Commissioner Steve Radack wishes you a safe and fun summer vacation and hopes you will visit and enjoy Precinct Three’s Kleb Woods Nature Preserve or one of the other 65 plus parks in the Precinct.

August is a most vibrant month. Over the summer, nature has produced a bounty of flowers, seeds, fruit, insects and young that will carry their species to the next generation. All about the nature preserve young birds can be seen getting experience chasing down insects, learning the proper bird feeder etiquette and discovering the cooling benefits of an afternoon dip in one of our water features. They revel in our sprinklers as we water the hummingbird flowerbeds and the vegetable garden.

Volunteer activities
Our volunteers seem to have enjoyed the free sauna treatments they receive while volunteering for strenuous outdoor projects during July. They continue to be productive weeding gardens, mulching flowerbeds, rebuilding arbors, replacing decaying trail signs and clearing and trimming the vigorously growing vegetation. We also had six Boy Scouts from Troop 87 in Spring come one Tuesday to assist our regular crew with mulch work.

We were aided this month by a large group of close to 100 volunteers from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Tomball. That group helped us complete many maintenance projects that included spreading the remainder of this past year’s Christmas tree mulch in the gardens and on the trails, digging out drainage culverts in the farm clearing and improving the growing conditions for our grand live oak by removing yaupon from under the tree’s drip line.

The woodworkers have almost completed a new display shelf for the nature center lobby. This unique piece is made from old bridge timber found on the property and some handmade bricks donated to us earlier this year. The bricks are believed to be from New Kentucky, and thought to have been made during the Texas Republic era or possibly before. The shelf will display those bricks, be a serviceable display for handouts, and make a great accent piece for the lobby.

Discovery Days at Kleb
This summer program is designed to give kids an engaging summer experience in both history and nature. In July, we had a program about the antique farm equipment and the barn. The children first learned about horse-driven farm machinery. In the barn, they saw a demonstration of how a bag of cotton used to be weighed on a cotton scale. They also learned to tie three simple, but useful, knots. They then put up a rope swing in an oak tree and did what kids have done for centuries. This most basic form of country entertainment was as popular as ever. My guess is that more than one family has now put one up in their back yard.
Our second program of the month featured a visit from Cooper the Opossum from Friends of Texas Wildlife. Cooper was rescued as a baby, but had a deformity from birth that meant he could not survive in the wild. He became an ambassador for the organization’s education programs. Before getting to meet Cooper, the kids learned about opossum biology. Opossums are marsupials, they have 50 teeth and their behavior of “playing possum” is an automatic response to stress. Friends of Texas Wildlife is a non-profit rehabilitation group that takes in all varieties of native wildlife that have been injured or orphaned. Unfortunately, young wildlife are often picked up by well-meaning people who mistake them for orphans. In reality, the parents are watching from a distance. Many young animals are only fed once or twice a day, and left “parked” in what is thought to be a safe place all day long. People stumble across these young animals and think they should rescue them. The rescue group urged everyone to leave these young animals to their parent’s care.

History Discussion Group
In July, the group discussed the book by H. R. McMaster, Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam. The discussion was well-attended and lively, especially since some participants had served in Vietnam and most remember the era well. They looked at policy decisions and events starting at the end of World War II that set the stage for the decisions that Johnson, McNa mara and the Joint Chiefs made. The group then considered the title phrase “Dereliction of Duty.” Several members of the discussion group had varying thoughts about each player’s role, but the group seemed in consensus that given the circumstances none were guilty of dereliction of duty. Perhaps, they were guilty of just “following orders.” Each member of the discussion group was thankful they had not been the one to have to make the decisions that were required at that time.

German language classes
There is one more opportunity to attend the summer Introduction to German Language class. It is from 11 a.m. to noon on August 9. Formal German language 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.
Bluegrass Jam
The monthly jam group meets the 4th Saturday of each month and plays from noon until 4 p.m. They would love to have you come and join them or just sit and listen. Future dates are August 26 and September 23.

Birding activities
The weekly bird walks are often rather warm in July and birds can be scarce at times. However, post-breeding dispersal and the start of migration provide incentive for the birders to brave the heat and humidity. This July they have had early migrants that included Spotted Sandpiper, Eastern Kingbird and Orchard Oriole.

The July Senior Birding Bus Trip went in search of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Jones State Forest and to Liberty in search of Swallow-tailed Kites. Thanks to the Grand Parkway, the group was in Jones State Forest well before 8 a.m. and soon found two of the coveted Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Although the birds were too far away and active for the photographers to capture, everyone was able to see them well and watch them at some length as they fed in the tops of distant pine trees. The group was most fortunate because there are currently only nine of the birds in the entire forest, so finding two was a stroke of luck. The birders found almost thirty species on their walk. Other highlights included Yellow-breasted Chats, Indigo Buntings and a singing Summer Tanager. After a breakfast stop at a fast-food place, the group headed to Liberty. On Highway 90 between Dayton and Liberty in the Trinity River bottom they spotted some Swallow-tailed Kites soaring over the trees. The bus stopped and all were treated to the great aerial displays of three or perhaps five Swallow-tailed Kites. These graceful birds are a perennial favorite with both birders and photographers. The birds were cooperative, as you can see from some of the pictures below.

The group continued on to Liberty Municipal Park in search of more kites. At that park, they found several Mississippi Kites, two Red-headed Woodpeckers and a “Liberty” mockingbird. They then went to lunch at a local Italian restaurant. Most of the group left well satisfied and toting a to-go box.
The seniors then went to Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge and enjoyed some varied wildlife there. Then it was on to Baytown Nature Center before returning to Kleb Woods.

At left, rain was across the bay from Baytown Nature Center. Photo by George Valdez. At right, a Common Nighthawk at BNC. Photo by Hao Vo.

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 Aug 18 trip to visit Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge and Smith Point to see Swallow-tailed Kites and other migrants and the Sept 29 trip to Brazos Bend State Park. You may also sign up for the October 6 trip. This trip is unlike any we have done before. It will leave at noon (after lunch) and go to Quintana and Bryan Beach for some afternoon birding. We will then go to dinner at a local Freeport restaurant favored by the seniors, and then go to the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory for a special presentation on raptors by Bill Clark. Bill has recently published a new book, *Raptors of Mexico and Central America*. We will depart there about 9 p.m. and arrive at Kleb Woods about 11 p.m. 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 August and September 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](http://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](http://www.pct3.com) for more information.