Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff wish you a safe and Happy Fourth of July, and hope you enjoy the concerts and professional fireworks displays. In 1776, a group of patriots (rebels in the eyes of England) declared our independence. The War of Independence drug on for six difficult, bloody years. Each side won and lost battles, but most often, the situation resulted in a stalemate. Finally, George Washington, with the help of the French, captured General Cornwallis’ army of 9000 troops and the battles ended. Two years later (1783), a peace treaty was signed. The independent colonies formed a confederation that did not function well. The states agreed to a Constitutional Convention held in 1787. After four months of debate, compromise and deliberation, a constitution was submitted to the thirteen colonies for ratification. When Ben Franklin emerged from the successful convention, he was asked what kind of government we now had. He replied “…a republic, if you can keep it.” With ratification in 1789, we became the United States of America. With that history in mind as we celebrate this joyous national holiday, let us remember this great experiment of our democratic republic and dedicate ourselves to keeping it.

Volunteer Activities
Tuesday Volunteers have remained active and productive even as the heat and humidity of summer settle onto Kleb Woods. They have worked on flowerbeds, repaired boardwalks, built garden trellises, picked up limbs, transplanted native plants and generally made themselves indispensable to the continued operation of the nature center grounds. The Woodworkers have organized the workshop and garage storage, repaired siding at Cypress Top Park, and built displays. They also took care of many weekly “honey-do” jobs in the Nature Center. The Vegetable Gardeners have been busy weeding and watering as well. They have tackled the wetland garden below the south porch that requires extra care as all wetland plants tend to grow aggressively. More master naturalists, who earn hours while volunteering, have recently joined these gardeners. Consequently, their tasks have grown accordingly. Their efforts to control invasive vegetation has expanded to our remnant prairie. Our volunteers invite you to join their ranks, just show up Tuesday morning about 9:00 a.m. and join the fun.

School Visitation Groups
On May 24, the Second Graders from Rosehill Elementary in Tomball ISD visited Kleb Woods. The 74 students, accompanied by 16 teachers and parents, were able to participate in many activities. These included a game where they learned about bird migration, a demonstration by our volunteer blacksmiths, a tour of the historical farm and 1896 Kleb House, a nature walk, a visit to the Nature Center, and a program about Sam Houston and his place in Texas history. The kids were as excited about being here as they were that school was almost over for the summer. It was a day filled with new experiences to end their school year.
History Discussion Group
Albert Holba, a Geophysicist PhD with a deep interest in naval combat, led the June discussion. His topic was “Turning around the U.S. Fortunes in the Pacific Theater of World War II.” After the Pearl Harbor attack, the US and its allies were desperately trying to deal with the Japanese offensive “Steam Roller.” The Allies had desperate shortages of ships, planes, and trained men. Many of the U.S. planes were obsolete and faced very effective Japanese aircraft. The "make do" Americans stopped Japanese offensive progress at Coral Sea and delivered a crushing defeat at the battle of Midway. The Guadalcanal/Solomons Campaign was a battle of attrition. Eventually American industrial productivity built up the Allied Forces sufficiently to overwhelm the Japanese. The Battles of the Philippine Sea and of Leyte Gulf sealed the defeat of the Japanese. Albert conveyed the personal side of these decisive battles by showing how the personalities of the various commanders influenced the battles’ outcomes.

The July 11 discussion will be about the removal of the buffalo from the Great Plains in the 1869-1879 period. It will draw from several books including *The Buffalo War: The History of the Red River Indian Uprising of 1874* by James L. Haley, and *The Border and the Buffalo: An Untold Story of the Southwest Plains* by John R. Cook. The August 8 meeting will be **A-bombs Away: August 6th and 9th, Living Under the Influence.**

Plant Walks
The June plant walk was on the 28th and will be reported in a future newsletter. Future summer walks will be July 26, and August 30.

Birding activities
The weekly bird walks in June are relatively slow and, more often than not, turn into more general nature walks. Birds are seldom more than summer residents, which are all familiar and expected. A special treat is usually a baby bird or a behavior seldom observed. In addition, flowers, dragonflies, butterflies, lizards and an occasional snake help spice up the walks.

A pair of Eastern Screech Owls has occupied a new nest box on Draper Path. Here an owlet peaks out. Photo by Megan Ahlgren.

The Senior Birding Bus Trip in May was to Sabine Woods, the Texas Ornithological Society’s Sanctuary near Sabine Pass. The trip was planned to catch the tail end of spring migration. Unfortunately, the winds favored the birds and not the birdwatcher and it was a relatively slow day. The birders had to work hard to pick out the few migrants scattered about the woods. Fortunately, there were some nice birds to be found with diligence and patience. Some of the notable species were Black-billed Cuckoo, four Thrush species, including Veery, and Blackburnian and Bay-breasted Warblers.
At left, a Common Grackle with a tadpole. At right, flowers of Wood Sorrel. Photos by Albert Holba.

At left, a Veery bathes while a Tennessee Warbler watches. Photo by Albert Holba. At right, a Northern Waterthrush. Photo by Truman Louderback.

At left, a Gray Catbird, one of the more common migrants. At right, a Bullfrog, a voracious predator. Photos by Albert Holba.
The group left the woods and visited Sea Rim State Park where they saw some birds of more open habitat, including shorebirds on the beach. One of the interesting sights at the park were Common Nighthawks. A pair was on territory, chasing each other in courtship. A third bird came to participate and the action intensified. Quickly the intruder was chased away.
Signing Up for Senior Birding Bus Trips (Must be at least 50 years old to go on these trips)

You may now sign up for the **July 12** trip to search for Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Swallow-tailed Kite, the **August 23** trip to Galveston and the Moody Gardens Rainforest Pyramid, and the **September 27** trip to the Hazel Bazemore Hawk Watch near Corpus Christi. To sign up for these trips, **email klebwoods@pct3.hctx.net** 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 May and June 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.