Harris County Commissioner Steve Radack hopes you had a happy Easter and are ready for a full spring of activities at
the Precinct Three Kleb Woods Nature Center. April is one of the more eventful months in Texas for wildlife and history. It
is an especially memorable month for Texans.
Of course, it starts with April Fools’ Day. In the spring of 1836, that was when Mexican leader Santa Anna made many
foolish mistakes when he marched into Texas.
First, he wasted men, time and supplies destroying the Alamo and its small army of “Texian” defenders. But most
foolishly, he burned the bodies of the Alamo’s defenders. That disturbed his soldiers. It was considered commendation to
hell of those brave men for whom his Mexican soldiers had gained respect during the fierce battle in San Antonio.
Then, on Palm Sunday, the generalissimo executed 300 “Texians” at Goliad who had surrendered honorably on the
battlefield at Coleto Creek. Again, the Mexican soldiers thought Santa Anna was provoking God’s wrath.
But Santa Anna saved his most foolish action for later in April. He chased after the officers of the Texas government with
only 1,500 soldiers, leaving almost 4,000 of his force at Fort Bend on the Brazos River.
General Sam Houston seized the opportunity and defeated Santa Anna’s army at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. Santa
Anna was captured the following day. Stories like this and the characters who lived them are what make history special.
Here at the Nature Center, we will be starting a new program targeted for school-aged children called “A Closer Look at
History.” The inaugural class will be April 21st and it will cover this history tale.
Please check the web page calendar for times of this and future programs.

**Volunteer activities**

The Yaupon’s Worst Nightmare Crew has completed a productive 2015-16 season. They cleared privet from the farm trail
and along Draper Road. They also removed privet from the west line trail. Then, as a season finale, they opened up the
picnic area on the north tract to jumpstart a reforestation effort planned for summer and winter. The Tuesday volunteer crew continues with park maintenance. They recently prepared the vegetable garden. The woodworkers have completed a display chicken coop for a hen. Her name is Henrietta, and her clutch is scheduled to hatch at the next “A Closer Look at Nature” class. The vegetable gardeners have been thwarted by rain and equipment problems. It does not appear they will manage to plant before mid-April. We had an Eagle Scout candidate complete another park project. This scout created three more flower beds for hummingbird plants. The new beds are on the north side of the Nature Center. The center now has butterfly and hummingbird beds on three sides. The expansion of the beds into a previously undeveloped area should significantly expand the habitat for summer and winter hummingbirds.

History Discussion Group

Due to bad weather, the history discussion group did not meet in March. The next meeting on Thursday, April 14th will be about the early 20th century Texas oil boom and the multiple families of H.L. Hunt. Jim Wilson will review the book of Margaret Hunt Hill, titled *H L and Lyda: Growing Up in the H L Hunt and Lyda Bunker Hunt Family as told by their eldest daughter*.

‘A Closer Look at Nature’ class

The “A Closer Look at Nature” class in March was about wildlife folklore such as the story of Saint Patrick. In addition to that tale, the kids learned about the controversy over which plant species is the real shamrock. The class also discussed the science behind rainbows and why we can never seem to reach the pot of gold at the end of them. The class concluded with the kids watching as Henrietta the Hen sat on seven eggs which should hatch just in time for the next class. Information on future classes can be found at the Nature Center the precinct website. Also, please note the new “A Closer Look at History” classes starting in April.
Backyard Habitat classes

The Backyard Habitat series concluded in March with the final program covering feeding and sheltering wildlife. The class reviewed the benefits of incorporating plants that provide food into their landscape plans and the pros and cons of providing supplemental food, like seeds, to wildlife. The importance of providing food and shelter for insects was also discussed. Many of the participants asked about future classes. We plan on following up the Backyard Habitat series with future programs that will include more specific topics.

German classes

The three German classes, 1-A, 1-B and 2-A, continue. Check the website for dates and times. German 1-A and 1-B are the equivalent of high school German 1, while our German 2-A and 2-B are equivalent of high school German 2. This summer we will again offer introductory classes so you or your kids can determine if it is a course of study for you.

Birding activities

March is a transitory month as winter species leave and summer residents begin to arrive. Early March is still very much winter while the end of March is very much spring. The change in bird life is always fascinating to watch and document. Our weekly bird walks have done a remarkable job at that. We have generated more than 10,000 bird records for the park since 2002. These records give us a good idea of which species we should expect to arrive when. Therefore, each walk has some anticipation of what we might find that adds to our data and stretches the knowledge we have accumulated. You can imagine the joy many of the staff and regular participants felt when on March 23rd they were able to identify two fly-by sandpipers. The group was on the hawk tower watching raptors when the two small, long-winged, brown-backed and brown-rumped sandpipers zipped by them. Baird’s Sandpiper is species number 238 for the park.

The senior birding bus trip in March went to Brazos Bend State Park. Seventeen birders braved the flood waters and made it out to Kleb Woods. The morning rains predicted for the day never showed and it turned out to be a gorgeous Friday. Brazos Bend State Park is only an hour’s drive and that gave the group more birding time off the bus than almost any other trip. Participants could sit at picnic tables and watch birds or leisurely walk around the lakes and along the trails. By the end of the day, some had logged more than 10 miles of walking.

At 40 Acre Lake, a favorite for birders, Swamp Sparrows seemed to outnumber other species amongst the reeds. The best birds along the lake were American Bitterns. Brazos Bend is an excellent place to see these cryptic birds that blend in with the reeds, and our group counted 13. At the spillway, several Snowy Egrets were fishing and showing off their fancy breeding plumages.
The group then went to Elm Lake, where participants enjoyed a picnic lunch while watching Roseate Spoonbills, a nearly fluorescent male Vermilion Flycatcher and breeding-plumaged White Ibis. The trails around Horseshoe Lake were covered with blooming Red Buckeye and filled with the sounds of Northern Parulas. Also, at Elm Lake, a Texas Rat Snake was spotted hiding in the buttress roots of a tree and a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks were observed at their nest.

At the next stop, a mother gator and her 31 babies were treated like celebrities. They are next to the boardwalk at the start of the Creekfield Lake Trail. The babies are believed to have hatched last June. The "nursey" is blocked by an orange mesh barrier, so you can’t miss them … or get too close.
The final stop in the park was Hale Lake. Those who elected to sit at picnic tables near the bus were entertained by a Hermit Thrush and several Dark-eyed Juncos visiting a puddle. Others who walked around the lake were treated to nice views of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a lingering winter resident.

Before the bus returned to Kleb Woods, there was enough time for an ice cream stop. This is a rare treat for birders but a well-deserved one after all of that walking. The group ended the day with exactly 80 species tallied.

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

There is a wait list for the April 15th trip to Austin to look for Golden-cheeked Warblers and the April 29th trip to the coast. You may now sign up for the May 6th trip to the coast in search of spring migrants by emailing klebwoods@pct3.com or calling (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 calendars for April and May can be found on the website. There is a link from the park web page or you can look under the Community Center events calendar. The website is [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com)

**Dog owners:** Pets are no longer allowed in Kleb Woods. For your convenience and enjoyment, Precinct Three maintains five popular dog parks where your dog can run free. They are the Millie Bush Dog Park, 16756 Westheimer Parkway, in George Bush Park; the Danny Jackson Family Dog Park, 4828 ½ Loop Central Dr., near Loop 610 and Westpark; a dog park in Congressman Bill Archer Park, 3201 Highway 6 North; the Deputy Darren Goforth Dog Park, 9402 Barker Cypress Road and Beverly Kaufman Dog Park located in Katy at Paul D. Rushing Park, 9114 Katy Hockley Road. 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.