Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff welcome you to walk in our park and enjoy the spring flowers, singing birds and scampering squirrels. Due to the COVID-19 precautions, we have suspended all of our scheduled classes including volunteer workdays until the threat becomes manageable. The Nature Center remains open with some areas now restricted and limits on the number of people in the building at one time. Please call 281-357-5324 or visit www.pct3.com for information and updates to the park calendar.

We find ourselves in the early 21st Century trying to make sense of the COVID-19 pandemic that has besieged the world. Our lives are disrupted beyond anything previously experienced. Diseases also disrupted lives dramatically in the 19th and early 20th Centuries in ways few living people have experienced. Smallpox, measles, cholera, yellow fever and the influenza of 1917 and 1918 caused major changes in world demographics and human behavior.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the Kleb Family and relatives were trying to make sense of the Yellow Fever epidemic that hit Texas in 1903. In a 1903 letter from Minnie Willmann from Monthalia, Texas, to her “dear friend” Ed Kleb, we read that she wasn’t able to visit him in Rose Hill over Christmas because of Yellow Fever. For the trains that were still running, strangers could not get off in Gonzales.

In San Antonio, passenger trains were canceled. Minnie was not sure what to do because she wanted to marry Eddie in San Antonio.
In 1918, letters from Ed and Minnie Kleb’s relatives spoke about the Spanish Influenza. Minnie’s brother, Charles Willmann, wrote that he was sick with it and did not want to get it ever again.

My dear Sister & Bro-in-law:

I received your kind and welcome letters sometime ago, and was glad to hear from you all,

I am glad to say that we are all fairly well again. I was down with the Spanish Influenza for about 2 weeks, but am about up and around again. I hope I will never have it again, for I had it as bad as I want it, it was bad enough.

Well I sure would have wrote to you all much sooner than this, but you know if one gets sick he will have to keep quite and in bed.

.........
Ed’s niece, Lillian Metzler, wrote that she had the Spanish Influenza. Schools were canceled for three weeks, although they were now back in session. She commented about the number of people who died because of the Spanish influenza, many of them having been soldiers.

Dear Uncle and Aunt:-

I thought I would write you all a letter to see if you are all alive yet. How are you? I hope you all didn’t have the Spanish Influenza. I was the only one in the house who had it. I was in bed five days. We are now well except that mama often has pains in her head. I don’t know what makes it.

... School had been closed 3 weeks on account of the influenza but it reopened 3 weeks ago. The “flu” is about gone now. A good many people died of it, especially soldiers.

The above newspaper article in the El Paso Herald from 1918 also talked about the soldiers on the battlefields of Europe, showing that the Spanish Influenza was not limited to the home front. The “Great Influenza” is thought to have killed more
than 50 million people worldwide. Remember, the population was less than one-half what it is today. Yet the Klebs survived and we all enjoy the park because they persevered through the threats, the turbulent times, and the world changing events.

Volunteer Activities
Our volunteer workdays have been suspended, but before that took effect the Yaupon’s Worst Nightmare Crew completed their season. Their final project was clearing beneath oaks along Live Oak Trail. This project made the trail more open and pleasant while at the same time reducing competition for the large trees along the trail. They should be healthier and more drought resistant for years to come because of the crew’s effort. We applaud their work this season. Several new volunteers strengthened the crew this year, and we hope they will return this December when the crew begins work again.

The Tuesday Volunteers have had to suspend their regular hours, but some have come in on an individual basis during the week to help with maintenance that they normally would do on Tuesdays. They are most dedicated to helping the park looks its best. The Vegetable Gardeners are not meeting as a group but individuals have managed to get the garden planted for the season. Therefore, in spite of COVID-19, the Kleb Garden will again grace the historic farm. The Butterfly and Hummingbird Gardeners continue to drop in from time to time to work in the beds or clean the water feature.

School Field Trip
We hosted Keith Elementary for a field day in early March. One hundred and ninety-two students plus teachers and parent chaperones came to learn about Kleb Woods, its nature, history, and blacksmithing, as well as bird migration and Sam Houston. The kids were excited, well mannered, and seemed to enjoy the day of learning.

A Closer Look at History
The A Closer Look at History Program was cancelled in March and will not be held until further notice. Please check the calendar or call for activity updates.

A Closer Look at Nature
The A Closer Look at Nature Program in March was all about tracking animals. Visitors gathered next to the garden to make plaster casts of tracks in the dirt. The kids enjoyed finding and identifying animal prints while making a mold to bring home with them. As we left the plaster to dry, we moved our lesson into the auditorium to learn about different signs of animal activity around us. The kids guessed what animals matched the tracks left behind and were baffled by a picture of armadillo tracks. Animals are active at all different times, and if we are able to read the signs they leave behind we can learn with whom we share our spaces. We also gave handouts for families to help identify common mammal tracks found in Harris County. Due to COVID-19, the next A Closer Look at Nature Class will not be held until further notice. Please check the calendar or call for activity updates.
At Left, dog tracks with a plaster cast. At Right, a plaster cast of a hog track next to the original hoofprint. Photo by Sierra Ridley.

Above, attendees of the animal tracking program were able to take home a Backyard Detective Guide. Photo by Sierra Ridley.
History Discussion Group
In the March 12 meeting, Fred Collins compared two books on the Texas Revolution. The first book, *History of the Revolution in Texas, Particularly of the War of 1835 & '36* by Chester Newell, was published in 1838 and written only a year after the Revolution’s pivotal battle at San Jacinto had won Independence. The second book, Stephen Harrigan’s 2019 Texas history book *Big, Wonderful Thing*, covers Texas’ entire history in 925 pages and details the Revolution in several chapters as well. The discussion covered the entire period of the Anglo-American Colonies and the grievances with Mexico, a country that also struggled during this same period with independence from Spain and a turbulent central government. Once Mexico abandoned the Constitution of 1824, which Stephen F. Austin actually helped write and was modeled after the US Constitution, it was only a matter of time before the Anglo-American colonists would demand independence. The discussion followed the events of the uprising year by year. Both books follow that design but even with 925 pages, the new book missed much detail. However, Harrigan does a wonderful job of describing each character in ways seldom found in history books. He gleaned these descriptions from a wide variety of written histories and letters from participants in the events. This novel-like approach makes the book highly readable.

Our next history discussion group will not be until May, and we will discuss the book by John M. Barry entitled *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*. It seems timely to look at the most deadly pandemic in modern history as a backdrop to what we are currently experiencing.

Plant Walks
The end of February plant walk focused on early blooming flowers that mostly consisted of introduced species. The walk started at the Nature Center with a pop quiz about branch characteristics and ended at Draper Road where the variety of plants in full bloom was surprising. The group identified 30 species that were then discussed in more detail as they were seen along the trails. Due to COVID-19, plant walks are suspended until further notice. Please consult the calendar or call for plant walk updates.

Birding Activities
The weekly bird walks in March were cut short by the COVID-19 suspensions. However, many birders have frequented the park, getting exercise and reducing their cabin fever with some social distance birding. Winter birds have mostly departed and spring migrants are arriving. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and Chimney Swifts have arrived. Visiting birders have reported flyover Bald Eagles and Canada Geese pairs. Our resident Rufous Morph Eastern Screech-Owl has taken up residence in a Wood Duck house near the nature center.
Above, the Rufous Morph Eastern Screech-Owl in the duck nest box above Walter’s Pond near the nature center. Photo by Sarah Kuzio.

**Birding Bus Trip**

The March **Senior Birding Bus Trip** to observe the Golden-cheeked Warblers near Austin was canceled due to COVID-19 precautions. The early April trips scheduled to visit Boykin Springs to see Bachman’s Sparrow and to the coast for spring migrants are canceled, as well. Check with us later in the month regarding future trips.

**Signing Up for Senior Birding Bus Trips (Must be at least 50 years old to go on these trips)**

We will continue to take reservations for bus trips. Registrants will be notified of any changes or cancellations.

You may now sign up for the **May 8 trip** to the coast for spring migrants. To sign up for these trips, **email klebwoods@pct3.hctx.net** or call 281-357-5324.

You may only sign up yourself plus one friend/spouse. No multiple reservations. **You will get a confirmation e-mail a week before the trip if you have a seat.**

**The calendar** for May can be found on the [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) website at Community Calendars or a link may be found on the park page.

**Dog owners**: Pets are **not allowed** in Kleb Woods Nature Preserve. The scent they leave negatively affects wildlife. For your convenience and enjoyment, Precinct Three maintains five popular Dog Parks where your dog can run free. The Dog Parks have their own set of rules. Please visit the Precinct Three website [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) for more information.