



Mr. Grant often visits schools to teach students about horseshoe crabs.

Growing up on the New Jersey coast, it would have been difficult for **Dave Grant** *not* to notice horseshoe crabs. They gather on local beaches by the hundreds each spring to lay their eggs in the sand. The closer he looked, the more he got hooked! Today, Mr. Grant oversees the Ocean Institute at Sandy Hook, located in the old army base where he grew up. There he shares his love and knowledge of various ocean animals with students of all ages.

A horseshoe crab with hitchhikers on its shell.



TK

Question: Why do scientists describe horseshoe crabs as “living fossils”?

Answer: They’ve changed so little in 350 million years that ancient specimens look very much like today’s horseshoe crabs. From the very beginning they were so well suited to their environment that there’s been little need for them to evolve.

Q: Is sight important to horseshoe crabs?

A: VERY! They rely on their eyes to find other crabs and to move away from threats. They also set their internal clocks by the light of the Sun and Moon. This is important because they lay eggs only during spring high tides, which occur when the Moon is either new or full.

Q: Do they smell? Can they hear?

A: Yes, they smell awful when they’re dead! But seriously, they have tiny hairs that help them detect odors in the water. And though they don’t have ears, they may be able

to sense the pounding of surf on the beach, which helps them avoid getting washed ashore.

Q: You spend a lot of time studying and teaching others about this animal. Why?

A: It’s arguably the most interesting creature on the Atlantic Coast. If I could choose only one animal to teach people about life in the sea, the horseshoe crab would be on the top of my list.

Q: Why is that?

A: A horseshoe crab is like a walking zoo. About halfway through its life, it stops molting and starts picking up hitchhikers. For the next ten years or so, its shell provides a firm surface for barnacles, sea stars, snails, sponges, and many other animals to hang on to. The seafloor along the mid-Atlantic coast is mostly sand and mud, without many exposed rocks for invertebrates to settle on. Horseshoe crabs provide island homes for creatures that can’t survive in the sand.