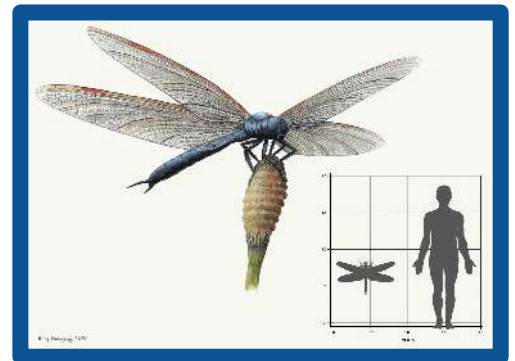


HORSESHOE CRABS



Life History of the Horseshoe Crab

- There are only 4 species of horseshoe crabs. They live in the eastern United States, India, Japan, and Indonesia.
- The horseshoe crabs of today have walked the earth's oceans for at least 350 million years.
- Horseshoe crabs are arthropods and belong to their own class called Merostomata which only have four extant species.
- Their closest living relatives are scorpions, ticks, and spiders. Not crabs!
- During the time of the first horseshoe crabs, dragonflies had 27" wingspans!



The Meganeura
~300 million years ago



HORSESHOE CRABS

Life History of the Horseshoe Crab, continued

- The Paleozoic Era began 540 million years ago when the closest ancestors of the Horseshoe crab, the Trilobite, roamed the seas. These organisms evolved together, and while the trilobite went extinct the horseshoe crab did not.
- At the end of the Paleozoic era a huge mass extinction occurred, which gave way for dinosaurs to evolve or go extinct, but horseshoe crabs survived.



Trilobite Fossil



Horseshoe Crab Fossil

