



The Buzzard Bulletin

Notes & Information for CREW Trust Volunteers

April-May, 2020

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Notepad

What's open/closed?

As of the end of March, trails in CREW areas are open to the public. However, camping and all public programs/gatherings are closed.

The situation is fluid. If the trails become crowded enough that genuine social distancing is no longer possible, those particular trails will be closed to everyone. The decision about closings will be made by the SFWMD.

BRS closing

Unrelated to health closings, BRS will close again to the public and volunteers sometime this spring or early summer for the final phase of boardwalk replacement. Expect an email when the SFWMD confirms the exact dates.

Rusty Hinges

The Rusty Hinges volunteers have been busy installing two memorial benches on the BRS trails, one dedication bench on the FPS trails, and new watershed signs by two of the parking lots at FPS.

Posting information

FPS volunteers have been busy putting in more trail identification posts while another group has been replacing and adding posts at CMT and CDT. For information about dates to help (haul posts, use a post hole digger, paint), please contact Brenda or Allison.

Information, please

Guided walks, programs, cancellations

Volunteer appreciation day

The annual CREW Trust Volunteer Appreciation Day planned for April is cancelled. Appreciation gifts for volunteers who have donated 30+ hours during 2019 will eventually be presented.

Weekly guided walks, events

The South Florida Water Management District has asked the CREW Trust to cancel all guided walks, programs, and events until further notice. All of the trails will remain open to the public for the time being.

60-day moratorium

All currently scheduled school field trips and programs on the CREW trails have been cancelled, and a two-month moratorium on all CREW Trust public programs is in effect. That basically means no programs until next fall.

Stay updated with the latest

With news and information changing daily, the latest updates and news will be posted on the CREW Trust web page – www.crewtrust.org. Please check it regularly.

Trail tip: Identifying similar looking big black snakes

The majority of snakes encountered on trails are harmless and will flee at the first opportunity.

To distinguish between venomous and non-venomous large black snakes, do not judge by size, head shape, or body color which are similar. Look at the patterns on the head.

The Banded Water Snake, top photo and harmless, has a light chin and jaw with thin, black vertical stripes.

The Water Moccasin, bottom photo and venomous, has a dark wide, dark horizontal band through eye and a thinner one on the chin.

Although you probably don't want to be close enough to see, non-venomous snakes have round pupils in their eyes while venomous snakes have vertical slits for pupils.

Note: There is a difference between poisonous and venomous.



Poison is swallowed; venom is injected. *If you bite it and you die, it's poison. If it bites you and you die, it's venom.*

Fire ants: stinging scourge of fields, pastures, and yards

ORIGIN/DESTINATION

Red Fire Ants, *Solenopsis invicta*, were introduced into the United States from western Brazil/eastern Argentina about 60 years ago. Unfortunately, their natural enemies were left behind in South America.

Fire ants are associated with disturbed habitats, mostly created by humans, and are abundant in fields, pastures, lawns and other open sunny areas.

They are rarely found in mature forests and other areas with heavy shade unless part of the area has been disturbed or opened by fire or storms.

MOUNDS

Mature fire ant mounds are on average 10-12 inches in diameter and up to 18 inches high. They may extend six feet underground or to the water table and can contain from 80,000 to over 250,000 workers.



THE ATTACK

Fire Ants in the United States are active and aggressive, swarming over anyone or anything that disturbs their nest. Typically, the ants can swarm up on a leg for 10 or more seconds before they grab the skin with their mandibles, double over their abdomens, and inject their stingers. Each ant can sting multiple times.

Although it looks as though fire ants bite when they attack, the correct term to use is sting.

The ants can maintain a temperature inside the mound much higher than the outside, allowing them to continue colony growth even during cool weather.

When it's cool outside, the queen stays closer to the top of the mound. When it's hot out, she moves deeper. So the most effective time to treat a mound is in the cooler early morning.

REPRODUCTION

During the summer, usually after a rain, hundreds of winged fire ants ascend from their mounds to mate from around 300-800 feet in the air. The males quickly drop to the ground and die, their purpose in life fulfilled. The females, now queens, drift downward to start new colonies. On a windy day, this may be as far as five miles or more from the original colony.

If the queen lands on a suitably moist site, she removes her wings and digs a vertical hole about 2-5 inches deep. She seals herself off and within 24 hours begins to lay eggs.

The first worker brood takes about a month to develop. Then, they open the nest, begin to forage for food, rear more workers, and care for the queens.

A queen can live up to seven years and produce 1,500 to 1,600 eggs a day. So in less than a year, a new colony can easily number over 100,000 ants.

The whole process can repeat up to eight times each summer, spreading ants 20 to 30 miles a year.

The venom is an alkaloid known as Solenopsin and is a mix of at least 46 proteins. Recent testing of the venom suggests that it affects the nervous system.

REACTING TO STINGS

There are numerous home remedies that people have come up with to treat stings ranging from toothpaste to apple cider vinegar. In general, the best treatment is to

- Ice the sting off and on (15 minutes on, 15 minutes off). Use an ice pack or put ice in a towel. Don't put ice directly on the sting, and don't use heat.
- Elevate the part of the body with the sting to reduce swelling
- Take an antihistamine and use a hydrocortisone cream to relieve itching

Once stung, there is a 60% chance of having a similar or possible worse reaction if stung again.

It's normal to have a small, itchy lump, which usually gets better in less than an hour. Within 8-24 hours, a small blister filled with fluid that looks like pus (it's actually dead tissue) may form.

Some people have larger reactions around the sting. A severe allergic reaction is rare, but it can be life-threatening. Symptoms include tightness in the chest, trouble breathing, dizziness, and swelling of the tongue or throat. If left untreated, these allergic reactions can cause the body to go into shock. Call 911 right away.

Staying connected

People

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Web sites

www.crewtrust.org

www.trackitforward.com (hours)

www.crewtrust.org/crew-trust-volunteers (volunteer library—the password is **crew17**)

The Buzzard Bulletin contains notes and information for CREW volunteers and is emailed six times a year (September, November, January, March, May, July). Dick Brewer, editor.

Volunteer resource material at www.crewtrust.org

Information is available for volunteers in two sections on the CREW Trust web page. Most is intended to provide volunteers with accurate information when interacting with visitors. A little is just for personal enlightenment. On the web page,

1. Under **Volunteer**, click on **Volunteer Resource Library**. The password is CREW17, and
2. Under **Education**, click on **Free Downloadable CREW Educational Materials**.

Here's what's in the VOLUNTEER RESOURCE LIBRARY

TRAINING BULLETINS

mosquitos
lightning
service dogs
trail safety
dogs at BRS
trail steward
dealing with reluctant victims
dealing with alligators
Flint Pen Strand hike leader training

CREW PUBLICATIONS

Nature's Peace
Volunteer jobs
Living with Alligators (FWC)
Living in Bear Country (FWC)
Panther Safety Tips (FWC)
Invasion Curve (invasive species)

BUZZARD BULLETIN (*sample of articles listed below*)

Alligator Top 10 List (Apr 2019)
Bird trivia (Feb 2020)
Dealing with dry-downs (Dec 2019)
Dealing with visitor complaints (Dec 2016)
Fire Ants (Apr 2020)
Heat Index (Aug 2019)
Lightning strike myths (Jun 2019)
On the Job (Oct-Dec 2016; Feb-Apr-Jun-Aug-Oct 2017)
Poison Ivy (Oct 2019)
River Otters (Aug 2019)
What Are You Packing? (Aug-Oct-Dec 2018)

RESOURCES (*continues in next column*)

reference/field guide book list
Dick Brewer's Southwest Florida Nature Profiles
useful apps to have
useful web sites for reference

Dick Brewer's list of volunteer resource materials

(*also at www.dickbrewer.org/CREWguides*)

- trail maps for BRS, CD, FPS, CMT
- wildlife checklists for BRS, CD, FPS
- observations at BRS (birds, insects, other)
- birding basics and ID booklet
- identification keys
 - native epiphytic orchids
 - Southwest Florida ferns
 - native epiphytic bromeliads
- photographs
 - Southwest Florida snakes
 - Southwest Florida spiders
 - Southwest Florida turtles
 - Southwest Florida orchids
 - Southwest Florida non-native reptiles
- Just for Fun
 - Demotivation from the Swamp
 - Uncommon Southwest Florida Birds
 - Seven Wonders of the World
- Everything you wanted to know about...
 - Alligators
 - Green and Brown Anoles
 - Big Cypress Fox Squirrels
 - Crayfish
 - dragonflies
 - Fire Ants
 - Gambusia (mosquito fish)
 - Green Treefrogs
 - identifying black snakes
 - identifying frogs by sound
 - lichens
 - Love Vine
 - native orchid bloom times
 - Pig Frogs
 - Yellow Jackets
 - weather: humidity-clouds, fog-dew-frost, lightning

Here are the FREE DOWNLOADABLE CREW EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

- Alligators
- Anoles
- Bird Fledge Times
- Bird Life Spans
- Big Birds from Below identification
- Dragonflies of CREW
- Ferns & Fern Morphology
- Frog and Toad Sounds
- Frog & Toad identification
- Tillandsia
- Identifying wading birds by height
- Identifying aquatic turtles
- Coloring pages (Barred Owl, Blue Dasher Dragonfly, Bobcat, Zebra Longwing)