Commissioner Steve Radack wishes you a fabulous fall and a happy Halloween. He invites you to his annual Diggin’ Old Stuff Heritage Festival at Kleb Woods Nature Center on Saturday, October 21, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Traditionally October offers some of the finest weather days to be had in Texas. Cool fronts turn the air chilly, and are followed by clear skies and low humidity to make for delightful days to get out and enjoy the outdoors. Bird migration is in full swing, with more species that will spend the winter on the Gulf Coast showing up with each front. Mammals grow new coats and are as beautiful as they will ever be. October is the month of nature’s promise fulfilled.

Volunteer activities
Our volunteers really shined at the Hummingbird Festival. Seventy of them came out to work the event this year. They are the backbone of the festival. I am always impressed that they seem to have as much fun as anyone who attends, even as they are busy helping others.

Hummingbird Festival
The 10th Annual Hummingbird Festival was a delightful day with perfect weather. A cold front had passed and its cool temperatures and low humidity was especially welcomed following the deluge we all had experienced with Harvey. Sumita Prasad, our licensed hummingbird bander, and her assistant Jim Renfro, also a licensed hummingbird bander, deployed a walk-in hummingbird trap which worked extremely well. Jim was able to catch birds and keep Sumita busy banding throughout the day. Sumita banded 20 hummingbirds, including 17 Ruby-throated and 3 Rufous. She also caught a Rufous Hummingbird that she originally banded here in 2013. This same bird was caught at the 2015, 2016, and 2017 Hummingbird Festivals. In fact, this year the bird was caught three times during the day. It seems to like Sumita as much as our human visitors do.
Second only to the hummingbirds at the festival are the hawks and owls that Mary Anne Weber of Houston Audubon brings each year. They delight young and old and are the favorite subject for all the photographers on hand. This year Mary Anne brought an assistant who played the guitar and sang songs for the children. HAS also provided a nice display of raptor specimens so everyone could examine each feather of this majestic group of birds.

The activities at Hummingbird Festival are always popular, but this year almost 40% of the visitors were children. The activities were very lively throughout the day as kids made bird masks and flying paper hummingbirds, played in the Bird Olympics, learned what it took to eat like a hummingbird, and tested their wingspan and flapping abilities. All in all, they stayed busy for hours.

For about 40% of the people that attend Hummingbird Festival each year, it is their first visit to Kleb Woods. Consequently, the lobby displays and Young Naturalist Room in the nature center, the 1896 Kleb farm house and the blacksmith shop and barn are all novel to these visitors. Having the Cypress Historical Society show visitors the farm house and blacksmith Dave Koenig doing demonstrations are key facets of the festival. We are grateful for their steadfast support.
At left, the craft activities were popular and the tables were full of industrious kids. 
At right, a child is weighed on the Cypress Top Historic Park freight scale at the Eat Like a Hummingbird activity. Photos by Jim Pulliam.

At left, the couple from Wild Birds Unlimited engaged children at the wingspan activity. Photo by Jim Pulliam. 
At right, kids enjoy a farm house tour led by a Cypress Historical Society volunteer. Photo by Albert Holba.

**Closer Look at Nature**
The Closer Look series has started up again. It began with a “Closer Look at Hummingbirds” on September 21 during the peak of hummingbird migration. Following an informative class about hummingbird biology and migration, the students went out on the porch for an activity. They made two kinds of flying paper hummingbirds and tested them to see which “flew” better. Since the activity was on the porch in front of the hummingbird feeders, dozens of hummingbirds provided additional entertainment.

**History Discussion Group**
The September history discussion group continued to discuss *At the Birth of Texas - The Diary of William Fairfax Gray*, which they started in August. The first session had looked at various aspects of travelling across the country by stagecoach, steamboat and horseback. Gray arrived in Texas just in time to participate in the election of delegates for the Convention of 1836, which declared independence and wrote a constitution. He described events and gave his impressions of the key men during the struggle, which we discussed this session.

Gray became friends with Lorenzo de Zavala, who was vice president of the Texas revolutionary government. Zavala and Santa Ana had been allies during Mexico’s fight for independence from Spain. Both had been members of the liberal Federalist Party. Zavala had served as governor of the state of Mexico, and later as Ambassador to France for the newly independent nation of Mexico. He was also a key figure in the opposition Liberal Party after Santa Anna’s turn to the Centrist Party. Zavala fancied himself leading Mexico’s Federalist Party should the Texas revolution succeed. He hoped to return Mexico to the Constitution of 1824. Zavala hoped to be Santa Anna’s major political opponent in the future for President of Mexico. Santa Anna wanted nothing more than to take advantage of the Texas revolt and hang his political opponent if he
could catch him. Hence, he abandoned all caution and chased Zavala and the Texas government to San Jacinto with only a fraction of his army and with no means of escape.

Our next History Discussion group will be October 12. The topic will be a book: *Train to Crystal City* by Jan Jarboe Russell. The discussion will be led by Barbara Pankratz who is a historian and retired school teacher.

**Conservation Pioneers**
The Conservation Pioneers program for September was about Jacques Cousteau. This fascinating pioneer invented the SCUBA system, which allowed millions of people to dive underwater and see, enjoy and learn about life in the oceans. While he was and remains after death a controversial figure, his legacy of introducing humankind to the wonders of life below the surface of the water sets him apart from all others. Very few people have contributed so much to civilization’s body of knowledge. Our next program will be about William T. Hornaday. He was a leading conservationist in the early 20th century for whom the Boy Scout conservation medal is named. He is credited as being a key figure in preventing the American Bison from becoming extinct. This series is designed for students 7th grade and up as well as adults.

**Houston Archeology Project**
The Houston Archeological Society did not have a work day in September in wake of Hurricane Harvey. They will resume activity in October.

**German language classes**
Formal German language classes have resumed this month with a German 1-A and a German 1-B class, there will be no German 2 classes offered this fall. 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. Please consult the web calendar for class dates and times. If you have any other 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.

**Birding activities**
The weekly bird walks were surprisingly uneventful in September. However, Hurricane Harvey during the final days of August delivered a new bird species for the park. Mark McLafferty, who lives close to the park, observed four Magnificent Frigatebirds soaring from west to east above FM 2920. He took the picture below. Had someone been observing from Kleb Woods at that instance they could have been seen and they probably flew right over the north tract.

The bird walks did encounter some migrants, like Spotted Sandpiper, Yellow-breasted Chat, Indigo Bunting, and Dickcissel. Wilson’s Warbler and Orchard Oriole have also been seen recently by park visitors. Our first winter resident arrivals included Rufous Hummingbird and Brown Thrasher.

The September Senior Birding Bus Trip was to Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory at the water treatment facility. It was not until September 29 and will be reported on next month.

**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 October 6 trip. The October 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. You may now sign up for the November 3 trip to TOS’s Sabine Woods where we will look for late fall migrants and arriving winter species. To sign up for these trips, email klebwoods@pct3.com or call 281-357-5324. **Save the date for a December 15 trip, destination TBD.**

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 October and November can be found on the [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) website at Community Calendars. There is also a link from the park’s web page.

**Dog owners:** Pets are not allowed in Kleb Woods Nature Preserve. The scent they leave negatively affects wildlife. For your convenience and enjoyment, Precinct Three maintains five popular dog parks where your dog can run free. 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.