The Living Fossil
(Horseshoe crab)

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CHAPTER - 4

Distribution of horseshoe crabs at their nesting grounds, East coast of Peninsular Malaysia

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Abstract

Present study was aimed to investigate the distribution and abundance of horseshoe crab along the observed nesting grounds of horseshoe crabs in East coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Sampling was conducted in a time span of four months from September to December 2009. Percentage abundance of nests was higher in Pekan station (84.6%) compared to Balok station (15.39%). The highest number of horseshoe crab nests recorded was in November (N =11) and lower in September (N=1). A total of 4 nests were noted in September in Balok station while no nests were recorded in other sampling months. Kruskall-wallis analysis showed the significant difference in the number of horseshoe crab nesting during full and new moon periods while the site specific difference was not significant (P > 0.05).

Key words: horseshoe crab, nesting grounds, Balok, Pekan, living fossil.

Introduction

Horseshoe crabs belong to a class of animals called Merostomata, order Xiphosurida and from the family Limulidae (Mikkelsen, 1988). There are four species of horseshoe crab in the world with discernible morphology which are Limulus polyphemus: Tachypleus gigas, Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda and Tachypleus tridentatus. Three species, Tachypleus tridentatus, T. gigas and C. rotundicauda, occur in the coastal waters of Asia from Indian to Japan, including the waters