Summer officially comes to an end in September. Many animals are well into their fall migrations by now. Most of the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds migrate to Central America during the month, and their peak migration is mid-September. That is why we hold our Annual Hummingbird Festival in September. Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff invite you to come out and enjoy the Annual Hummingbird Festival on September 14, 2019 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is free and open to all. [http://www.pct3.com/Portals/45/docs/news/hummingbird_fest.pdf](http://www.pct3.com/Portals/45/docs/news/hummingbird_fest.pdf)

### Volunteer Activities

*Tuesday Volunteers* have remained busy during August and look forward to cooler weather in September. They have been busy with regular maintenance and getting ready for Hummingbird Festival. They have trimmed trails, prepared signs, repaired boardwalks, and generally made the entire preserve as appealing as possible for the many new visitors we see each year at the festival. The *Woodworkers* have made several repairs to the barn and birdhouses. The *Vegetable Gardeners'* historic garden is morphing into a fall garden and requires even more weeding and watering. The luffa are again outstanding, and the luffa arbor has become a favored spot for photographers. The *Butterfly and Hummingbird Gardens* really come into their prime in late summer and fall. Their blooms are a welcome reward for the gardeners' year-round care. The butterflies and Hummingbirds show their approval every day during migration. If you would like to join any of these active volunteers, they will welcome you. Just show up Tuesday morning about 9:00 a.m. and enjoy great camaraderie and a productive morning.

Another Eagle Scout candidate completed his Eagle Project in August. He and his crew removed and replaced one of our older boardwalks. They put in three tough, hot workdays to complete the approximately seventy-five foot boardwalk. The first day was demolition of the old boardwalk.

At left, the old sections of boardwalk are cut and hauled out. At right, all is removed except the old posts. Photos by Megan Ahlgren.

The second day was installing twenty-seven posts and the stringers. The third day was decking, trim and clean-up. His crew included some carpentry-talented adults who were able to teach the scouts how to handle hammers, squares and other tools. They did a marvelous job, and the new boardwalk should last ten years or more.
At left, the Scouts fasten the decking on the boardwalk; the red-shirted Eagle Scout candidate supervises the workers. At right, the final boards are nailed down. Photos by Megan Ahlgren.

**Discovery Days**

We had several Discovery Days in August. The first was *Being a Blacksmith*. The kids watched a blacksmith demo and then tried their own hands at some metalwork. They used punches and hammers to press their name or initials into metal. Then they worked a piece of iron stock with sandpaper and watched the ugly rusty metal turn into a clean shiny silver. They were truly impressed that they could so dramatically change the appearance of the metal.

At left, Blacksmith Dave forges a piece of red-hot steel. At right, he explains the procedure to the kids. Photos by Amber Leung.
The second Discovery Day Program in August was Goodness Snakes Alive! This program was all about snakes, with a focus on identification of Texas snakes. Snakes are among the most significant rodent control on earth, and are highly beneficial for the environment. Clint “The Snake Man” Pustejovský brought several live snakes, including representatives of the venomous snakes of Texas. While the venomous snakes remained in their enclosures, several kid-friendly snakes could be handled. These included a 9-foot Burmese Python that took several adults to hold. The kids and some of their parents were impressed to touch the python and other snakes. It was a great snake-friendly educational experience for the kids.
The final Discovery Day of the summer was *An Avian Adventure*, which featured live birds of prey from the Houston Audubon Society. The HAS staff brought out a number of raptors and allowed the kids to see each one up close. While the kids admired the feathered treasures, the HAS staff told the kids about special features of each bird and allowed the kids to often see these unique features on the live bird. It was a great way for the kids to learn a lot about basic bird biology while they enjoyed the sights and sounds. *A Closer Look at Nature and History Classes will return in September. See the calendar for topics and dates.*

**History Discussion Group**

The August discussion was led by Fred Collins and titled *The A Bomb: Living Under the Influence*. The discussion began with the conclusion of World War 2 in late 1944 to August of 1945. The critical battles of Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa became increasingly brutal, deadly and disastrous for civilian populations. It was clear that an invasion of the Japanese homeland would be costly to Allied Forces, and even more deadly to the civilian population of Japan than to the military involved. Dropping the atomic bomb to bring a swift end to the war literally saved millions of lives. The development of the bomb was in response to belief that Germany had or would soon have one. Whoever had it first would win the war. It was a monumental task, the most costly weapon development in history in terms of percentage of GDP. The group discussed the German program and the Allied response to it. Finally, the discussion moved to the Cold War and growing up with school air raid drills. We had some members of the group relate their eyewitness accounts of atomic bomb testing in Nevada. One man told about loading and maintaining bombs on U.S. aircraft in Germany during the height of the Cold War in the late 60s and early 70s. His personal knowledge was an interesting addition to the discussion. We were happy to have a record attendance for the group, and hope as many of you will join us next month when we discuss Hayne Dominick’s story from the book *March of Death*: An American Soldier’s 1,216 days as a P.O.W. of the Japanese. Mr. Dominick was a relative of one of our regular participants.

**Plant Walks**

The late July plant walk focused on wetland plants and most of the walk was at Walter’s Pond in front of the Nature Center. The variety of plants that have found this relatively new pond is surprising. The leaders showed the group how to distinguish each species. More than 30 species were identified and discussed around the pond. The August 30 plant walk will be reported next month. Please consult the calendar for dates and times of our fall walks.
Birding activities

The **weekly bird walks** in August always begin to turn up fall migrants and this year has been no exception. Early migrants found on the walks have included Mississippi Kite, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Orchard Oriole, Black-and-white Warbler, and Dickcissel. We expect that list to rise substantially in the final walk of August and into September.

The July **Senior Birding Bus Trip** was planned as a black and white birding quest. The first bird to be found was the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Contrary to its name, it normally appears as only a black and white woodpecker. The seniors traveled to the William Goodrich Jones State Forest on FM 1488 near I-45. They soon found a group of three of these very special woodpeckers. This endangered species is virtually unknown beyond the borders of forest reserves specifically managed for their benefit. They are unique among North American woodpeckers in making roost and nest holes in living pine trees. They create sap wells around the roost holes that continually ooze sap. This sticky sap protects the birds from rat snakes.

The group found many other species at the forest. Two of the favorites are the large Pileated Woodpecker and the show-stopping Red-headed Woodpecker. Of course, the butterflies and wildflowers added to the enjoyment of the outing.
After satiating their woodpecker appetite, the Seniors headed east to the Macedonia area north of Dayton. There they found their second black and white quarry, the Swallow-tailed Kite. This elegant hawk is a superb and agile flier, and the Seniors watched it dive and pluck dragonflies from the air. They consumed the dragonflies while still in flight. It was an impressive display. There were many related Mississippi Kites in the air as well. They used longer and deeper dives to catch dragonflies. Spectacular but without the great finesse of the Swallow-tailed Kites.
The final quest for the day was after one of North America’s largest birds, the Wood Stork. This bird, too, is black and white. The group traveled out Highway 90 east and found the birds in their traditional roost site near Nome. They were able to see about 60 of the large Storks, and most who cared to took pictures with which they were pleased.
At left, a close up of a Wood Stork. At right, a group comes in to land in a tree. Photos by Sid Ehler.

Following the wonderful Wood Stork show, the Seniors enjoyed a late afternoon McCafe before calling it a day and heading back to Kleb Woods.

**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 **September 27** trip to the Hazel Bazemore Hawk Watch and the **October 18** trip to a coastal location TBD and the **November 22** trip to the central coast to see Whooping Cranes. 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 Community Calendars. There should also be a link from the Kleb Woods’ Park 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.