



BRAZOS BEND BUNCH BUGLE

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 5

MAY 2008

APRIL MEETING NOTES

Submitted by Nicole Olson

President James Blankenship called the meeting to order. There were eighteen volunteers, six VITs and one junior VIT present. Three staff members were present. The March 2008 meeting minutes were approved as posted.

Treasurer's Report for the month of March 2008 – Diane Carpenter

The budget report was projected on the screen and discussed. See the Financial Report in the volunteer lounge for complete Information.

The following expenditures were approved:

- Funds to buy enriched topsoil/compost to level out areas in some of the campsites. It will be coming out of the El Paso fund money.
- Funds for marking trailheads and color-coding the maps. There will be a printing of 30,000 copies, 200 marker posts, a post driver, 400 color stickers and 50 specific color stickers.
- Funds for trailhead map panels and 8 map kiosks. The maps would be more detailed and would stand at the trailhead. There would be some additional information given about the park on the map.

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Outreach – Judy Strauss

The turnout at the Children's Festival in Richmond was great and it was a good time. There were 824 visitors that came by the booth. Thanks to everybody who helped. It's really rewarding to do, and it does count to the 48 hours.

Chuck Duplant mentioned that May 4 is Ducks Unlimited Greenwings at Dewberry Ranch in the north Katy area. It's from 11 am to 3 pm. Please get with Chuck if interested. An announcement will be sent to Sharon Hanzik to get it out.

Maintenance Report – Noel Duncan

- Replaced some wood yard timber racks
- Handled 4.5 cords wood
- Treated fire ants
- Treated Chinese tallow
- Cut grass on Buckeye and around oak trees on Whiteoak trail
- Installed water stations
- Trail maintenance including work on Elm Lake, Pilant Slough, Spillway, and Prairie Trail
- Cleared brush from Maintenance driveway and Big Creek Bridge
- Maintained Kubota, chain saw chains and chipper

Gift Shop Report – Beth Debenport

A great March! There's a new logo on neat totebags; very pleased with them. I appreciate all the help in March. We did \$466 today. Last weekend for 2 days was approximately \$1,000. We sold 82 t-shirts in March. We also sold 358 candies.

Training – Anna Dell Williamson

We trained 7 junior VITs today. We will need assistance with the hands on training. We recruited two parents. The ages ranged from 8 years to 16 years old; impressive bunch of young people. Five of these junior VITs are sponsored by current members.

New Business

There's interest in building a new classroom facility. The following statement of support was proposed to the volunteer organization for adoption: "The Brazos Bend Volunteer Organization will assist with the design and fund raising, and will oversee construction of the Brazos Bend Environmental Education Center – Phase I (classroom)." The statement was approved unanimously. *Discussion:* We want to see this happen. Any money raised or spent will be approved by the Executive Committee. The next meeting will be in approximately two weeks. We will accept people into committees such as design, building, construction, etc. We will ask Texas Parks & Wildlife what rules/restrictions are for fund raising and materials to use. This will be a complete volunteer committee – no staff will be on the committee; all meetings will be open to the membership.

Jean Northington suggested we start a blog on the Houston Chronicle Fort Bend blog section. We can start a BBSP blog and post the weekend schedule. It's just a matter of cutting and pasting the schedule onto the blog. Initially, we keep it simple and there's no charge to do it. We will let Jean handle it.

There are proposed changes to Appendix B, Required Hours. We are asking to move from two people in the Nature Center to three people. It helps when the Nature Center is extremely busy and two people are not enough. We will also remove VIT information from Appendix B and say VITs participation is governed by current volunteer training policies. The proposed changes will be posted in the upcoming newsletter.

Sharon Hanzik gave out caps and patches to the following: James Watson, Brian Watson, Rachelle Watson, and Jean Northington. Congratulations!

We are up 500 hours from last March = 2,294 hours for March 2008.

The meeting was adjourned.

STAFF REPORTS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

STEVE KILLIAN

March was a great month! It generated the most revenue ever in the history of BBSP. Over 28,000 people came through the turnstiles...the word is out!

The Texas Outdoor Family Program is to build new outdoor enthusiasts and to teach outdoor skills. There will be 15 sites behind the dining hall area available to use to teach. It will be staff-conducted and interpretive. The event will occur four to six times a year. We are looking for a Park Specialist II to be established and housed at the park. Really excited about this! Those interested in volunteering for the teaching of camping skills should talk to Steve.



The Brazos River is an asset resource with 3.2 miles of frontage along the park. There are plans to have canoeing and kayaking along the river. The Houston Wilderness Society is driving this. There will be an event on May 15 at the park. Fort Bend County political officials will kick off the access to the Brazos River. Phase 1 – a gravel road from Sawmill House parking lot to a sandbar, 1.5 miles. Phase II – upgrade to a modern boat ramp; from the master plan of the Brazos River of 1978. In short order, we will have an access point to the river for canoes and kayaks. BBSP will have one takeout/putin point. No boating will be allowed in the shallow lakes, so no one will be on Big Creek, just on the Brazos River. The sandbar is on park property...there are rocks on the surface at BBSP!

We are upgrading all shelter loops with water upgrades. Due to funds if we wait to FY 2010 September, we will have all sites upgraded: electrical to loops and shelters. Some sites will have full hookups. Approximately 73 sites will have water and electrical services, including 14 shelters. We are pushing for a new campsite loop – we need more campsites, which means new campers. The high ground behind maintenance near the Observatory can be used for campsites.

Trails Grant – David Heinicke applied for a trail grant. The money needs to be expended by August 31, 2008. We will buy crushed limestone to resurface the trail system. TXDOT will donate material located near Kraft's. There are funds to purchase fuel (dump truck/front-end loader), and materials.

Resource Management - We continue to spray the lakes. We will focus on the prairies between spraying the lakes (every 2-4 weeks) until the growing season in October. We need one volunteer a day next week to assist while spraying aquatic herbicides in the lakes.

INTERPRETIVE STAFF REPORTS

SHARON HANZIK



I expect May and June to be booked with more school groups – I will need help. Yes, there are hooded mergansers!

The *Ask The Ranger* program takes more than one person to do, especially when the park is very busy. You can take a bird or wildflower person with you...anybody is welcome to help!

There are many VITs here tonight to introduce: James Watson, Brian Watson, Rachelle Watson, Cindy Peterson, Jean Northington, Robert Aaron and Ethan Aaron (Jr. VIT).

DAVID HEINICKE

We are busy with school groups. I'm involved with trail head maps and the new classroom project. The "Alligators in the Wild" is a neat way to meet the public. Take one or two alligators or snakes and give information to the people about them. I'm encouraging people to do this; even use a telescope. Question: Is it legal to ride in the back end of a pickup truck? Response: You must be at least 18 years old.



June 7 is National Trails Day. There will be bike hiking, a bird hike and an alligator hike but we could use more ideas. The Geocache Association is still in the process of putting plans in place. There are 16 geocaching sites in the park. In response to a question about the time for the Creekfield Hike, David said we can do an additional one at 11 a.m. if needed or at any other time; just let us know. We can even do hikes elsewhere. Steve Killian commented that the more activities we have, the more visitors will stay.

NATURE CENTER REPORT

APRIL 2008

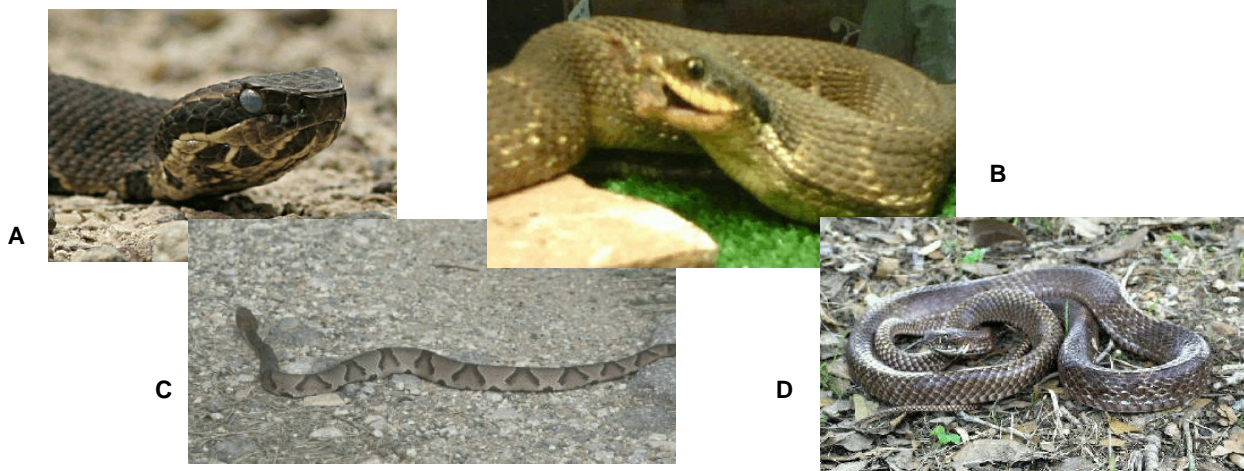
by Anna Dell Williamson

Here is a breakdown of the various activities and attendance recorded for the Nature Center, hikes, and programs for April 1 - 26, 2008. Numbers come from the calendar in the Nature Center and may not reflect all activities. Be sure to report Nature Center visitation on the calendar, and attendance for all programs and hikes on the form behind the front desk.

	PROGRAMS	TOTALS
NATURE CENTER TOTAL: APR. 2008, 6387 APR. 2007, 7399	SATURDAYS (4)	2613 - High, 855, 4/12 average: 653
	SUNDAYS (4)	1952 - High, 589, 4/6 average: 488
	WEEKDAYS (22)	1822- High, 306, 4/11 average: 83
	CREEKFIELD HIKES (10 days)	169 - High, 74, 4/12
	ASK THE RANGER (2 days)	131
	ALLIGATOR PROGRAMS (6)	316
	OUTREACH (Mar 29 and April 5)	1344
	POND LIFE (2)	50
	CHILDREN'S STORY TIME (6)	79
	OTHER PROGRAMS (7) includes various videos (3), photo walk, bird, snake, special hikes (2) and junior angler program	140

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE SNAKES?

Test your herpetological knowledge! Answers are on Page 15.



APRIL MAINTENANCE REPORT

submitted by Ron Morrison and Noel Duncan

Wood Yard:

Built two new wood racks in the wood yard
Rebuilt & raised wood racks #5 and #6 off the ground to stop rotting
Split 1 cord of Willie wood. Placed it in the 24-foot rack along front fence
Unloaded two cords of Jeff's wood
Handled 4.5 cords wood

Mowing and Landscaping:

Cut the grass on Red Buckeye trail, and around the pecan trees on White oak Trail

Trail Trimming and Trail Maintenance:

Trimmed Hoots Hollow Trail and the Creekfield Forest Trail
Cleaned all bridges, piers and walkways (Teresa)
Cleaned around two oak trees on Creekfield Forest trail making a nice viewpoint
Filled potholes at all Elm Lake piers
Installed a culvert on Pilate Slough Trail by Elm Lake bridge
Added trail topping to all footbridges on Pilant Slough trail
Replaced a rail section knocked out of the spillway foot bridge
Trail maintenance on the Prairie Trail

Equipment Maintenance:

Serviced the wood chipper for 5 hour maintenance and for 10 hour maintenance
Built a backstop with plywood wings to keep the wood chips in the Kubota
Maintenance work on the Kubota, chain saw chains and chipper

General Maintenance:

Cleared brush from entrance to maintenance yard to make cross traffic visible
Cut trees under Big Creek Bridge so the bats won't fly into them
Collected wood from Equestrian Campsite area and from Campsite 122
Installed a culvert on Pilate Slough Trail by Elm Lake bridge
Cut a blown down limb on Riverview trail
Cut a blown down tree on Red Buckeye trail, on the 200 camping loop and on Bluestem trail
Cut a tree at Steve's house
Cleared 200 loop dumpster and Red Buckeye trail of blow downs
Installed water stations

Pest Control:

Treated Chinese Tallow trees across from the dump station and on Pilate Slough trail
Treated the park for fire ants

OUTREACH REPORT

by Judy Strauss

The Children's Day Festival at the Richmond Museum on March 29 was, again, a very successful event. We "clicked in" 824 visitors at the BBSPVO booth, but I would feel very confident in saying that our numbers were much higher! It is sometimes a challenge holding a critter in one hand and "clicking" with the other, all while trying to hand out info and stickers and talking with the visitors. But I am happy to say that with all the practice, our skills are improving!

A BIG THANK YOU to Patricia Marshall, Jane Minard, Glen Kilgore, and Jerry & Diane Carpenter for all their help! Glen even managed to take a tour of Richmond/Rosenberg before starting his shift. Be sure to ask him about all the places he saw. Way to go, Glen!

Thank you, Jane for staying longer to cover the void we had, and to Diane and Jerry for starting earlier than they had planned. Teamwork is what it is all about, and teamwork is what we had! Thanks, again, to all of you!

And we all want to thank Sharon for the "I TOUCHED AN ALLIGATOR" and the "I TOUCHED A SNAKE" stickers that she managed, in her ever-so-hectic daily activities, to make and get ready for us to take with us. They were such a big hit! Thank You, Sharon!

VOLUNTEER NEWS AND NOTES

PROPOSED CHANGES TO DEFINITIONS OF REQUIRED HOURS

The following changes are being proposed to Appendix B of the Standard Operating Procedures for BBSPVO. To see a copy of the current SOP, check the Members section of the web site. Changes are noted in bold type. Discussion and voting will take place at the May 10 meeting.

APPENDIX B DEFINITIONS OF REQUIRED HOURS

General: All members are requested to sign up on the computer system. Those persons without a computer should call a friend or the Volunteer Coordinator for sign up. Active members may sign up in person for any of the current day's open shifts at the Nature Center desk and must enter their name in the Nature Center computer at that time. All members and **VITs** signed up for a given day who cannot fulfill their duties must call the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible. Emeritus members shall be considered Active Members for the purposes of this Exhibit. **VIT service requirements and supervision requirements shall be documented in the current version of the Training Plan.**

Nature Center Information Desk:

Two required hours shall be available to only the first **three** active members signing up for any two hour shift. A **two or three** person crew shall consist of a volunteer behind the desk to count visitors and give general information, and **one or two** interpretive volunteers working the Nature Center and assisting the Gift Shop. Should only one person be on duty, the information desk slot has priority. If there are **three** volunteers signed up, additional volunteers will report their time as "Interpretation" under Membership hours, not as Nature Center hours.

In the sections regarding Gift Shop, Water Stations/Trail Patrol, Creekfield Hike/Trail Patrol, and Firewood Projects, the only change is the omission of the statement **VIT working the (area indicated) must be supervised by a signed up active member**. The provision for VIT's is now covered by the added statement under "**General**".

Rationale: There are two parts to the proposed change.

The first part is to increase the number of volunteers who may obtain credit toward quarterly required hours for service in the Nature Center from two to three. The increasing popularity of the Nature Center with the Park visitors makes it necessary to provide additional volunteer staff.

The second part is to separate the VIT service and supervision requirements from Appendix B and recognize that those requirements are documented in the Training Plan (current version). Changes to the Training Plan are coordinated by the BBSPVO Vice-president and the Volunteer Coordinator. There are separate Training Plans for Junior Volunteer trainees and Volunteer trainees.

GROUNDBREAKING FOR PADDLING TRAIL

by David Heinicke

On Thursday, May 15, at 10:00 AM, Brazos Bend will be hosting the announcement ceremony for the "ground breaking" of the Brazos River Paddling trail. This project is a joint venture with TPWD, Wilderness Houston, Brazoria and Fort Bend Counties and several towns along the way. This trail will eventually stretch from around Sealy to the Gulf of Mexico.

At the ceremony we plan on having elected officials, VIP's, possible corporate sponsors, and media. Part of the ceremony will be at the NC and part of the ceremony will be at the equestrian area, including a short canoe ride for VIPs. We could use some help at both locations (set up , take down, visiting with folks, answering questions, giving directions, etc...) including having people paddling and helping folks get in and out of canoes.

There will be refreshments and such at the NC afterwards for the invited guests (park staff and volunteers can feed on leftovers). All equipment (tents, canoes, food & drink, portable rest rooms and more) are going to be furnished by county agencies. All we are looking for from the BBSP volunteers is some help with the event, no funds.

If you're interested in helping please mark May 15 on your calendar. We have another planning meeting next week, and I'll send out more information and details after that. Thanks for all your help! This sounds exciting!!!!!!



NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

BBSP will celebrate National Trails Day on Saturday, June 7. Activities will include the following:

- 8:00 AM Bird Hike, 40-Acre Lake
- 9:30 AM "Alligators in the Mist" Hike, 40-Acre Lake
- 9:30 AM Orienteering class
- 10:00 AM Creekfield Nature Hike
- 11:30 AM Children's Story time, Nature Center and Hike
- 1:00 PM Bike Hike, 40-Acre Lake (meet at Nature Center)
- 1:30 PM Butterfly and Dragonfly Hike, Hale Lake
- 2:00 PM Snake Program, Nature Center
- 3:00 PM Alligator Hike, Elm Lake
- 4:00 PM Hoot's Hollow Hike, 40-Acre Lake
- 5:00 PM Photography Hike, Nature Center
- 8:30 PM Night Hike, 40-Acre



Photo by Jerry Zona

If you are interested in helping with this activity, contact David Heinicke.

EMERITUS MEMBERS

by Judy Strauss

Our Park would not be what it is today if not for those members of our "elite" Emeritus group. Our Volunteer Organization would not be what it is today if not for the members of our "elite" Emeritus group. These Volunteers have always been and always will be of great importance to our Park and to our Volunteer Organization. These are our Volunteers who have put in many hours of dedication, love, leadership and fellowship, but for reasons beyond their control, are no longer able to do the "physical" activities that they have done for many years. But they do not choose to quit. They choose to continue being a part of our organization; to help when and where they are able; to offer their guidance, support, opinions, and concerns for our future growth and development. We are proud to have them in our Organization!

So when our Emeritus Volunteers come to the Park, be sure to thank them for their help, not say to them, "come back and visit us anytime". Be sure that they know that they are important to us, and that we appreciate them. And when they speak out or ask questions at a meeting or discussion, have patience! Don't assume that they are just being argumentative: realize that it may just take a little bit longer, or need a bit more explanation before they can understand the issue at hand. And if they are just being argumentative, that's OK, too! They have earned that right! Show them the same respect that you expect to be shown.

I hope that some day (but not too soon, I pray) my name will be on the Emeritus Plaque. (It sure beats the alternative of either no longer being a member of the BBSPVO, or having my name on the "other" plaque first!). I would be very proud!

THANK YOU to all of our Emeritus Volunteers for all that you have done in the past, for all that you offer us now, and for all that you will do in the future. Without you, BBSP and/or the BBSPVO could not be what it is today.

MEETING NIGHT SUPPERS

by Judy Strauss

Thank you to all that have been bringing the Meeting Night Dinners. We have really had some great meals, haven't we! I really appreciate the response that I have received lately. It is a great time for getting together with our fellow Volunteers, staff and visitors and enjoying fun, food & conversation.

There are a few slots still open in the coming months, so if you are interested and willing to provide the dinner for everyone, please sign up. Two or more people can work together, if you prefer. Just be sure to keep your receipts and to bring them to me, as I will need them in order to repay you for your expenses, and also to determine the cost of the meal per person for that night. We try to keep the meals at a minimal cost to those who eat, usually around \$2-\$3, so please keep that in mind when purchasing the food. Spending between \$35 - \$50 is a good range. The number of Volunteers that will be there can vary, depending on the meeting content, so you might want to check a day or so before to see about how many the "experts" (not me!) think might be there. Attendance usually runs between 15 and 20. You might want to plan on a few more than expected and for some to want seconds. Plates, bowls, plastic ware, napkins and glasses are provided. There are crock pots and a microwave available to use. We provide tea and coffee.

Again, thanks to all who have helped in the past and to all of you that may be willing to help. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Thanks

to everyone for all the help and support
to **Joyce Blankenship** for the March meeting dinner
to **Jean Northington** and **Jerry Zona** for pictures
to **Rick Dashnau** for story and pictures for this issue
to **Dennis Jones** and **Sharon Hanzik** for articles for the NL
to **Judy Strauss, Patricia Marshall, Jane Minard, Glen Kilgore, and Jerry and Diane
Carpenter** for all their help at the Richmond Museum Children's Festival outreach
to **Sharon Hanzik** for stickers for the outreach programs



Photo by Jean Northington

BIRTHDAYS and ANNIVERSARIES



MAY BIRTHDAYS

Rose Aden
Suzie Gann
Virginia Harrison
Dennis Keptra
Dawn Tejero (VIT)

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Judy Huber
Glen Kilgore
Jacob Ramirez
Anna Dell Williamson

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

Rose and Elmer Aden
Linda and David Heinicke
Patricia and Steve Marshall

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

Joe and Sue Carmichael (1953)
Nelda and Martin Gay
Joyce (VIT) and Darrell Giese
Joan and Warren Jackson



Water Hyacinth
Photo by Jerry Zona



Roseate Spoonbills
Photo by Jerry Zona

CONGRATULATIONS

to our newest full volunteers: Nancy and Jenn Bertmeyer, Jean Northington and Bryan, Rachelle and James Watson have all finished their requirements for membership. Welcome these fine volunteers into the organization.

ALLIGATOR ACTIONS

by Rick Dashnau

Close to 9:00 am, I was at the culvert by the water station. There was an alligator on the bank a bit further down (towards New Horseshoe lake), another in the water right behind it, and a large one swimming. I'd stopped to watch the one that was swimming. There was a large alligator in Pilant Lake, near the bird box.

I talked to a visitor about the alligator, when I suddenly noticed another large alligator in Pilant Lake (I'd had a tree between it and me) with its head raised. It did a headslap. The other alligator (by the bird box) moved over and did the "snout bumping" with the larger alligator. The large alligator didn't respond much, and the smaller (it was still at least 7 feet long) alligator swam past towards the Horseshoe Lakes. The large alligator then moved towards the bank, and I moved my bicycle out of its path. I assumed the alligator would cross from Pilant to Elm Lake. The alligator did cross, and picture "Bike Crossing" (above)



shows it passing my bike. It entered the water, and moved towards pier 7 in Elm Lake. There, an alligator had moved out of Elm Lake onto the bank next to the trail. The large alligator took up station about 15 feet from the bank, watching the alligator on the bank.



Jaci came by on one of the Kubotas to change out the water. The alligator moved off the bank into the water. About 10 minutes later, the large alligator moved towards the smaller one, and started bellowing. The smaller one answered, and then they both bellowed repeatedly. The second image, "Morning Courting" (left) shows them bellowing. There was a bit more

movement after this, when two alligators bellowed some distance further down Elm Lake, towards the Horseshoe lakes. The big one in front of me immediately rushed off towards the bellowing.

Later, I made my way back to 40 Acre Lake, where the gator mother and the babies were. I spent a lot of time there. This last image (right), "Check Mother", shows one of the babies as it poked around the mother alligator's eye. A number of the babies seemed to be trying to grab something off the skin of the mother, but I couldn't tell what it was. This baby was trying to pull something on or near the mother's eye.



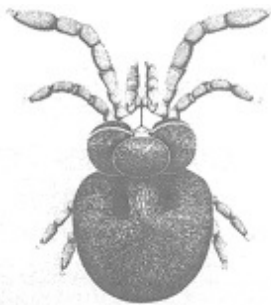
I GOT CHIGGERS!

by Dennis Jones

Chiggers. That's a word most of us who venture outdoors in this part of the world become intimately familiar with sooner or later. Webster defines the chigger as a six-legged mite larva (family *Trombiculidae*) that sucks the blood of vertebrates and causes intense irritation. Add this definition to the legends about these invisible creatures and your own personal experiences, and you have one bonafide denizen of the great outdoors.

Chiggers are a kind of mite of which there are almost 2000 species around the world. However, fewer than 50 or so species attack humans. According to C. L. Hogue in a species account of the insect life in Costa Rica, we find that, "those few species that normally parasitize reptiles seem to cause an inordinate amount of allergic reaction when they accidentally attach to human skin. It appears to be the incompatibility between the chigger's salivary enzymes and human tissue chemistry that brings on the violent response. Rodent chiggers, or those normally on other mammals, generally cause little or no reaction when they accidentally bite humans." Mr. Hogue goes on to say that three lizard chigger species are the most conspicuous for their attacks on humans, in that area.

It is only in the larval stage that this tiny (less than 1 mm) mite actually bites. It usually attaches to its particular kind of vertebrate long enough to "fatten up" before dropping off to continue its life as a free-living mite, feeding mainly on the eggs of soil-dwelling insects.



Adult chigger. Drawing courtesy Texas A & M University.

Although chigger larva have six legs, they are not insects. Mites are arachnids, and more closely related to spiders and ticks. They can come in a variety of colors, ranging from red to orange to yellow to white. In their adult form they will have eight legs.

Webster was really only half right about sucking blood and causing irritation. The chigger is actually after lymph and semi-digested tissue. With sharp mouth parts the skin is punctured and saliva injected; he then sucks up the "soup" he's created and injects more saliva to repeat the process. Your tissue reacts with the mite's saliva to produce a tube-like core called a stylostome. It is this core that you see if you examine a chigger bite. The stylostome is what causes the itching after the chigger has dropped off.

(I suspect that the saliva, being composed of various enzymes, contains one that serves to deaden the area while the actual feeding occurs).

As far as protection is concerned, a few simple precautions will help immensely:

- Avoid areas of high grass or very heavy, dense vegetation by staying on the trails.
- Mites like the constricted areas where it is warm. Boot tops, belt lines, etc., should be given a little extra attention in the shower after a day in the field.
- New bites can be sterilized with alcohol, and itching is relieved to some extent with the over-the-counter skin anesthetics. Some people have had success with a mixture of one part chlorine bleach with four parts water.
- "Try" not to scratch the lesions to prevent infection.

There is no indication that chiggers in the New World are carriers of any infectious diseases. Wear clothing tightly tucked in at the waist and boots. Standard mosquito repellents are not going to be effective for chiggers. However, sulfur dusted into boots, on sock tops, and on pants legs does seem to help. That is, assuming you do it before you "get chiggers".

FRESHWATER JELLYFISH?

By Sharon Hanzik

Recently the rangers mentioned to me that a freshwater jellyfish has been discovered in our lakes. Freshwater jellyfish? Never heard of 'em! But then I do recall finding some unidentified squishy substance once while collecting pond life. I didn't even guess that it would be a jellyfish! Well, what perfect timing with *TPWD Magazine*, as they have published an article on these "jellyfish".

According to the article by Dyanne Fry Cortez, the species is "not a true jellyfish, but a member of a related family. Biologists call it *Craspedacusta sowerbii*, and it is found in lakes and ponds all over the world." Cortez also writes that Terry Peard, who studies *C. sowerbii* at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, lists some 50 Texas sightings on his web site. They have appeared in Lakes Amistad, Cisco, Grapevine, Joe Pool, Limestone, Nacadoches, Medina and Travis, as well as several private lakes and ponds.

The free-floating medusa is the most visible stage of the jellyfish's complex life-cycle. In most seasons, *C. sowerbii* lives in colonies of tiny, stalked polyps attached to underwater surfaces. A polyp reproduces by budding. It may produce a branch that remains connected or a frustule larva that breaks off and crawls away. Every so often, the polyps will bud off a crop of medusa, which develop sex organs and go looking for mates.

Both the medusa and polyp forms of *C. sowerbii* feed on zooplankton. Like its saltwater relatives, the freshwater jellyfish uses stinging cells to capture its food. The stingers aren't tough enough to have much effect on a human, although some people have reported a tingle when one touches a sensitive spot.

Blooms have been described as appearing similar to bubbles in a boiling pot. Peard's research suggests that most United States populations are all male or all female. All the jellies in a given water body may be descended from a few dormant polyps (podocysts) that arrived on a bird's foot or in a hatchery tank with stocked fish. Blooms may last only a few weeks, and they don't happen on a predictable schedule. If you want to get lucky, gaze into water on a still day in late summer when the sun is high in the sky. The hotter the water, the more active they are.

Adult medusae are quarter-sized; immature medusae are much smaller. They are distinguishable from their counterparts by the presence of the velum, a thin, shelf-like structure on the ventral surface.

For more information, visit www.jellyfish.iup.edu

COMMENT CARDS

There were 15 comment cards filled out during the first quarter of 2008, eight of them from first-time visitors. All said they would visit again. Four are annual pass holders, two visited as individuals, ten with family and three as part of a group. Seven visited for the day and four were camping. One visitor from Poland said, "It's a great opportunity to see wilderness I can't see in my home country!" Responses to "what keeps you coming back?", included "it's a beautiful park and the people are very kind", "a nice retreat", and "the clean, clear lakes". General comments included "seeing the alligators reminds me that humans aren't all (or even mostly) monsters who destroy" and "absolutely beautiful - the volunteers and staff well deserve extra kudos on maintaining such a spectacular park!" One visitor suggested we "have a table in the Nature Center for all observing containers (the bug boxes)."

SOURCE FOR VOLUNTEER UNIFORMS

by Jean Northington

I have struggled to find appropriate uniforms to wear at the park. I tried sporting goods stores and uniform shops, but nothing worked for me. I recently discovered Lands' End Business Outfitters, <http://ocs.landsend.com/>, and I'm so glad I did. They have a great selection of women's khaki cotton and no-iron shirts, pants and shorts in regular, petit and plus sizes. I will warn you that prices are on the steep side, but the items I ordered appear to be well-made.

PHOTO NEWS

You are invited to the exhibition, "Cyprus Ridge High School: Man and Nature" at the Fill Your Cup Coffee Shop Gallery, 1410 E. Highway 90A, Richmond, April 18 - June 20, 2009.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2008

May 9	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Restroom, 8:00 AM
May 10	Junior Angler Workshop, 9:00 - 11:00 AM, Nature Center
	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
May 11	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Restroom, 8:00 AM
June 6	Bird Hike, 40-Acre Restroom, 8:00 AM
June 14	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
July 4	Independence Day Bicycle Parade
July 12	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
August 9	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
September 13	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
October 11	Volunteer Annual Picnic, 5:30 PM
October 25	Texian Market Days
November 8	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
November 27	Thanksgiving (open Friday after, 9-5)
December 6	Simple Christmas, 3:00 - 7:00 PM
December 13	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM

2009

January 10	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
January 19	Martin Luther King Day Holiday
February 14	Regular meeting, 5:30 PM
February 16	President's Day Holiday



Snake Identification (from Page 5): **A:** Cottonmouth, photo by Jean Northington; **B:** Hognose, photo by Sharon Hanzik; **C:** Copperhead, photo by Jerry Zona; **D:** Coachwhip, photo by Rick Dashnau.

Ed. Note: Volunteers with special interests: How about sending me some pictures of your favorite flora or fauna - types of birds, turtles, insects, butterflies, spiders, flowers, grasses, etc? Be sure to identify them, because I'm relying on the you for the correct answer. - **adw**

Brazos Bend State Park
 Texas Parks and Wildlife
 21901 FM 762
 Needville TX 77461

→ **NEXT MEETING DAY AND TIME** ←
SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2008, 5:30 PM



FIRST CLASS MAIL



REGULAR VOLUNTEER EVENTS

Creekfield Hikes	Every Saturday and Sunday at 10:00 AM, led by volunteers
Photo Hikes	First Saturday of each month
Volunteer meeting	Second Saturday of each month at 5:30 PM
Bird Hikes	See schedule in calendar

BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

President:	James Blankenship
Vice-President:	Anna Dell Williamson
Secretary:	Nicole Olson
Treasurer:	Diane Carpenter

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The **Brazos Bend Bunch Bugle** is the newsletter of the Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization, A.K.A. The Brazos Bend Bunch. It is distributed monthly to volunteers through the BBSPVO web site. For further information on this newsletter or the volunteer program, contact David Heinicke or Sharon Hanzik at Brazos Bend State Park, phone 979-553-5101.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the opinions of the author of the article and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Organization nor of BBSP administration. The deadline for Newsletter contributions is the Saturday following the monthly meeting, if mailed to Anna Dell Williamson, or at the meeting if delivered to the park. (E-mail address: awilliamson4@comcast.net). Notify Anna Dell (281-485-2843) well in advance of any events you want announced in the newsletter.