

Priorities: Delaware Bay Focus Area

Delaware Bay hosts the largest spawning population of horseshoe crabs in the world and the second largest population of migrating shorebirds in North America. Over eighty percent of the Western Hemisphere's population of red knot depends upon horseshoe crab eggs to double their weight in less than two weeks before flying to the Arctic to nest. These migrants depend on the eggs of spawning horseshoe crabs for a major portion of their diets (50 to 90 percent) each spring before migrating from the Delaware Bay beaches to their Arctic nesting grounds. Delaware Bay is designated within the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network as having the highest reserve status. In addition to providing the principal food source for migratory birds in Delaware Bay, horseshoe crabs comprise the main diet of juvenile loggerhead turtles.



Photo: Gregory Breese, US Fish & Wildlife Service

Key Species: Red knot
 Horseshoe crab

The largest heron rookery north of Florida, Pea Patch Island Heronry contains about 15,000 birds, composed of nine different species. The birds forage in the surrounding wetlands, at least as far as 25 kilometers away. The wetlands surrounding Delaware Bay have been recognized as having international significance by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The Delaware estuary serves as a spring staging area for as many as 200,000 snow geese. The estuary annually winters approximately fifteen species of waterfowl which comprise a population of nearly 500,000 birds.

Key Species:	Bald eagle	Black rail
	American black duck	Dunlin
	Northern pintail	Sedge wren
	Pied-billed grebe	Henslow's sparrow
	Yellow-crowned night heron	Northern harrier
	Northern diamondback terrapin	Osprey
	Wild rice	

5 year goals (FY2007 through FY2011): Restore 600 acres wetlands
 Restore 0.2 miles of shoreline

Delaware Bay Estuary Project US Fish & Wildlife Service

