

## Skate Egg Case

A skate egg case is also referred to as a “mermaid’s purse.” Each one of these black cases is about 3-4 inches in length. Each year, a female will lay two fertilized eggs, each in its own casing, every 3 to 5 days. Skates lay anywhere from 60-82 eggs annually. The egg case has a total of four “hooks” so it can anchor itself to seaweed or other substrate on the ocean floor. The “hooks” also serve the purpose of providing oxygen to the developing embryo through a small hole at the end. The egg case is made from the same substance as human finger nails (keratin). Depending on the species of skate, it can take 3-15 months for the skate to hatch. Most of the ones you find washed up on the beach are empty, the eggs having already hatched.



Egg case photo credit: Kira Dacanay, Senior Fisheries Biologist, Marine Fisheries Administration

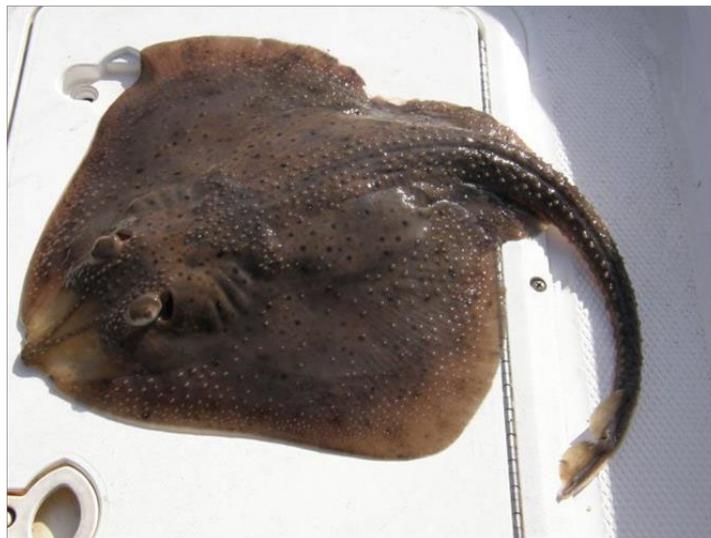


Photo credit: James Maloney, Hourly Technician, Marine Fisheries Administration

## Atlantic Horseshoe Crab, *Limulus polyphemus*

Did you know that Horseshoe Crabs are closer in relation to spiders than crabs? Or that the genus *Limulus* is documented to have existed in the Triassic Period? The fossil record shows the earliest ancestor of the Horseshoe Crab dates back 350 million years. Horseshoe Crabs are scavengers that feed on sea worms, small mollusks, crustaceans and anything decaying on the ocean floor. Their blood is blue due to a copper-based respiratory pigment called hemocyanin. The blood also contains a protein called Limulus Amebocyte Lysate. This protein is used by pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers to test their products for evidence of endotoxins and bacterial substances. If these substances are present, they can cause a fever in humans and possibly death. Horseshoe Crabs spend most of their time offshore in depths up to 100 feet but come ashore in late spring to spawn.

