Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff wish you a cool fall as well as a happy and safe Halloween. October traditionally ushers in the first real cool fronts with dry air that ripens the seeds of grasses and wildflowers. It is harvest time for nature. Wild food is abundant so birds are not very dependent on feeders. The large numbers of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that blessed us at Hummingbird Festival ride these cool fronts to southern Mexico and Central America where they will stay until March. With their departure we welcome the arrival of the Rufous Hummingbirds that grace our feeders all winter. Many other species that winter on the Gulf Coast are also beginning to arrive.

Please save the date for “Diggin’ Old Stuff” on November 3. This fall festival has been moved back a couple of weeks this year in hopes of cool weather and less conflict with other events. The flyer is attached to the end of the newsletter and can also be found on Commissioner Radack’s home page www.pct3.com.

Volunteer activities
The Tuesday volunteers were busy with many maintenance items, trail trimming and preparation for Hummingbird Festival. They are highly productive, yet always things remain to be done. Taking care of 130 acres, miles of trails and more than 800 feet of boardwalk is a never-ending process. The vegetable gardeners have planted pumpkins and some other fall crops. They continue to pick beans, okra, and luffa, which is the spectacular yellow-flowered vine on the big trellis in the back of the garden. The master gardeners have continued upkeep of the butterfly and hummingbird flower beds as well as the heritage garden near the 1896 Kleb house. Master naturalists worked diligently to prepare the Wetland Trail for the nature walks at Hummingbird Festival. They also continue removing invasive plants. The woodworkers continue building shelves and working on maintenance items.

Hummingbird Festival
This was our 11th Annual Festival. The Hummingbirds and our Hummingbird bander, Sumita Prasad are the stars of the day. This year Sumita was able to catch more than 30 Hummingbirds, and visitors to the festival were able to see banding all through the day. There were so many Hummingbirds at the porch feeders that visitors were able to photograph them within three or four feet using their smart phones.

Although the forecasts throughout the week were fearful, the weather on festival day was wonderful and we registered more than a thousand guests. The visitors enjoyed the activities and displays. As always, Houston Audubon was a big hit with several live Hawks and Owls which everyone could see up close. For a more hands-on experience they also brought RC Cola, a beautiful Rooster that enjoyed being pet.
There were many educational activities that helped people understand the unique biology of Hummingbirds. One of the popular ones is about how much Hummingbirds eat. Hummingbirds consume about 20% of their weight each day in sugar. The kids weigh themselves on an antique freight scale and then calculate how much sugar they would have to eat if they had the metabolism of a Hummingbird. One young boy presented with about ten pounds of sugar wanted to run away with it claiming he could eat all that sugar, no problem!

A new game for the visitors this year was a Hummingbird migration game. They used dice to determine what station they advanced to next. The station may be a reward that sent them on their migratory way or it may be a difficulty that sent them back to a previous station. The activity was extremely popular and will be included again next year.

Another new activity this year was a bird house building demonstration. That booth saw over 100 visitors. As always the craft tables were active and all day kids could be seen walking about in their own bird mask creations. Always popular are the blacksmith demonstration in the barn’s blacksmith shop and the Kleb house tour led by volunteers from the Cypress Historical Society.

The nature walks were a big hit this year because due to a dry summer there were almost no mosquitoes to contend with. Participants learned about many plants and much about the forest ecology. It was great that nature cooperated with the master naturalists who led these walks.
We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the support of the Precinct 4 Constables who helped visitors park and kept the crowd secure. It is also a wonderful opportunity for the youngsters to interact with them and see their vehicles and other equipment.

At left, visitors learn about building bird houses. At right, festival attendees tour the Kleb Farm House. Photos by Truman Louderback.

**Closer Look at Nature**
This series returned in September with “A Closer Look at Hummingbirds.” In the classroom program, the kids learned about hummingbirds’ unique style of flight, their high metabolism and other interesting aspects of their biology. They then ventured into the park to play the hummingbird migration game. It was great fun to watch the kids confront the trials of hummingbird migration.

At left, kids play the Hummingbird migration game. At right, a girl (as a Hummingbird) finds a flower during her migration. Photos by Kendra Kocab.

**A Closer Look at History**
The September 20 class was a birthday party for Elmer Kleb, who was born on that day in 1907. The kids learned about Elmer as they unwrapped gifts representing different times of his life. As each gift was unwrapped, the kids tried to figure out its significance for Elmer. They had great fun and finished the class off with a chorus of “Happy Birthday” and a slice of birthday cake.
At left, the kids pose with Elmer’s cake and presents. At right, a girl unwraps Vulture feathers symbolizing Elmer’s unique pet. Photos by Megan Ahlgren.

**History Discussion Group**

The September 13 discussion was led by Paul R. Scott, CA, CRM, Harris County Archivist and Records Manager (retired). His topic was the Military History of Texas from 1822 to 1865, drawn primarily from the book *Riding for the Lone Star: Frontier Cavalry and the Texas Way of War, 1822-1965*, by Nathan A. Jennings, Denton. He also referenced about a half dozen other sources, including *Empire of the Summer Moon* and *The Saga of a British Redcoat Regiment in the American Revolution*. It was a wide ranging discussion about military history in general. They talked about how military history is often held in disdain. However war, and how a society handles it, is an important part of history and can tell us much about societies. There was a good deal of discussion about the Texas War of Independence, but the varied discussion prevented us from making it much beyond that. Paul also brought two pistols from the period so that participants could fully appreciate the advancement from a single shot weapon to one with multiple shots. Texas’ war innovation contribution was the use of revolvers on horseback. It was revolutionary in the 1840s. Perhaps a Part Two is in order for some time next year.

Our next HDG will be October 11 by Karli Pitman, Kleb Woods and Cypress Top historian. She will discuss the book *Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices: Women on Texas Cotton Farms, 1900-1940*. The book provides wonderful insights into the Kleb farm and its neighbors during the period.

**German language classes**

Formal German Classes resumed in September including German 1-A, German 1-B and 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. If you have any other questions, please contact Linda Martin-Rust at klebwoods@pct3.com.

**Native Plant Walks**

These walks are designed to introduce you to plant identification and, for more advanced naturalists, instruction about what characters distinguish similar species. They are led by two highly competent botanists who have volunteered their services which allows us to have the walks. The walks travel down various trails here at Kleb Woods and the botanists identify various plants. More often than not, they share tidbits about the plant’s biology, uses and folklore. The walks in September also included much discussion about various mushrooms as well. The next scheduled walks are Wednesday October 17 from 1:30-3:00 p.m. and Saturday October 20 from 10:30 a.m. to noon.

**Birding activities**

The weekly bird walks in September attracted good participation. The increase in participants corresponds with an increase in birds. Migration is in full swing. Flocks of Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts soar overhead, and the first few Broad-winged Hawks began to show up at the end of the month. Warblers are migrating through as well. Recently reported species include Prairie, Blue-winged, Mourning, Nashville, and Wilson’s Warblers. Some other fall migrants seen this month include: Tricolored Heron, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Kingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Baltimore Oriole, and Red-eyed Vireo.

Our first Rufous Hummingbirds have returned, and October should see the arrival of other wintering species.

The September Senior Birding Bus Trip was on the 28th and will be reported in the next newsletter.
Signing Up for Senior Birding Bus Trips (Must be at least 50 years old to go on these trips)

You may now signup for the **October 5** trip to Quintana and to hear Kevin Karlson speak about his book *Birds of Prey: Hawks, Eagles, Falcons, and Vultures of North America* (note: this trip will start and end later than usual and there is a fee required for the talk) and the **November 9** trip to Sabine Woods and Sea Rim State Park and the **December 7** trip to go to see the Whooping Cranes in the Aransas area. 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 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.