Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff at Kleb Woods Nature Preserve wish you a Happy Valentine’s Day and a memorable Presidents’ Day. We hope you will come enjoy the nature preserve and attend our nature and history programs. This month’s “A Closer Look at History” will be a birthday celebration in honor of our nation’s presidents. We will open presents that introduce some of our past presidents and then share their birthday cake.

Volunteer activities
The Tuesday volunteers have been highly productive this month, completing many projects and weekly tasks. The hard freeze early in the month froze back many of our hummingbird plants and the master gardeners have been busy cutting those back while the vegetable gardeners have cleaned up that garden and are formulating their plans for the coming season. Our woodworkers have completed a terrarium stand for Desi our Desert Kingsnake in the Young Naturalist Room. They are preparing 75 bird house kits for A Closer Look at Nature in February. The Yaupon’s Worst Nightmare Crew has completed the clearing in the remnant prairie area and will move on to other forest restoration work in February.

Eagle Scout projects
A young Eagle Scout candidate has been working on a new water feature for the park. It is on the south side of the nature center and features a flowing stream. It is an ambitious project and he was successful in getting many volunteers to do the excavation and ground contour work. It will be a great water feature that will benefit wildlife, especially birds, for many years. It promises to be one of the most attractive wildlife features this summer.

A Closer Look at Nature
The class in January was about owls. The kids learned some interesting facts about them with one focusing on features of their unique anatomy that allows them to utilize the dark of night while most creatures sleep. The class activity was dissecting Barn Owl pellets. The pellets are the indigestible remains of the owls’ dinner, primarily rats. The kids found the activity fascinating and just “gross enough” to be great fun. Future classes will be February 15: Build Your Own Bird House, March 29: All About Bats, April 19: Life in the Pond, and May 17: Aphids and Aphid Eaters (Ladybugs, Lacewings, and More!).
A Closer Look at History
There was no class in January, but future classes will be February 1: President’s Day, March 1: Texas Independence Day, April 5: The Road to San Jacinto, and May 3: World’s Fairs and Expositions.

History Discussion Group
The discussion in January was about the history of world’s fairs, and specifically about the New York World’s Fair in 1964/1965. What became known as the world’s fair began with the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. This fair was promoted by Prince Albert and Queen Victoria and featured the Glass Palace. Over the years, some of our most iconic structures have been exhibited at these fairs, including the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty. The 1964/1965 New York World’s Fair remains famous for the delicious Belgian waffles served at the Flemish Village exhibit, which became wildly popular following the fair. Participants at the discussion enjoyed Belgian waffles during the discussion, too. The fair is also remembered for introducing the world to some of Walt Disney’s most popular attractions—including It’s a Small World.

Our next history discussion on February 8 will be led by Barbara Pankratz, historian and former teacher, who will talk about Comanche captives from her hometown area of Comfort, Texas. The March 8 discussion will be about women’s suffrage in the West and will be led by historian and former history teacher Jay Gavitt. The April 12 discussion led by Fred Collins, park director and author, will discuss Gail Borden. Borden was a key figure in Austin’s Colony, the first newspaper publisher in Texas and the creator of Eagle Brand Milk and the Borden Milk company. The May 10 discussion will be about Mexican Revolution hero Pancho Villa, based on the book The General and the Jaguar: Pershing's Hunt for Pancho Villa: A True Story of Revolution and Revenge by Eileen Welsome.

Houston Archeology Society Project
The Houston Archeological Society (HAS) had a workday on January 21. HAS members continued to excavate to the west of the house to learn more about the soils at Kleb Woods and to explore the artifact deposits in that area. In the early afternoon, a group of boy scouts were shown how to excavate a unit and were provided with hands-on experience screening and identifying artifacts. Another group analyzed maps and historical aerials of Kleb Woods to learn more about Harrisburg (Harrisburg-Washington) Road and the potential that it may have crossed through the northern part of Kleb Woods.

The next HAS work day will be February 10. They have secured the Ground Penetrating Radar for the day and would love to have the public come out and learn more about this technology.

German language classes
Formal German language classes continue with a German 1-A, German 1-B, and German 2-A class. 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.
Birding activities

The weekly bird walks in January have been well attended and the birders have observed good diversity. The early severe cold temperatures have reduced the numbers of some species while increasing others. We finally have large flocks of American Goldfinches but are still looking for our first Pine Siskin of the winter. This is a banner year for Winter Wren with counts as high as five on the bird walk.

At left a White-throated Sparrow. At right. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Both photos from weekly bird walks by Kursten Tucker.

The January Senior Birding Bus Trip visited Williamson County where they succeeded in finding their target birds: Mountain Plover, McCown’s Longspur and Burrowing Owl. As a bonus they also found Short-eared Owl. This annual trip has rarely found all four of these species on the same trip, and to top the day off the weather was cool but extremely pleasant. The group also observed a White-tailed Hawk, which is rare in Williamson County.

At right, the group scans the field trying to see individuals of a small flock of about a dozen Mountain Plover. Photo by Glen Hill.
At left, a Mountain Plover is spotted out in a fallow field. Photo by Albert Holba.

At left, the group watches for an owl to be flushed by a few “bird dawgs”. Photo by Glen Hill.
At right, a Short-eared Owl is flushed showing its distinctive wing pattern. Photo by Albert Holba.
In addition to the special target birds the group found many other species: Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, Cooper’s Hawk, Wilson’s Snipe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Horned Lark, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Harris Sparrow, Fox Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow.

At left a Savannah Sparrow on a typical fence wire perch. At right, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Photos by Albert Holba.

**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 **February 23** trip to search for Northern Gannets, ducks and gulls in Galveston and/or the Bluewater Highway in Brazoria County. You may now sign up for the **March 23** trip to east Texas to look for Bachman’s Sparrow and Red-cockaded Woodpecker, the **April 6** trip to the Austin area to search for Golden-cheeked Warbler and the **April 27** trip to the coast to look for spring migrants. 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 February and March 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.