Commissioner Steve Radack wishes you a Happy Thanksgiving with family and friends. We hope you get out and enjoy the fall season in nature.

Volunteer activities
The volunteers were exceptionally busy in October. They took on many projects and continued to maintain the trails and grounds. They also turned out 70 strong for Diggin’ Old Stuff, our fall heritage festival. Our Tuesday volunteers cleared a fallen oak from the wetlands trail. This tree is likely 80 or more years old. Our 16-inch chainsaw would not cut it through. They had to resort to 19th century technology to cut it so it could be removed from the trail. Unfortunately, we did not get a photo of the actual cutting but the picture below gives you an idea of how it was done.

At left, these volunteers demonstrate how they used the old crosscut two-man saw to finish a tree too big for our 16-inch chainsaw. At right, two of our volunteer gardeners pose while working on a hummingbird flower bed. Photos by Fred Collins.

Our woodworkers have built another unique piece of furniture for the Young Naturalist Room that must be seen to be appreciated. It is a table designed to house a display case, with cedar limbs for the table legs. Our gardeners have been equally active in the vegetable garden and the hummingbird and butterfly gardens. They seem to enjoy their work as much as we appreciate it. In December, the Yaupon’s Worst Nightmare crew will resume work on Mondays. I hope you will come join these convivial and productive people.

Diggin’ Old Stuff Heritage Festival
The annual Diggin’ Old Stuff Heritage Festival was threatened by rain. We moved most of the activities to the wide porches of the nature center as well as inside. The Houston Archeology Society led the kids in an actual dig where they learned proper techniques to dig and document finds. The society also had a nice selection of artifacts from the San Jacinto Battleground to show the kids. San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site again participated and had a printing activity for the kids. They were able to print documents in the same fashion as was done in 1836 in Texas. Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site also attended and brought several mid-19th century games for kids to play. Wayne Callender brought his antique tool collection again, which fascinated young and old. Steven Sundquist used his foot-powered woodworking tools to demonstrate how bowls, furniture and other items were made in the first half of the 19th century. Gudrun Sundquist helped the kids learn to do calligraphy. Dusty Kobs brought his collection of artifacts, including some from the Waller County Historical Society. He also brought metal detectors, which the kids used to find pennies and horseshoes he had hidden like buried treasure. Dave Koenig, our devoted and talented blacksmith, demonstrated skills while several other volunteers helped kids work metal in a variety of ways in the barn. Other volunteers, including Cypress Historical Society members, lead tours of the Kleb Farm House and provided an activity there for the kids. We welcomed for the first time dulcimer groups from the local area who played during the day. We were also happy to have staff from the West Harris County Regional Water Authority and their mobile teaching lab. The interactive displays in the lab showed kids how water shaped the history of Texas.
At left, kids screen dirt from excavation pit searching for small artifacts. Photo by Kristina Arndt. At right, HAS member supervises kids excavating pit. Photo by Ashley Jones.

Visitors enjoy a ride in the wagon while others visit with the constables on their 4 wheelers. Photo by Albert Holba.

At left, kids learn to use a punch and hammer. At right, they enjoy some 19th century games provided by Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site. Photos by Albert Holba.
The dulcimer players added a great atmosphere to the day with their music. Photo by Albert Holba.

A Closer Look at Nature
The October "A Closer Look at Nature Class" was about bluebonnets. The kids learned about growing this favorite Texas plant and how we came to have six state flowers! They were surprised that it took 70 years for the Texas legislature to finally agree that all species of bluebonnet in Texas would be considered the state flower. Following class, they went into the park and planted bluebonnet seeds in an area that had been previously prepared by a group of Boy Scouts.

A Closer Look at History
The October "A Closer Look at History Class" was about the history of money. The class was again very well attended. The kids learned how money evolved out of the barter system and how currencies have changed over time. They also learned about many of the details essential to creating currency people will trust, including the symbols, colors, and type of paper used to make money. Following the class, they tried their hand at designing their own money and assigning it value. We were delighted to see some beautiful samples!

History Discussion Group
The discussion in October was about the book: The Train to Crystal City by Jan Jarboe Russell. The discussion was led by Barbara Pankratz, a historian and retired school teacher. The book recounts the experiences of two young girls, one a Japanese-American and the other a German-American, who were in the internment camp with their parents in Crystal City, Texas during World War II. These girls, though American born citizens, were forced to return to the countries of their parents' birth as part of an exchange program that returned Americans captured by Axis forces. The exchange program seems to be one of the least known aspects or the war. Barbara had visited the site of the camp in Crystal City and was able to provide firsthand accounts of the site. Crystal City is also known as the "Spinach Capitol of the World." I was personally intrigued that there are still several Popeye statues around town, including the one that became an iconic symbol to the
internees. Barbara showed us her photos of those statues, as well as photos of historical markers and monuments that have commemorated the experiences of the internees at Crystal City.

Our next History Discussion group will meet Thursday, November 9, 9-11 AM. The topic will be the Cuban Missile Crisis which ended on Nov 2, 1962 when John F Kennedy went on TV and explained that the Cuban installations were being dismantled. We will examine a “what if” scenario about a Russian submarine present off the US coast and other Cold War episodes which have only recently come to light.

Conservation Pioneers
October’s program was about William Temple Hornaday, the namesake of the Boy Scout conservation awards. He revolutionized the field of taxidermy by creating realistic displays of animals as they would be seen in their natural habitats. He founded the first American zoos, including the Bronx Zoo which is considered to be the best zoo in the United States to this day. Most notably, Hornaday is credited with saving the American Bison from extinction. He was also instrumental in the passing of the Fur Seal Treaty of 1911 and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. His pioneering methods are still the cornerstone of modern wildlife conservation around the world.

Our November program will be about Teresa Hershey, one of Texas’ great conservationist and namesake of Precinct 3’s Terry Hershey Park. This series is designed for students 7th grade and up as well as adults.

Houston Archeology Project
The Houston Archeological Society had a public dig on October 7. They demonstrated laying out and opening an excavation pit. The group then screened all the dirt from the pit so not even a small item would go undetected. They also operated a dig at the festival. Look for future opportunities to participate with the group at Kleb Woods on their Houston Archeology Society website.

German language classes
Formal German language classes continue with a German 1-A, a German 1-B class, and a German 2-A.. 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 group’s final jam at Kleb for 2017 was October 28. They will resume monthly jams at the nature center in January. Join them on the 4th Saturday of each month in the coming year. They play from noon until 4 p.m. and would love to have you come and join them or just sit and listen.

Photography BioBlitz
We held a photography bioblitz in October. Eighteen people came out and participated, including some local plant, dragonfly, reptile and amphibian experts. The group in aggregate gave us hundreds of pictures to document various life forms in the preserve. Several new species not previously identified were discovered during the day. It was such a success that we plan to have more in the future.

Birding activities
The weekly bird walks were surprisingly uneventful in October. One rather rare bird was encountered, a dark phase Broad-winged Hawk. These birds are from the northwest corner of the species’ range and are rarely found this far east during their southward migration. Of the hundreds of thousands of Broad-wings reported by hawk watchers in Texas annually, fewer than a dozen dark phase birds are typically seen. Other migrants seen passing through this October included Mississippi Kite, Gray Catbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson’s Warbler, Nashville Warbler and Indigo Bunting. The first Saturday bird walk had the pleasure of watching 212 Chimney Swifts exit the tower. Winter residents that returned in October included Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, Brown Thrasher, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned Warbler, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow.

On September 29, the Houston Audubon Society hosted a Swift Night Out at Kleb Woods. Pam Smolen gave a presentation about Chimney Swifts. Many were fascinated by the biology of these amazing aerial insectivores. At dusk, the group walked out to the parking lot, where they counted 337 swifts entering the Chimney Swift tower to roost for the night. The program concluded with Mary Anne Weber presenting two of her educational raptors which are known to prey on Chimney Swifts in the wild.

The September 29 Senior Birding Bus Trip visited Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory at the water treatment facility in Austin. The birding was slow, but the gorgeous Border Patch butterflies were worth the trip. Next, the group walked the nature trail
on Platt Lane, where a few migrants were seen. After lunch at a BBQ joint, they admired a few Ruddy Ducks at Walter E Long Lake. The final stop of the day was Webberville Park where hundreds of Black Vultures were coming in to roost. The group returned to Kleb Woods just in time for the Swift Night Out program.

The October trip went to Quintana near Freeport. Instead of the usual 7:00 a.m. departure time, this trip started at noon and first visited Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary. Participants found few migrants there, but an adult male American Redstart was cooperative. A Chuck-will’s-widow delighted those who caught a glimpse of it as it flitted among the salt cedars looking for a good place to roost and hide. At the Quintana Jetty there was a nice assortment of gulls, terns and shorebirds. The group studied the birds through a spotting scope, allowing them to see the distinguishing features. The best bird was a Red Knot in its gray winter plumage. There were also at least eight Lesser Black-backed Gulls, which is an unusually high number. The final birding stop was the Quintana xeriscape sanctuary. The highlight there were three Vermilion Flycatchers.

The seniors went to dinner at a local seafood restaurant and then made a quick stop at a Monk Parakeet roost site in Freeport. Then it was on to the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, where William Clark gave a presentation about his new book, Raptors of Mexico and Central America. The group enjoyed the talk and many bought the book for Mr. Clark to sign. The senior night owls returned to Kleb at 10:45 p.m.

**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 **November 3** trip to Lake Mitchell near San Antonio where we will look for late fall migrants and arriving winter species. You may now sign up for the **December 15** trip to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to look for Whooping Cranes and the **January 5** trip to Williamson County in search of Mountain Plover, Burrowing Owls and longspurs.

To sign up for these trips, [email klebwoods@pct3.com](mailto: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 November and December 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.