

Stamp Development
Attn: Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 3300
Washington, DC 20260-3501

February 10, 2025

To the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee,

We are writing to nominate the horseshoe crab, whose story of survival spans hundreds of millions of years (as well as its recent tragic exploitation), to be represented on a U.S. postage stamp for its key ecological role, its role in Native American history, and in modern science.

Once a ubiquitous presence on the Atlantic coast of North America (and with three other species found in Asia), the horseshoe crab has declined significantly in numbers since the 1990s due to human-induced factors like beach house-building, polluting the ocean and shore, and



harvesting horseshoe crabs for medicinal uses. This arthropod is a keystone species without whose presence the ecosystem would be thrown drastically out of balance. Along with maintaining a micro-ecosystem upon its large, round shell of a back, the horseshoe crab serves as a significant food source for migratory birds, sea turtles, alligators, and sharks, to name a few. Its decline in population poses a critical risk to the web of species who depend on it, creating the possibility of serious disturbance to its entire ecosystem.

Having existed on Earth for 440 million years—arriving long before the dinosaurs—the horseshoe crab carries a wisdom to which humans should listen. Born in a time with temperatures similar to now, the Horseshoe Crab survived a jump of 30°F and subsequent decline back down to current temperatures.ⁱ Historically, Native Americans used their pointy tails as spear tips and the rest of their bodies to enrich their gardens.ⁱⁱ In recent years, as scientists discovered that horseshoe crab blood is beneficial to vaccine production and testing the presence of bacterial endotoxins (which can be present on implanted medical equipment), humans have failed to recognize and listen to the ways this species survives.ⁱⁱⁱ Now, the practice of “milking” their blood and throwing them back into the ocean (often to perish) has become prevalent. Synthetic alternatives have now been created but are more expensive, leading to the continued milking of horseshoe crabs despite their vulnerability to extinction. How sadly ironic it would be

if the horseshoe crab's end comes at the hands of humans rather than the vast ecological changes it has endured.

In an effort to listen to the horseshoe crab, it seems that the species' most salient advice may be to attune ourselves to Earth's rhythms. After all, our



Scientists extracting horseshoe crab blood

physiological, agricultural, and other societal cycles are tied to these rhythms—we have only lost sight of the patterns. If we take actions to mitigate climate change—halting greenhouse gas emissions and overdevelopment, particularly of the coasts and beaches—the horseshoe crab population can restore itself to stability. And if we focus on what the horseshoe crab can teach us, not only will we be better equipped to face climate change, we might just be able to reverse it. Further, its beautiful, almost alien visage would make for a striking stamp, one worthy of collecting and one that could inspire stronger protection of this majestic creature.

The horseshoe crab is an inspiration of survival, resilience, and hope in a rapidly destabilizing world. An ancient, prehistoric being, this animal is one to which we should turn in the face of an uncertain future. With the horseshoe crab's recent decrease in population, its presence on a U.S. postage stamp is of utmost importance to maintain awareness of its existence, its history, and its importance in the web of life.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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and Angelina Reddy
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Gaianway.org

ⁱ <https://www.usgs.gov/youth-and-education-in-science/paleozoic>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nps.gov/fiis/learn/nature/natural-history-of-horseshoe-crabs.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/horseshoe-crab-blood-miracle-vaccine-ingredient.html>