



Delta Discovery

Connecting Classrooms to Nature at the Nueces Delta Preserve

Red Harvester Ant



Fast Facts:

Scientific name:

Pogonomyrmex barbatus

Common names: Harvester ant, red ants,

Habitat: Open areas (formed by the ants themselves) in range lands or yards

Fun fact: Harvester ants are the preferred food the Texas horned lizard (horny toad)

Spotlight on a Species

Fact sheets discussing species found on the Nueces Delta Preserve

There are 10 species of harvester ant found in the state of Texas. The red harvester ant is the most obvious of the species, found throughout the state and in parts of Arizona. Colonies are easy to spot in open fields; the ants usually clear an area 3-6 feet in diameter. Studies of related species have found the nest to be seven feet deep and over 30 feet of tunnels!

Many students who visit the Nueces Delta Preserve automatically assume any ant is a fire ant. Fire ants are an invasive species in Texas, and red harvester ants are a very different NATIVE ant. This means red harvester ants are supposed to be here and are a part of a functioning ecosystem. In an ideal habitat the harvester ant makes up 90% of the diet of Texas horned lizard. Differences between these ants and fire ants can be seen with careful observation. Other differences are not easily observed but cause the ants to behave differently. Harvester ants can deliver a painful bite or sting, but are less aggressive than fire ants. This means a person is not likely to be "swarmed" by these ants.

Harvester Ants

Red in color, large ant
Flat, underground nest
Clears an area
Eats seeds & dead insects
Mildly territorial

Fire Ants

Black in color, medium sized ant
Raised mound for nest
Mound in dense grass
Eats live prey & sensitive to movement
Highly territorial

Sources for Further Reading:

<http://www.antweb.org/antblog/ask-an-ant-expert/ant-farms/>

<http://insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide/cimg361.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/24/science/24ants.html>

http://www.pogolumina.net/NorthAmericanPogosbySpecies/Pogonomyrmex-barbatus-red/12867513_9vnmJd#813394731_A9dye

http://discovermagazine.com/2003/nov/the-secret-life-of-ants/article_view?b_start:int=0&-C=