August brings the end to what most consider summer. The kids head back to school, and the experiences of summer vacation reside in our memory instead of our daily anticipation. For much of our flora and fauna, it is the end of the reproductive season: fruits are ripe, seeds set, and baby birds and mammals raised. Migratory birds begin to move in earnest and Hummingbirds start to line up to use the feeders at Kleb Woods. It is an easy time for most of nature’s young, with lots of easily accessible food. The sun changes its angle significantly and the afternoon skies seem bluer. Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff invite you to come out and enjoy the afternoon light and the bounty nature provides this month. Don’t forget to save the date of September 14, 2019 for our Annual Hummingbird Festival.

Volunteer Activities
Tuesday Volunteers continue their weekly contributions to the maintenance and improvement of the preserve and historic farm, even in the face of excessive heat and humidity. At least, the mosquitoes have been tolerable so far. Many of our volunteers take extended or numbered vacations since most are retired. Visiting grandkids across the country and visiting cool northern states are high on their to-do lists. In spite of these things, they continue to accomplish much each week, from clearing downed trees and limbs to weeding transplanted trees, gardens and beds. There is always something to repair and now that many of our boardwalks are approaching ten years of age, they are regularly replacing failing boards. The Woodworkers use their skills to help with weekly necessities, and are now focusing on the batten board replacement on a building in Cypress Top Historic Park. The Vegetable Gardeners’ delightful historic garden requires weeding and watering, as well as picking, more than once a week. I am sure Minnie Kleb would be happy to call it her own. The Butterfly and Hummingbird Gardeners have been busy tending flowerbeds and caring for young trees that they planted. These folks would welcome you to join them, just show up Tuesday morning about 9:00 a.m. and enjoy the free sauna treatment.

We were blessed to have the Cypress Stake Youth Service Project here for the third summer in a row. They brought more than 60 volunteers who were highly productive clearing Chinese Tallow Trees from a wetland, removing invasive Privet from the Farm Trail, and sanding moss and fungus off of about 150 feet of boardwalk. In the photo below, the kids in the back are on the huge pile of Tallow Trees and Privet they removed. We look forward to their return next summer.
Discovery Days

The program in July was called “Fun in the Farmhouse,” and was all about the farm chores and games that kids would have experienced around 1900 in the Kleb Family Farmhouse. The kids tried their hands at various farm chores. They beat rugs, filled the bathtub by carrying water from afar, washed clothes on a washboard, and churned cream to butter. After completing their chores, they played marbles and tried their balance on stilts.

Above, the kids experience what it was like to haul water to fill the bathtub. Photos by Kendra Kocab.

At left, a boy churns butter: “Is anything is happening?” Photo by Megan Ahlgren.
At right, two girls: “I can’t believe that’s butter!” Photo by Kendra Kocab.
At left, a girl washes a heavy pair of denim overalls. Photo by Kendra Kocab. At right, a young boy wrestles with the overalls. Photo by Megan Ahlgren.

At left, a young man tries his hand at rug beating. At right, a boy finds his batting form works well. Photos by Megan Ahlgren.

At left, the kids tour the 1896 Farmhouse and learn how people lived 100 years ago. At right, chores finished, a boy plays on stilts. Photos by Megan Ahlgren.
There are three more Discovery Days scheduled for August. The “A Closer Look at Nature” and “History Classes” will return in the fall. See the calendar for topics and dates.

**History Discussion Group**
The July 11 discussion was about the removal of the buffalo from the Great Plains from 1869 to 1879. It drew 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 Haley book explains how many actions far from the plains came to bear directly on events that would unfold there. At the time, the plains were still the stronghold of the Comanche and other buffalo Indians. The Haley book correctly points out how every treaty from 1854 onward was violated by the United States. Since the U.S. did not uphold its end, the Native People had little choice but to violate the treaties as well. Consequently, the U.S. sent troops to return the natives to their reservations. After the Civil War, the U.S. turned its full power to the "Indian problem," primarily with the use of African American Union soldiers (known to the Indians as Buffalo Soldiers). Within a short span of time the tribes were decimated, their precious buffalo were all but extinct, and the Native Americans were vanquished. They were sent to paltry living conditions on reservations only a small fraction as large as originally agreed to. It was a shameful episode in American history.

However, the period did include small battles of legend. There was despicable horror and behavior on both sides, but gallantry and demonstrations of bravery on both sides as well. Perhaps the most famous of the battles was the 2nd Battle of Adobe Walls. The Comanche Medicine Man had convinced Quanah Parker that they would be immune to the buffalo hunter’s bullets. About 700 braves attacked 27 hunters and trade post residents. The hunters repulsed the initial attack and then kept the Native Americans at bay with their buffalo guns. On the third day, Billy Dixon had “the shot.” He killed a brave that was sitting on his horse almost a mile away as the natives counseled what they should do. The Native Americans, realizing they were not immune to the bullets, gave up the fight.

The next History Discussion group will be August 8. We will look back at the use of the atomic bombs that ended the war with Japan, closing out World War II.

**Plant Walks**
The July Plant Walk was late in the month and will be reported in the next newsletter. Join us for the August 30 Plant Walk scheduled for 9 a.m.

**Birding activities**
This summer, licensed bird banded Simon Burton began a MAPS banding station at Kleb Woods. MAPS, which stands for “Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship”, is a continent-wide effort to monitor birds during the breeding season. The goal is to assist with the conservation of birds and their habitats. On nine days throughout the summer, birds were captured in mist nets and banded. Each band has a unique number so the bird can be individually identified if it is recaptured. Before it is released, data is collected for each bird to document species, age, sex, feather molt, signs of breeding, weight, and wing length. The majority of birds captured at Kleb Woods are Northern Cardinals, Carolina Wrens, and Blue Jays. Other birds banded this year include a Carolina Chickadee, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Swainson’s Thrush, and even a Rufous Morph Eastern Screech-Owl. The hope is to recapture some of these birds over the course of the summer and in the years to come. In doing this, Simon can help gather valuable information to contribute to the MAPS program.

The Weekly Bird Walks in July are often hot and without too many unusual birds. However, during this time post-breeding dispersal is in full display. Many species of birds begin breeding early. Great Horned Owls and Great Blue Herons begin egg laying in late December and January. Southern songbirds like Chickadee, Titmouse and Pine Warbler usually have hatchlings in early March. Consequently, they have completed their nesting activity for the year by July, and both adults and young begin to widen their area of travel and explore nearby habitats. Many species that breed close to Kleb but not within the forest show up in July, often singing and acting like breeding birds. This year Eastern Wood-Pewee, Black-and-white Warbler, and Hooded Warbler have appeared. Moreover, by the second half of the month we start to see southbound migrants filtering through as well. The Empidonax Flycatchers and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are some of the first fall migrants.

The June Senior Birding Bus Trip went to various places across Harris County searching for the numerous exotic introduced birds in the area. The group first went to the Sugarland area where they found a family of Mute Swans with Cygnets. The young Swans were still downy and gray just like an ugly duckling.

The group then headed to El Franco Lee Park in south Houston where they hoped to find an exotic Finch or two. Unfortunately, they came up empty there for exotic species but still found some interesting birds including a nocturnal Common Nighthawk flying about during the day.

The next stop was a neighborhood filled with big pecan trees. There they found Monk Parakeets at the CenterPoint transfer station at the edge of the neighborhood. In the neighborhood, they found a plethora of Peafowl, mostly dazzling Peacocks but also a few Peahens with trailing chicks.
Then it was off and up to the Heights where the group had lunch at one of their favorite restaurants. After lunch, they went in search of the Red-vented Bulbul, which were easily found but not photographed.

The final stop of the day was at Lake Anne in Summerwood. There the Seniors found twenty-plus Egyptian Geese to end their day’s quest.

**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 **August 23** trip to Galveston Island and Moody Garden’s Rainforest Pyramid, the **September 27** trip to the Hazel Bazemore Hawk Watch and the **October 18** trip to a coastal location TBD. 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 August and September can be found on the [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) website at Activity Calendars.

**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.