Summer is a special time and Precinct Three Commissioner Steve Radack's Kleb Woods Nature Center has a special offering this summer. We will have watercolor classes for school-age children on two Thursdays each month. The instructor will be Gary Spessard, an artist with formal training at two universities. This class will be a great opportunity to discover the artist in your family. Whether you take this class or take advantage of our introduction to German class or one of the many other educational opportunities at Kleb Woods, we hope your summer of 2016 is filled with incredible memories for your family.

Volunteer activities
Our volunteers continue their weekly work despite the continuing rain, wind and mosquitoes. They are a tough bunch. Rains and storms have tested their limits for clearing downed trees and repairing trails. The vegetation has begun to grow as if on steroids and trail trimming has become a regular activity. The woodworkers are actively working on new displays for the Nature Center. The gardeners’ persistence has finally paid off and they have a beautiful garden.

History Discussion Group
The May meeting was about events in Mexico that led to the Battle of Puebla, where the Mexican army defeated a superior French force. Although the Mexicans lost the war, the battle was epic and developed a sense of Mexican pride that lives on today and is celebrated primarily in the United States as Cinco de Mayo. The June meeting will discuss the role of Native Americans during the American Revolutionary War.

A Closer Look at Nature class
The “A Closer Look at Nature” class in May was about wildflowers. After a short classroom lecture, the kids ventured into the park to collect flowers. They then pressed them and took them home for further study. The class also saw Henrietta and her baby chicks, completing our study of how baby birds grow. They watched the eggs being set in March, held the newly-hatched chicks in April and admired how much they’d grown in May. Following the class, the hen and her family of four chicks returned to the farm of their origin, where the chicks met ”Papa Rooster” for the first time.

“A Closer look at Nature” will take a summer hiatus and return in September. Information on future classes can be found at the Nature Center. You can check the Precinct Three website at www.pct3.com.
A Closer Look at History
These classes are growing in popularity. The May 5th class was, of course, about Cinco de Mayo and the May 26th class about how Memorial Day. Each class includes a short lecture and activity or two. Come join us and learn more about our American and Texas history.

German classes
The three German classes – 1-A, 1-B and 2-A – have ended for the school year. This summer we will offer the introduction to German classes. Each class will be similar and give families an opportunity to try German out as a language and see if they are interested in starting formal classes in the fall. These introductory classes would also be helpful to adults who might be planning a trip to Germany. Formal classes resume in September.

Birding activities
May was an excellent birding month at Kleb and the bird walks were productive. The group of birders tried a second “Spring Big Day” on May 4th. They came close to breaking the record of 90 species in one day, but settled for 89 species. The day had many nice birds and was highlighted by 15 species of warblers.

The April 29th senior birding bus trip began at LaFitte’s Cove, where participants were greeted by the unmistakable calls of Northern Bobwhite. The few migrants there included Magnolia Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Baltimore Oriole, and a flyover Least Bittern. The group then spent time at the Quintana Jetty. This is a great place to see a variety of gulls and terns. Participants practiced identification skills with five species of gulls and six species of terns.

The group then birded their way from Surfside to Galveston Island State Park. At the Crabbing Pear, a Clapper Rail walking across a parking lot gave everyone great views. San Luis Pass had a Dunlin and some American Avocets, which were new for the day. At a small pond on the side of the highway, two juvenile Pied-billed Grebes were favorites.
The final stop of the day was LaFitte’s Cove, usually a great destination during spring migration. However, the weather tends to be the ultimate factor and this was not our day. In the 90 minutes spent at LaFitte’s Cove, only a few species of warbler were found. Just as it was time to leave, birds began to arrive and several birders saw two Golden-winged Warblers before returning to the bus. By the end of the day, the group found 102 species.

The May 6th trip was fast-paced as the group tried to tally as many species as possible. The goal was for everyone to see 100 species, which is certainly attainable this time of year. But flooding at the first destination, Cedar Hill Park at Lake Charlotte, was a setback. This is a good place to look for Swallow-tailed Kite, Bald Eagle and Prothonotary Warbler. Unfortunately, the flooding stopped the group from finding these species, but they were treated to the song of a Swainson’s Warbler before leaving the park.

Next, they went to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, where several Common Nighthawks put on a show by swooping through the air and landing on tree branches to pose for pictures. Shoveler Pond, while not as active as usual, produced many species. A probable Glossy Ibis flew away just before the identification could be confirmed and the group rejoiced when one Least Bittern, usually common in May, was seen on the last leg of the loop.

Houston Audubon’s Boy Scout Woods at High Island was the next destination. From the bleachers, the group spotted several migrants, as well as a Yellow-bellied Watersnake.

After an hour the group moved on to Rollover Pass and Yacht Basin Rd. to look for shorebirds. Short-billed Dowitchers, a Stilt Sandpiper, and a Semipalmated Plover gave close views at Rollover. On Yacht Basin Rd., the group found a few Whimbrels and Black-bellied Plovers in both breeding and non-breeding plumages.
Finally, the group had enough time to make one more stop at Smith Oaks, where warblers, and other migrants were found. Some participants also visited the famous rookery to see breeding herons and egrets, which always put on a show. By the day’s end, the group tallied 128 species.

At left, a Roseate Spoonbill. At right, a Purple Gallinule. Photos by Carol Mills.

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

Summer birding trips will be June 10 to search for exotic species in the Houston area like Peacock, Egyptian Goose, Monk Parakeet and Red-vented Bulbul. The July 1st trip will search for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Swallow-tailed Kites that nest north and east of Houston. The August 19th trip will visit High Island, Bolivar Flats and ride the Bolivar Ferry on the way home. You may now sign up for these trips 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 June and July 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

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.