs are laying their eggs.

At the council meeting Monday night, fishing industry representatives and council members used the decline as an argument against the moratorium, The Star-Ledger (Newark) reported. Red knot numbers have dropped sharply even though horseshoe crab harvesting was banned for five of the past seven years.

Environmentalists blame the bird's troubles on a sharp increase in the number of horseshoe crabs taken in the 1990s for bait for eel and conch fishing.

The state Department of Environmental Protection may now ask the governor or Legislature to act to protect horseshoe crabs.

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