Steve Radack, Commissioner
Harris County Precinct 3

John Paul Landing
Environmental Education Center

April 2020

Commissioner Steve Radack welcomes you to his recently opened Environmental Education Center at John Paul Landing Park.

The John Paul Landing Environmental Education Center. Photo by Fred Collins.

The John Paul Landing Environmental Education Center (JPLEEC) is located in the northern portion of Precinct Three’s John Paul Landing Park. The Education Center’s address is 9950 Katy Hockley Road. The park is 865 acres and its most prominent feature is a planned 450-acre lake. The lake serves as a major flood detention facility for the area. When complete it will hold 2200 acre-feet of water. It is designed to accommodate wildlife, both terrestrial and aquatic. The lake was dug over a number of years, and excavation will continue into the future. Currently, the lake is about 150 acres. When completed at 450 acres, it will be the 3rd largest body of water in Harris County.

In accordance with current COVID-19 precaution measures, all scheduled classes and activities at John Paul Landing have been suspended. At this time, playgrounds at the park are closed, but the environmental education center, trails, pavilions, and restrooms are available for use. However, guidelines must be followed for social distancing and limits on the number of people inside buildings and pavilions.

Please call 713-274-3131 or visit www.pct3.com for information and updates to the park calendar.

Volunteer activities
Once park activities resume, the new center will have volunteer opportunities including landscape maintenance, wildlife feeding, Butterfly and Hummingbird gardening, and Eagle Scout projects for starters. We will likely designate Wednesday mornings as regular volunteer days, but would be interested in working with individuals on any day we are open. For more information, or to join our volunteers, email us at johnpaullanding@pct3.hctx.net.
A Closer Look at Nature

The March A Closer Look at Nature class was all about eggs. Eggs come in a fascinating variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. From birds to insects and reptiles to monotremes, the class learned about the different types of animals that lay eggs. After the lesson in the auditorium, the kids went outside for an egg hunt! They worked together to match pictures of eggs to the animal that laid them. Older siblings helped their younger siblings race to find eggs and match them to the correct animal. The group enthusiastically found every single egg, a great relief for the staff members that would have had to search for any that were missed. After class, many families walked around the lake or headed over to the park’s playgrounds to enjoy the sunshine.

Above, from left to right: house sparrow nest with eggs, ostrich egg, emu egg, and snake eggs. Photo by Sierra Ridley.

The A Closer Look at Nature program is a general interest nature program targeted to elementary school-aged children. Commissioner Radack has run this successful and popular program at Kleb Woods Nature Center for years and will expand the program to JPLEEC. Each class typically has about a 30-minute talk followed by a related hands-on activity. A Closer look at Nature classes will usually be twice a month on Wednesdays from 2 to 3 p.m. and repeated the following Saturday from 10 to 11 a.m. Please see the website calendar for specific dates and topics.

Plant Walks

We are excited to offer plant walks at John Paul Landing led by Charles Peterson and Paul Roling. These men are excellent Botanists with nearly 100 years of experience between them. The walks will be about two hours in length and will look at plants in different areas of the park. Some walks will focus on trees and shrubs planted around the Nature Center, while others will focus on wetland plants at the shore of the lake. Regardless of your knowledge level, you will learn something new on each walk. In all likelihood, there are hundreds of species of plants already in the park, and as construction lessens, more species will establish. The next plant walk is scheduled for Friday, May 29 from 10 to 11 a.m.

Bird Walks

The weekly bird walks are scheduled for Thursdays from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. They are suitable for all ages and levels of experience. We hope you will join us to discover the variety of birds that can be seen around the park. On the March walks before the Covid-19 cancellation of activities, we had a good variety of birds. The March 5 walk produced 36 species including Least Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Purple Martin, Cave Swallow, and four LeConte’s Sparrow. The walk on March 12 found a total of 31 species, including five Ducks and five raptors. Spring will see a good increase in species for the weekly walks.
Above, a pair of Mottled Ducks seen on the March 12 bird walk. Photo by Sarah Kuzio

At left, a young Bald Eagle soars over the lake. At right, three White-faced Ibis silhouetted against the blue sky. Photos by Sarah Kuzio.

**Upcoming calendars** can be found on the [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) website under Activity Calendars, or a link may be found on the John Paul Landing Environmental Education Center park page.