Steve Radack, Commissioner
Harris County Precinct 3
Kleb Woods Nature Preserve
October 2019

Fall has arrived and its signs are all around us. Most noticeable are the shortening days and earlier evening sunsets. Other signs are migrating animals: monarch butterflies, wandering glider, green darner dragonflies, and, of course, birds. In late September, many wintering species appeared after an absence since this past March: Rufous Hummingbirds, American Kestrels, and Northern Flickers are examples. The cooler temperatures that will surely come in October will make outings to the park more pleasant. We invite you to come enjoy fall migration at Kleb Woods.

It is also the season for fall festivals, and we hope you will save the date for our annual Diggin' Old Stuff Heritage Festival. The Houston Archeological Society will be here so your children may participate in one of the research digs they are conducting here at Kleb Woods. The Festival will be November 2, 2019 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is free and open to all. http://www.pct3.com/Portals/45/docs/news/old-stuff.pdf

Volunteer Activities
In spite of the heat, Tuesday Volunteers worked diligently preparing for our annual Hummingbird Festival. They did a great job trimming trails, cleaning signs, repairing boardwalks, and generally making the entire preserve as appealing as possible for the many new visitors we see each year at the Festival. The Woodworkers hung new pictures in the building and engineered better tarp arrangements for the festival. The Vegetable Gardeners' Historic Garden is winding down. They had it looking great for the festival in spite of some pesky raccoons that decided to claim the remaining watermelons and harvest the sunflowers!

The Butterfly and Hummingbird Gardeners have worked hard to keep each bed watered and weeded. Visitors to the Festival were able to see how the various nectar and pollinator plants could be used to full advantage in their own gardens at home.

If you have been thinking about joining any of these volunteers, they will welcome you. The cooler weather October typically brings makes it a great time to start. Just show up Tuesday morning about 9:00 a.m. and enjoy congenial camaraderie and a productive morning. The Heritage Vegetable Garden Volunteers meet every Saturday morning shortly after 8 a.m. if you would like to join them.
Hummingbird Festival

The Annual Festival was again a great success thanks to the concentrated efforts of the **63 volunteers** that showed up to help during the day. **1,372 visitors were registered.** Of these, **675 were new visitors to Kleb Woods Nature Preserve, and 543 had never attended a nature event.** Licensed Hummingbird bander, Sumita Prasad captured and banded 30 Hummingbirds, much to the delight of visitors who were able to see the birds up close. Jim Renfro, another licensed Hummingbird bander, assisted her. If seeing the birds up close in Sumita’s hand was not enough, thirty lucky people had the special experience of releasing a Hummingbird from their own hands.

![At left, the fascinated kids and parents watch a Hummingbird being banded. At right, a Hummingbird gets a drink of sugar water before release. Photos by Amber Leung.](image_url)

Visitors enjoyed other activities at the Festival as well. Always popular are the presentations by Houston Audubon Society’s Mary Anne Weber. She is a natural history educator, licensed to keep and display wild birds including Hawks and Owls. Mary Anne and fellow educator Jeanette Lambert did several educational programs during the day. They also displayed a collection of bird skins so visitors could see and examine features of bird anatomy up close. The photographers loved the live birds and were busy all day shooting close-ups of Houston Audubon’s beautiful birds.

![Above, the audience listens to the Houston Audubon program and enjoys watching the Barn Owl. Photo by Amber Leung.](image_url)
There is always a variety of activities for children at the Hummingbird Festival. Some of these include learning about the wingspans of various birds, how much energy and food Hummingbirds require, and how banding birds helps us learn about where and when they move across the continent.

The Texas Master Naturalists led nature walks down the Wetland Trail throughout the day so visitors could learn about the flora and fauna of the Kleb Forest. The Festival also gives people a chance to see the Historic Kleb House and learn about the culture of a farm in the early twentieth century. Volunteers gave people tours of the house and our volunteer blacksmith did demonstrations throughout the day.
History Discussion Group
The September discussion was led by Charles Peterson. His uncle was one of the greatest generation. Charles talked about his Uncle 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. The can-do attitude of the GIs during the Philippines defense is inspiring. They were surprised when their Generals surrendered them. They were appalled with the treatment they received from the Japanese. However, they never lost hope that they could survive and return home. They persevered and a few lucky men did make it home after the War ended. They were surprised that they came home to a hero’s welcome and were forever honored for what they endured. 16 million Americans served in WW2. There were 12,000 POW survivors of the Japanese. The fact that in our discussion group of 20, six knew someone among those 12,000 men was a great surprise.

The October discussion will be led by Barbara Pankratz, a former history teacher, and will be about the book: The Storm On Our Shores by Mark Obmascik. This book reflects on the little known invasion of Attu Island in Alaska by the Japanese during WW2.

Plant Walks
The August 30 Plant Walk made the most of an extended dry spell by focusing on the marsh near the bird blind. The unusually dry ground allowed participants to learn the characteristics of more than 30 wetland plant species. They examined
Swamp Smartweed, Mermaidweed, Marsh Seedbox, Squarestem Spikerush, and Green Flatsedge, which all prefer to live in wet soils. The Bonesets, Camphorweeds, and Mistleflowers around the wetland produce blooms that are attractive to pollinators. The native Common Persimmon trees were full of fruit that will support our native wildlife. The next plant walks are scheduled for October 16, November 20, and December 18 at 1:30 p.m.

**Birding activities**

The **weekly bird walks** in September focused on migration and late summer wanderers. The most surprising find for the month was a very early Red-breasted Nuthatch, which appeared near the nature center during Hummingbird Festival on September 14. The furthest south any other had made it by then was Kansas! We wonder if this Nuthatch is the one that spent last winter with us. Another good fall migrant was a Mourning Warbler on the September 18 bird walk.

The August **Senior Birding Bus Trip** was to Galveston Island where the Seniors watched a tidal area on East Beach. In just 30 minutes, they saw 30 species. They lingered longer at the site to photograph and enjoy views of coastal birds.

The group, chased away from the jetty area by a thunderstorm, drove toward Sportsman Road on the west end of the island. There, sitting on a channel marker far...far...out in the bay, was a Brown Booby. This was once a rare species in Texas, but in the last 5 years, it has become an annually occurring species. After a fancy U-turn by the 40-foot bus in a 30-foot circle, the Seniors were off to lunch at a local buffet. Once everyone had their fill, they waddled over to Moody Gardens and visited the Rainforest Pyramid for some cool indoor bird watching.
The tropical birds in the Rainforest Pyramid were most challenging to identify. The birds could have been from anywhere in the world, and many were from families not represented among North American birds. They were flying about and hiding in vegetation just as wild birds do, so the first task was to get a good look. Then you had to try to figure out what family of birds it was from before even attempting to identify the species. A brochure had some species pictured and identified, but most birds in the rainforest were not on the brochure. We later obtained a partial list from an employee, but it too was not complete. By the time we left, we had identified all but one species. That bird was finally identified the following day. In all, we had 32 bird species in the pyramid and ended the day with 92 species counting those in the rainforest.
Two species from West Africa, a Blue-bellied Roller (left) and a Bearded Barbet (right). Photos by Barbara Heaton.

A variety of pigeons from Southeast Asia. At left, a Western Crowned-Pigeon. Photo by Sid Ehlert. Center, an Imperial Pied-Pigeon. At right, a Mindanao Bleeding-heart. Photos by Albert Holba.

At left, an Ocelot. Photo by Frank Hudspeth. Center, a White-faced Saki. At right, a Two-toed Sloth. Photos by Sid Ehlert.
The final stop of the trip was the giant Buc-ee’s in Texas City. With afternoon fortifications, the Seniors listed the birds they had seen for the day and reminisced about the wonders of tropical birding so close to Houston in the Rainforest Pyramid.

**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 **October 18** trip to a coastal location TBD, the **November 22** trip to the central coast to see Whooping Cranes, and the **December 6** trip to Lake Conroe and Lake Limestone. 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 October and November can be found on the [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com) website at Community Calendars or a link may be found on the Park 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.