Commissioner Steve Radack wishes you a safe and happy summer break and vacation. He invites you to visit any or all of his 65 plus Precinct Three Parks. June is upon us with its long days and short nights. The kids are on summer break and you may be looking for something special to do with them. Check out our Kleb Calendar for special summer programs.

Volunteer activities
Our volunteers work through the summer continuing to do maintenance chores and work on special projects. Our blacksmith replaced one of our branded trail signs that had rotted with time. Two of our volunteers have designed and built a nice rainwater harvest system so we can use rainwater in our plant nursery. The system will benefit the work of one of our master naturalist who has been growing several native plants. We are also experimenting with sprouting various tree seeds. Additionally, our volunteers continue to design ways to keep the bird feeders up for birds but safe from raccoons and most squirrels. That is a challenging problem that brings out a lot of creativity among our volunteers. And, the gardens are beautiful thanks to our volunteers’ hard work. The vegetable garden is as beautiful as we have ever had, and Minnie Kleb, Elmer’s mother, would be proud to call it her own.

School Visit: Tomball Elementary
Tomball Elementary brought their entire 4th grade to Kleb for a nature center and historic farm tour on May 16. They were also treated to a blacksmith demonstration by Dave Koenig. The 125 kids were divided into nine groups and each had an opportunity to tour the nature center, have a close encounter with one of our parrots and learn about bird biology, see a blacksmith demonstration and then tour the farm and 1896 Kleb home.

A Closer Look at Nature class
The class in May was about the social life of ants. Following a program that delved into every aspect of these social creatures, the kids went outside and tried their “social skills” to replicate the roles of the ants. They had to find “food” and then lay a trail using bird seed from the food back to the colony. Other kids should spot and follow the trail and likewise find the food source. To mimic the ants, they could not talk or signal beyond laying the bird seed trail. It was rather humorous to watch the kids walk around silently with hands by their side wandering about looking for food or trails to the food. It was as if we were watching a Zombie movie! It was gratifying as well -- in conversations we heard many of them use the special vocabulary gleaned from the class demonstrating that they had actually learned a great deal about how the ants work.
A Closer Look at History class
Since this month’s program was held on May Fourth, which happens to be National Star Wars Day, the famous catchphrase “May the Fourth Be With You” served as our inspiration for the class. Science fiction predictions from TV and movies was the topic with kids deciding if the movie predictions actually came true. While some became reality, others did not. However, some predictions almost came into being. For instance the hover board. They exist but they don’t really fly. Participants then were given a movie script outline and the opportunity to create their own science fiction movie with a chance to make their predictions for the future.

History Discussion Group
The 2nd Thursday May discussion was about the Texas Rangers since our Cypress Top Senior Bus Trip would visit the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame the following week. One of our sources for the program was the definitive Texas Ranger history by Walter Prescott Webb written in 1935. The book included a firsthand account by Frank Hammer of his role in the killing of Bonnie and Clyde. Another famous Ranger was Manuel Trazazas "Lone Wolf" Gonzaulas. He single handedly cleaned up the very wild oil boom towns of Mexia and Kilgore. He was quick on the trigger and somewhat cruel by modern day standards. He would chain as many as 300 prisoners up to a cable and walk them down Main Street. He made them sleep in a flea infested barn reinforcing their desire to leave town and not come back. Of course no Texas Ranger discussion is complete without exploring their pioneering use of the Colt revolver and its transformation to the Walker Colt that made the Texas Rangers superior fighters to the once dominate Comanche warriors.

Conservation Pioneers program
The May program was about Jane Goodall. This program was the best attended to date. The audience especially enjoyed learning the chimpanzee greeting that Jane Goodall often uses in her programs. The program not only discussed her history but also examined some of her novel and controversial research conclusions from her 10-plus years of chimpanzee observation. The subsequent filming and publicity she received from National Geographic Magazine caused her to become a worldwide sensation. That platform allowed her to become a major spokesperson for habitat conservation in Africa. Because she focused on how the conservation plan benefited the local people, her efforts were not only successful but became the model for every major conservation organization in the world. Our next presentation will be about John Muir and the majestic Yosemite Valley and the giant redwoods he helped preserve.

German language classes
German classes were completed in May. Summer introductory courses will be offered from 11 a.m. to noon on June 28, July 12, and August 9. Formal German classes will resume in September. 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 have questions please contact Linda Martin-Rust at klebwoods@pct3.com.

Birding activities
The weekly bird walks were lackluster for May compared to previous years. The weather favored the birds and not the watchers. Relatively dry conditions for much of the month allowed the birds to pass quickly north to their breeding grounds. Our resident birds were busy raising young. One Great Horned Owl pair whose nest was easily visible from the wetland trail fledged two big young, and Screech owls have raised broods in at least two of the nest boxes. A male Summer Tanager has set up a territory around the farm clearing and nature center building and can be heard singing throughout the day. Let’s hope he attracts a mate.

The May 5 Senior Birding Bus Trip went to the Texas ornithological Society’s Sabine Woods just west of Sabine Pass. It was a beautiful blue sky day and the birders found about several species of warblers and a good variety of other migrants. The highlight of the day however was a pair of Black-whiskered Vireos. These birds are rare in Texas normally only occurring in southern Florida in the United States. They are more widespread in the Caribbean basin of Latin America. The sanctuary has a couple of drips so birds can drink and bath. These spots are favorites of both the birds and photographers. Patience is often rewarded with beautiful and interesting photographs. The trip list for the day totaled 122 species and included 19 species of warblers, 7 species of flycatchers and 4 species of vireos and 4 species of thrushes.
Above, a male Orchard Oriole bathes, a Hooded Warbler waits its turn and in the top right corner a female Orchard Oriole admires the male. Photo by Albert Holba.

At left, a male and female Hooded Warbler bath. Photo by Gary Olson. At right, Magnolia Warbler was a common bird. Photo by Albert Holba.

At left, a make American Redstart. At right, a male Chestnut-sided Warbler. Photos by Truman Louderback.
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 June 2 trip to look for exotic species in the greater Houston area. You may now sign up for 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.