Commissioner Steve Radack and the staff of the Kleb Woods Nature Preserve wish you a Happy Mother’s Day and a memorable Memorial Day. Precinct 3 will hold its annual Memorial Day Ceremony at the Veteran’s Memorial in Bear Creek Pioneers Park on Monday, May 29, 2017 at 2 p.m. We hope you will join us.

Raising Their Young
May sees bird migration draw to a sudden end. Summer resident birds are well along with raising their young, and the summer heat typically sets in before the end of the month. We get many calls about orphaned wildlife during the month, and we refer them to several local wildlife rehabilitation centers. Most “orphans” are actually not. Most birds move their young from the nest long before they are able to fly. The parents scatter the young across several hundred feet of habitat so they do not lead predators to the nest because they make so many trips to feed the fast growing young. Adult birds often land near their baby bird and call the youngster to them, keeping the young birds moving frequently throughout the day. So if you find a seemingly lost nestling, be patient and see if in fact within an hour or so an adult shows up to feed it and move it yet again.

Volunteer Activities
The volunteers continue to work on a variety of projects, including preparing for activities and classes, gardening, maintenance, and constructing a rainwater harvest system for our native plant nursery. We celebrated their hard work and success with a volunteer appreciation luncheon in April. Come join this busy and inspiring group.

School Visit: Black Elementary
Black Elementary brought their entire 4th grade to Kleb for a nature center and historic farm tour. The 136 kids were divided into four groups and each had an opportunity to tour the nature center, have an up-close experience with a bird and learn about their biology, tour the barn and farm, and finally tour the 1896 Kleb home. After a lunch break, the kids participated in a scavenger hunt that encouraged them to observe nature.

A Closer Look At Nature class
The class in April was about nature’s best-known sanitation crew: vultures. These large black birds eat dead animals almost to the exclusion of all else. Consequently, they have many special attributes to help them make a living eating such a diet. The class examined these features and explained how each aids the bird’s survival.
A Closer Look At History class
The class on March 30 was a special appearance by Amanda Danning, compliments of Rosehill Christian School. Amanda is a forensic artist and brought with her several of the sculpted busts of Mexican soldiers from the Battle of San Jacinto. She created these from skulls salvaged from the battlefield by John J. Audubon in 1837. He sent them to a friend in Pennsylvania. When his friend died, the skull collection was transferred to a local museum where it remained all but forgotten for more than 100 years. About ten years ago, the collection’s significance was recognized and the skulls were studied. Part of that effort was to put a face on the soldiers and determine how they died on the field of battle. Amanda brought them to life. During Amanda’s presentation, the deathblows were re-enacted to help them understand how evidence seen in each skull indicates the manner in which a lethal blow was delivered. It engaged the kids in some play-acting, and all enjoyed the learning experience.

History Discussion Group
The April discussion was about the U.S. entry into World War I, which occurred 100 years ago in April. They discussed the text of a 1934 encyclopedia about the war. The detail and way of characterizing aspects of the events was vastly different from how the war is viewed today. While it seems somewhat primitive by today’s standards, it was technologically revolutionary at the time and considered such in 1934. The encyclopedia includes quotes from many of the players at that time and had a good deal of Wilson’s speech declaring war on Germany. The U.S. finally joined in the war because of Germany’s continued use of submarine warfare on neutral shipping and the Zimmerman Telegram that the British intercepted and published for America to see. In that telegram, Germany told Mexico if they declared war on the U.S., Germany would help them reclaim Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. That seemed to be the final straw in bringing the U.S. into the war. Within the next 17 months, the U.S. would build its troop strength from 127,000 at the beginning of the war to more than 3 million when the armistice was declared in November 1918.

Conservation Pioneers Program
The April program was about Gaylord Nelson who, in 1970, founded the “Earth Day Celebration.” He was a governor and senator from Wisconsin and first attempted to popularize environmental protection with a cross-country tour with President John F. Kennedy. That tour had limited success, so he then created the idea of an “environmental teach-in.” The idea became Earth Day in 1970 and the initial event had an estimated twenty million participants across the country. Perhaps the best measure of success is that the day is still celebrated and still inspires people to work together to continue protecting the environment for themselves and future generations. Future presentations will be about Jane Goodall (May) and John Muir (June). Please check the web calendar for dates and times.

Earth Day Activities
We held a series of activities on Earth Day to educate people about small things they can do to be environmentally conscious. Visitors learned about building a rainwater harvest system, making household cleaning products that are environmentally friendly, using old T-shirts to make grocery totes, and planting native wildflower seeds. The favorite activity was starting their own worm farms to decompose compost and improve their gardens.
German Language Classes

German classes are drawing to a close. 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. 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. Check the calendar for dates and times. Or for more information contact Linda Martin-Rust at klebwoods@pct3.com.

Birding Activities

The weekly bird walks are always highly anticipated and well attended in April, as each week we invariably see a new collection of spring migrants. The colorful species like Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo and Painted Buntings and Baltimore Orioles are always a hit with the birders. While the warblers are perhaps the most desirable additions, the various flycatchers, cuckoos and vireos add great variety. A highlight of any walk is a singing Wood Thrush or other thrush which have the most beautiful song of all birds. The final Bear Creek Pioneers Park bird walk of the season was held on the 27. They will resume in September.

The April 7 Senior Birding Bus Trip went to Emma Long Metropolitan Park in Austin in search of the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler. Along the Turkey Creek Trail, the group found one Golden-cheeked Warbler as well as some other Hill Country birds including Black-chinned Hummingbird, Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay and Black-crested Titmouse. Unfortunately, these birds were not very cooperative, and not everyone on the trip saw them.
Following the somewhat successful morning with the Golden-cheeked Warbler hunt, the group tried a local barbeque restaurant for lunch and then visited another local metropolitan park in Austin, Commons Ford Park. There the group hoped to find Ringed and Green Kingfishers but had to settle for only the Belted Kingfisher. They did see many Lesser Goldfinches, Lark Sparrow, Yellow-throated Warbler, Northern Parula and Summer Tanager. The day was delightful and the birds were almost overshadowed by the display of wildflowers.

Because April is a spectacular month for birds in Texas, we have two birding field trips. Our second visited Galveston and Bolivar during the heart of spring migration. The weather did not cooperate by bringing us a fallout of passerines, but it was a beautiful day and the group saw 110 species on the trip. Their first stop was Offatt’s Bayou on 61st Street in Galveston where they saw some Common Loons, many of which were in sharp breeding plumage. Then it was off to Lafitte’s Cove where they hoped to find migrating passerines. Though unsuccessful in that, they did see some nice birds including a White-tailed Kite. Then it was onto the Bolivar Ferry. Unfortunately, it was a long wait but the group was rewarded when four Magnificent Frigatebirds soared over the ferry. Upon arrival in Bolivar, the group ate picnic lunches at Fort Travis Park, where they found a few interesting birds like Upland Sandpiper. After lunch, it was on to Bolivar Beach and a long walk to the flats where shorebirds were roosting. Conditions were excellent, high tide was falling and the birds were relatively close in excellent light. An uncommon Long-tailed Duck, which had been present for a couple of weeks, posed for the photographers in the group, allowing for several nice photos. The shorebird and wader display was also most appreciated by the photographers. Unfortunately, we are limited as to how many pictures we can include in these newsletters.
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 May 5 trip to the coast to look for spring migrants. You may now sign up for the June 2 trip to look for exotic species in the greater Houston area and the July 7 trip to see Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Swallow-tailed Kite. To sign up for these trips, email klebwoods@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.