Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff wish you a Happy New Year. We hope you had a wonderful holiday season and were able to catch up with family and friends. It’s the time for resolutions. We resolve to make Kleb Woods Nature Preserve a better place for wildlife, and a better place for you to experience and learn about its nature and history. We have a full schedule of programs for kids and adults. This newsletter will give you a brief preview of what we offer in the New Year, as well as reporting on December activities.

Volunteer Activities
The Yaupon’s Worst Nightmare Crew began working in December. They meet on Mondays from 8:30 a.m. until about noon. They remove yaupon, privet, and other brush to maintain vegetation lines, promote tree growth, provide for pine regeneration, and protect prairie habitat. It is a great way to get exercise and also build hours if you are a Master Naturalist.

The Yaupon’s Worst Nightmare crew is pushing back the brush line on Draper Road, but protecting a patch of native Farkleberry. Photo by Fred Collins.

Tuesday Volunteers continue to stay busy with weekly chores that range from fixing equipment to sweeping the trail boardwalks, building cedar gates, caring for fruit trees, rehanging bird feeders and generally tidying up the grounds.

At left, volunteers clean up the heritage flower bed in anticipation of spring. At right, volunteers hang the cedar gates they built. Photos by Fred Collins.
The Vegetable Gardeners cleared out what was left of the dead plants and are taking a well-deserved break until spring. The Master Naturalists continue to control invasive and exotic species, as well as pitch in with the Yaupon’s Worst Nightmare Crew. The Woodworkers continue building shelves and working on maintenance items. They also started a new project, a miniature Kleb house for Purple Martins. They hope to have it completed and installed by mid-February.

The volunteers celebrated their year’s accomplishments with their Annual Christmas Party. They enjoyed the potluck dinner and a chance to visit without chores to do. The evening was again serenaded with Christmas tunes by dulcimer players. The evening put all of them in the Christmas spirit.

A Closer Look at History
There was no class in December. The January 17 class will be about the American Revolution and will focus on George Washington and his spies. Future programs will be about German immigrant experiences in early Texas and their trail of bones to New Braunfels, Austin’s Colony and the importance of his survey’s and maps, the pilgrims’ Jamestown and its importance to settling Texas, and the missions of Texas and their role in settling Texas.

Closer Look at Nature
The December 6 class was all about Sapsuckers. These distinctive Woodpeckers are often maligned because they are thought to damage trees. While they can sometimes damage fruit trees, particularly apple trees, they rarely cause serious injury to native trees. The kids learned how powerful the pecking force of Woodpeckers is, and how they have special adaptations to protect their brains. If we could only develop a helmet that worked as well as a Woodpecker’s skull we would not have to worry about most head injuries, even when playing football! The kids also learned what a peculiar tongue Woodpeckers have and how it is modified in Sapsuckers to help them lap up sap. They really should be called “Saplappers” instead of Sapsuckers.

History Discussion Group
The December History Discussion Group was led by Barbara Pankratz. Barbara is a retired teacher and historian. Her great-grandmother in San Antonio had close ties to the Mexican Revolution. She served as hostess at her father’s house when it was used by Revolutionary President Madero to hold clandestine meetings with Mexican agents during his exile. That personal connection has led Barbara to pursue the life, times, and movements of Pancho Villa, one of the Revolution’s most famous and controversial figures. This past October she visited Columbus, New Mexico, where Villa invaded the US in 1916. She was able to meet with the sole surviving daughter of Maude Wright, a woman that had been taken prisoner by Villa eight days before the Columbus Raid. He used her to hold the horses during the battle in Columbus and then, good to his word, released her following the battle. She walked back into the burning town covered in little more than a dirty serape.

These ladies had an after dinner card game. It became so rowdy it attracted onlookers. Photos by Mike Kuzio.

Future classes for the New Year will examine frogs, planting trees, eggs in nature, how fast baby birds grow, and spiders.
after her 100-mile ride through the mountains of northern Mexico with Villa and his men. Maude’s daughter befriended Barbara, and Barbara was able to share her insight with the group.

Above is Barbara, back center, showing pictures of her walking tour of Columbus, New Mexico, where Pancho Villa invaded the U.S. in 1916. Photo by Karli Pittman.

Upcoming discussions in January and February will examine some little known facets of George Washington’s life. We will review books, including Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger’s George Washington’s Secret Six: The Spy Ring That Saved the American Revolution and Peter Stark’s Young Washington: How Wilderness and War Forged America’s Founding Father. In March we will discuss WWII in the Pacific, focusing on the Marines.

**German language classes**

Formal German classes are in full swing, 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 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.

**Birding activities**

The weekly bird walks in December were highlighted by the weekly occurrence of a normally rare winter visitor: Purple Finch. These far northern Finches are rather uncommon even in North Texas, and to have them in good numbers on the weekly bird walks is a real treat. Red-breasted Nuthatches have settled in for the winter and are even visiting our feeders. We have had as many as four at a time. Most years we are very happy to have a single bird. We have also had Dark-eyed Junco several days, another bird typically more common further north.

At left, the female Purple Finch with its distinctive face pattern and deeply notched tail. Photo by Kendra Kocab. At right, the male with its unique “purple” color. Perhaps it should be named “Rose-colored” Finch. Photo by Fred Collins.
Currently there is a good size flock of Pine Warblers that circulate through the woods, passing the nature center once or twice a day. With them are Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets and Orange-crowned Warbler. Along with the birds that frequent the feeders near the nature center, it is a most entertaining group of birds.

A Brown Creeper, a winter favorite which gets its name from the way it creeps up the trunks of trees. Photo by Kirsten Tucker.

The December **Senior Birding Bus Trip** was scheduled to go to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Unfortunately the trip was cancelled due to heavy rain and local flooding. The January trip will be to Williamson County to search for Mountain Plover, Burrowing Owl and Longspurs.

**Signing Up for Senior Birding Bus Trips (Must be at least 50 years old to go on these trips)**

There is currently a waiting list for the **January 4** trip to Williamson County to look for Mountain Plover, Burrowing Owl, and McCown’s Longspur. You may now signup for the **February 1** trip which to the coast to look for Scoters, Gannets and wintering Gulls, and the **March 29** trip to look for Golden-cheeked Warblers. 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 January and February 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.