April is the most pivotal month for spring bird migration. Millions of birds pour through Texas during the month as they travel from South America and the American tropics to return to breeding grounds across the United States and Canada. Texas is truly a paradise for birdwatchers in April. Commissioner Steve Radack invites you to come and enjoy the April bird migration at several parks that have great bird diversity, such as George W. Bush Park, Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza Park, Bear Creek Pioneers Park, Paul Rushing Park and, of course, Kleb Woods Nature Preserve.

Volunteer activities
The volunteers have cleared all the dead stems, unwanted yaupon and other woody invaders from the hummingbird gardens around the nature center, and many of the flowers have already responded with blooms. “The Yaupon’s Worst Nightmare Crew” worked through the end of March, which closed the season. They have had a wonderfully positive effect on the preserve by removing exotic vegetation. They will resume work in late fall. Our master naturalist volunteers continue to work on individual invasive plants and nurture the longleaf pines planted earlier by scouts. The vegetable gardeners have planted much of the garden during the month. They have planted purple basil, luffa, muskmelon, pickling cucumbers, slicing cucumbers, sweet potatoes, borage, tomatoes, eggplant, California wonder peppers and banana peppers. The woodworkers have completed another bench for the Young Naturalist Room. The bench is made from a slab of tree downed in a storm at Kleb Woods. Our blacksmith had previously salvaged the wood slab and smoothed it for the bench. It is a big hit with moms who read to their children in the room. One volunteer has been helping with cataloging the artifacts in the Kleb House, a project long overdue. Some of the volunteers are helping us prepare for our Earth Day Activities Event planned on April 22 at the nature center.

A Closer Look at Nature class
The class in March was about bird nests. During the class, the kids learned about the great diversity of bird nests found in the world. Following the presentation, they had a chance to see a variety of examples of actual bird nests up close. They then tried their skills at building a nest themselves. Some of their results were surprisingly good.

At left, a group begins building their nest. Photo by Fred Collins. At right, three proud girls show off their nest masterpiece. Photo by Kendra Kocab.
A Closer Look at History class
The class on March 2 celebrated Sam Houston’s 224th birthday. It was also the 181st anniversary of Texas Independence Day. Since Sam was not here, the kids helped unwrap his ten birthday presents, each one representing something significant in his life. The first present was a baby blanket and we talked about his childhood. One gift was a simple gold ring similar to one his mother gave him when she sent him off to the War of 1812. His heroism during that war led him to a lifelong close friendship with Andrew Jackson. Another present was a sword that represented his becoming commander-and-chief of the Texas Army. The class was a great success as the kids, anxious to open presents, remained engaged. The birthday cake topped off a great morning of learning and made the party complete.

History Discussion Group
The March group discussed the massacre of Fannin’s men at Goliad on Palm Sunday of 1836. “Remember Goliad” along with “Remember the Alamo” were the battle cries of the Texan Army during the Battle of Independence at San Jacinto. While most Texans know about the Alamo, the details of the Goliad Massacre are less well known. The group examined events that led to the massacre, including the sometimes-indecisive Colonel James Fannin’s fateful decision to halt on the prairie near Coleto Creek. Unable to defend his position, Fannin eventually surrendered to Mexican General Urrea, with assurances his men would be treated as prisoners of war. Instead, Santa Ana declared them pirates and ordered them to be executed. A few men escaped to tell the tale allowing us today to know the details of the execution of more than 300 Texan soldiers on Palm Sunday.

Conservation Pioneers program
This program returned after a three-month hiatus to a new time, 1:30 p.m., on the third Wednesday of the month. The program’s Saturday schedule remains the same. This month’s program was about Gifford Pinchot, who began development of the U.S. Forest Service as its first chief during the time his close friend, Theodore Roosevelt, was president. Pinchot developed the basic-use guide that dictates forest management. The guide, while greatly expanded, is still used by the Forest Service today. Another contribution largely credited to Pinchot is the concept of multiple use on Forest Service lands that include timber production, grazing, recreation and habitat preservation for all Americans. While the original purpose was to have well-managed forests with sustainable timber yields, the National Forest system has grown to include 174 National Forests and National Grasslands totaling more than 193 million acres managed for multiple uses. Future presentations will be about Gaylord Nelson, founder of Earth Day (April), Jane Goodall (May) and John Muir (June). Please check the web calendar for dates and times.

German language classes
German classes are more than halfway through the semester. German 1-A and 1-B are the equivalent of high school German 1, while our German 2-A and 2-B are the equivalent of high school German 2. The success of our German class offerings is reflected in the students’ accomplishments. This year the Texas German Society awarded one of our Kleb high school senior students a scholarship for her essay in their statewide contest. Congratulations to Avery Carpenter! This is the second time one of Dr. Linda Martin-Rust’s students has placed in the statewide annual competition. If you are interested in starting German, we will again have introductory classes this summer and anticipate a new German 1A class in the fall. For more information, contact Linda Martin-Rust at klebwoods@pct3.com.

Birding activities
The weekly bird walks have passed through the lull of late winter into the excitement of spring. Each week we wonder what winter bird will be gone and what summer resident will return with migrants adding to our weekly list. The walk on March 15 totaled 50 species.
There was an **afternoon birding program** in March by one of our regular bird walk participants who is a professional photographer. Kirsten Tucker presented a program about the birds of Sri Lanka and Thailand that included her bird photographs from a recent trip there.

The March **Bear Creek Pioneers Park Bird Walk** had six children among the participants. It is always a delight to have the benefit of young eyes and ears. When you couple that with their joy of seeing and identifying birds for the first time, it makes a bird walk with kids a special day. The final walk of the season will be April 27. These walks are from 8:30 a.m. until 10 a.m. and the group meets at Koch Lane and Golbow Drive.

The March **Senior Birding Bus Trip** went to deep east Texas in search of two elusive sparrows that few people have seen. The first stop was Boykin Springs Recreation Area in the Angelina National Forest. The quarry was Bachman’s Sparrow. The species inhabits open pine forest with a grassy forest floor. The secretive sparrows were not singing this early in the spring but would respond briefly to their recorded calls. We detected at least five birds in this fashion but only a small portion of our group was able to see one bird. It did not pose well for pictures but one participant was able to get an identifiable picture of a bird nestled in a yaupon bush. Birds were hard to come by generally in the longleaf pine forest, but the butterflies kept everyone entertained with several species of swallowtails stealing the show.

The wildflowers were also putting on a show and the bus passed by many flowering dogwoods and azaleas. At both our stops, many species of wildflowers were found and photographed. Spring in Texas is hard to beat.
After spending the morning being frustrated by elusive Bachman’s Sparrows, the group traveled to the Big Thicket National Preserve. The group ate their picnic lunches there and then took up the quest for the even more elusive Henslow’s Sparrow. This species is notorious for diving into a grass and brush thicket and disappearing. They are always found in nice tall bluestem grass with a scattering of low brush. They are most common in fields with small pine trees that are generally less than ten feet tall. There is a perfect field near the preserve headquarters that has produced many sightings in the previous month. The seniors lined up, and in a long line of 30 yards swept across the grassy field. Their persistence flushed four Henslow’s Sparrows. The first did a typical disappearing act. The second, the group surrounded in a tight circle six feet across. Most people could see the bird moving about in the shadows of the grass, but no one ever got a clear view. It finally flushed and flew between two people not two feet apart. Finally, on the fourth bird one of the participants saw it land and freeze in a bare bush about four feet above the ground. We were able to get every trip participant good looks at the bird, and high fives and photos were celebrated all around. A great end to an early and long trip.

At left, the Henslow’s Sparrow that finally posed for the group. Photo by Albert Holba. At right, the group enjoys the sparrow. Photo by Sarah Kuzio,

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

There is now a waitlist for the **April 7** trip to look for Golden-cheeked Warblers in the Austin area and the **April 21** trip to the coast to look for spring migrants. You may now sign up for the **May 5** trip to the coast to look for spring migrants and the **June 2** trip to look for exotic species in the greater Houston area. To sign up for these trips, email klewoods@pct3.com 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 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

**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.