The heart and soul of Harris County Precinct Three Commissioner Steve Radack’s Kleb Woods Nature Preserve is clearly the energetic army of volunteers who perform a myriad of labors to help make us a popular destination for birders, animal and nature lovers, history buffs, plant enthusiasts, families, parents excited to school their kids on the wonders of “the woods” or those just looking for a peaceful place to escape.

The park was blessed with a service day from a local church congregation in April that featured 72 volunteers who completed several projects, including cleaning the auditorium floor, putting up a new photo display, planting nine trees and setting about two tons of stone to border low spots on the wetlands trail. The Tuesday volunteer crew continues with park maintenance and the woodworkers continue work on several projects. The gardeners’ efforts to date were wiped out by the recent torrential rains. We are in the process of raising the garden to abate its perennial boggy condition. And with this kind of help, we have no doubt about getting the job done.

History Discussion Group

April 14th meeting participants learned some fascinating information about the early 20th century Texas oil boom and the multiple families of H.L. Hunt. Our staff historian, Jim Wilson, reviewed 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*. What a different world it was less than 100 years ago. Our May meeting will be held Thursday, May 12th, at which time we’ll discover why Cinco de Mayo is celebrated at all and why it has turned into a bigger holiday in the United States than in Mexico.

A Closer Look at Nature class

The “A Closer Look at Nature” class in April was about how fast baby birds grow. The class concluded with the kids visiting Henrietta the Hen, who was set on seven eggs in March and now has four chicks. The kids sat in the young...
naturalist room while the baby chicks were passed among them to hold. The experience was new for many and will surely be remembered for years. Information on future classes can be found at the Nature Center or you can check the Precinct Three website.

A Closer Look at History
The inaugural “A Closer Look at History” class was enjoyed by a few families that braved horrible weather to learn about San Jacinto Day. Participants created their own maps, which they can use to trace the path Gen. Sam Houston and his Texian volunteers took to the battlefield at San Jacinto. Our next class will be Thursday, May 5th. That day is CINCO DE MAYO! We’ll learn about this Mexican holiday, which is wildly popular in the United States. Our final “A Closer Look at History” class for this school year will be Thursday, May 26th. We’ll be explore the origins of Memorial Day with an emphasis on traditional Memorial Day music.

German classes
The three German classes, 1-A, 1-B and 2-A, continue. Check the website for information. 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.

Birding activities
April is when birding in Texas reaches its zenith and our weekly bird walks are highly anticipated. This year, however, they seemed too anticipated. Due to those expectations, the first half of April felt disappointing, with few warblers or other spring migrants to entertain bird walker. Finally, on April 27, despite rough weather early in the day, expectations were met on our annual spring “Big Day.” The group birded from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and found 65 species. While this is nowhere near the record of 90 species, spirits were high as we watched a Swallow-tailed Kite soar across the open field from the Hawk Tower. In all, nine species of warbler were found, including Golden-winged Warbler. This species has only been seen in the park a few times. Other highlights included at least 12 Broad-winged Hawks kettling in the blue skies, a rufous-morph Eastern Screech-Owl peeking out of a nest box and five bright orange Baltimore Orioles flying overhead, one after the other.
Because April is so special there were two birding bus trips in the month. The first was in mid-April to the cedar-clad hills above Austin, where the group hoped to find the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler. Our first stop was the Turkey Creek trailhead at Emma Long Metropolitan Park. Unfortunately, while there were at least three Golden-cheeked Warblers singing, only one person was able to actually see one. However, there were other birds to entertain us at Emma Long. A few Summer Tanagers were singing and foraging close to the road, a flock of Franklin’s Gulls circled in the sky for quite a while and a Spotted Towhee was found calling and scratching under a tree. The best bird of the day, seen only by three lucky participants, was a Black-capped Vireo. These birds are also endangered. They are not commonly found at Emma Long and were an unexpected treat for those lucky few who spotted it.

The group then had lunch at a barbecue place before heading to Hornsby Bend, a wastewater treatment plant known this time of year for the many shorebirds that populate the drying beds. Unfortunately, the drying beds were rather full after some rain, so there weren’t as many species. We did see Killdeer, Least, Semipalmated, Baird’s, and Pectoral Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and Wilson’s Phalaropes. There was also an Eared Grebe going into breeding plumage and a few species of ducks, including Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, and Ruddy Duck.
The last stop was to Platt Lane, a site part of the Hornsby Bend complex. This was the first time many of the participants had been there. Everyone was impressed. Whiptail lizards ran ahead of the group along the trails, which are lined with blossoming prickly pear and other wildflowers. Though 3 p.m. is not the best time for birding, we did find an Orange-crowned Warbler and a few Lark Sparrows visiting a puddle before turning back for the bus.

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

There are a few seats on the May 6th trip to the coast in search of spring migrants. You may now sign up for the June 10th trip in search of exotic birds in the Houston area 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 an email confirmation a week before the trip, if you have a seat.

Calendars for May and June can be found on www.pct3.com. There is a link from the park web page or you can look under the Community Center events calendar.

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; 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 for more information.