Commissioner Steve Radack and his staff welcome you to walk in our park. Due to the COVID-19 precautions, we have suspended all of our scheduled classes and activities, including volunteer workdays, until the threat becomes manageable. The Nature Center remains open with some areas now restricted and limits on the number of people in the building at one time. While activities are tentatively set to resume on June 1, this is subject to change as the current situation evolves. Please call 281-357-5324 or visit www.pct3.com for information and updates to the park calendar.

The highlights of spring have passed without us having our normal activities. We regret not being able to share the wonders of this season, such as the vibrant flowers and migrating birds, with participants in walks and classes. The park is slipping into its summer “dress” with more green grass, mature and seed laden wildflowers, fledgling birds, croaking frogs, pesky mosquitoes, heat, and humidity. While it still has its moments, summer is never as pleasant and exhilarating as spring. Never the less, we hope to have an opportunity to share its special moments with you.

Volunteer Activities
While our volunteer workdays are still suspended, some individuals stop by to work on projects on their own. They help keep the bird feeders full, maintain the ponds and flowerbeds, pick up litter, and work on new activities and displays for the Park. They appreciate the diversion and ability to be productive. The vegetable garden is growing well even though only a single volunteer is maintaining it. We miss our Tuesday Volunteers that normally construct era-appropriate trellises and tomato cages for the growing plants. Recently the staff erected a makeshift pole bean trellis reminiscent of what Elmer Kleb might have improvised. Hopefully, the beans will climb it.

Kleb Critter Report
This is a record year for Broad-headed Skinks spotted around Kleb Woods Nature Center. Skinks are slender lizards that are commonly mistaken for snakes due to their short legs and almost no noticeable neck. Two species of Skink found in our area are often confused. Male Broad-headed Skinks are easily identified by their very large, bright orange heads that are even larger and brighter orange during the breeding season.
However, female and juvenile Broad-headed Skinks are difficult to distinguish from Five-lined Skinks. To differentiate between the two species, you must count the scales along their upper lip: Broad-headed Skinks have 5 scales, while Five-lined Skinks have 4 scales. Most photos do not show that level of detail. So far, only Broad-headed Skinks have been positively identified at Kleb Woods, and they are out in droves this spring. In fact, one adventurous male Broad-headed Skink found his way into the nature center to surprise our staff members. After a little bit of excitement, the Skink was sent on his way back to the woods to embark on more adventures around the nature preserve.

The dark Green Tree Frog pictured above was found taking a nap on the widowsill outside the Nature Center one humid May morning. Often heard calling before a rain storm, Green Tree Frogs (*Hyla cinerea*) are commonly found in backyards across the state. These frogs can range in color from dark green/brown to lime green. Their pigment often changes in response to environmental factors, such as temperature, humidity or brightness of light.

American Bullfrogs have been very vocal at Kleb Woods. You can find many of them at Walter’s Pond across from the Nature Center. Even if you don’t see them, you are likely to hear their deep bellows emanating from the vegetation. Walter’s Pond is a thriving ecosystem where visitors can expect to see different species of aquatic plants, frogs, fish, snakes,
dragonflies, and other aquatic insects. You might also spot animal tracks in the mud along the edge of the pond as squirrels, raccoons, and other animals make use of this water source. One raccoon was recently photographed in a tree near Walter’s Pond.

It is also the season for armadillo broods. A group of siblings was recently discovered foraging behind our workshop and storage area. Armadillos are unique in many ways but the brood demonstrates one of their most unique traits. Every armadillo has three identical siblings. In their reproductive cycle a single egg is produced and divides twice before it implants, thereby ensuring every armadillo is one of four identical same sex quadrupelets. The young siblings hang together for the summer and will not begin a solitary life until the fall and winter. Its always fun to watch a new brood explore the world together, searching out tasty grubs and other invertebrates in the ground.

At left, the brood thinks they have a prize. At right, several forage in leaf litter while one discovers metal is not a place to look. Photos by Sierra Ridley.

**Plant Walks**

We hope to resume plant walks in the fall. Until then, our plant experts, Charles and Paul, are still making regular visits on their own to add new species to our ever-growing park list. They recently added 20 new plant species in one visit! We are fortunate to have these enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers.

**Birding Activities**

Late April and early May brought surprising weather that made the last vestiges of spring quite pleasant. Many visitors came to the Park during the unseasonably cool temperatures. The fronts that brought this pleasant weather also encouraged migrating birds to stopover in the Park during their northward journey. Some winter residents, like Cedar Waxwings, have not yet felt the impulse to migrate. They have shifted their frugivorous diet from the tiny red yaupon berries that ripen in the winter to mulberries, which appear in April. Many other birds are found in pairs as they court, build nests, and care for their young. Tufted Titmouse chicks can be seen emerging from their nest boxes, and some Eastern Bluebirds are busy raising their second brood for the season.

The weekly bird walks could resume in June, as social distancing is not difficult during bird watching. Please call or check our calendar for updates.

At left, a Cedar Waxwing reaches for a mulberry. Photo by Sarah Kuzio. At right, a pair of Northern Cardinals. Photo by Steven Paultanis.
At left, a Tufted Titmouse chick looks out from its nest box. At right, a male Eastern Bluebird surveys his territory. Photos by Sarah Kuzio.

A Closer Look at Nature and History
Due to COVID-19, the next “A Closer Look at Nature and History” classes will not be until the fall. It is uncertain if we will have any summer programming, so please continue to check our calendars.

History Discussion Group
Our next history discussion group is tentatively scheduled for June 11, but please check the calendar for updates. We will discuss the book by John M. Barry entitled *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*. It seems timely to look at the most deadly pandemic in modern history as a backdrop to what we are currently experiencing. Staff Historian Brigid Burke, no doubt with occasional interruptions by director Fred Collins, will lead this discussion.

Auditorium Quilts
Those who have been to any classes at Kleb Woods may have noticed the quilts hanging in the auditorium. Director Fred Collins did not select just any quilt for the wall; each one had to have a story. Recently, our staff historian researched the quilts and created interpretive signs so that we can all appreciate their significance.
Senior Birding Bus Trips
The May Senior Birding Bus trip was cancelled due to the COVID-19 precautions.

Signing Up for Senior Birding Bus Trips (Must be at least 50 years old to go on these trips)
Since social distancing is an impossibility in an enclosed bus and Seniors are considered a higher risk group, we have decided to cancel our June 5 trip to the look for exotic bird species in the Houston area, and the July 10 trip to search for Wood Stork, Swallow-tailed Kite, and Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

We will continue to take reservations for bus for future bus trips. Registrants will be notified of any changes or cancellations. We are hopeful that the August 28 trip will be feasible.

To sign up for the August trip, 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 June and July can be found on the 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 for more information.

This Fox Squirrel just showed up May 14, no doubt released by someone who did not want it in their yard. It is very tame. Perhaps the homeowner where it came from fed it. It is tame and naïve but a mature male. It allowed this photo with a phone camera. Fox squirrels no longer occur at Kleb Woods, having been naturally displaced by Gray Squirrels. This lone Fox Squirrel unafraid of humans may unfortunately meet his end with Kleb’s resident Bobcat, or Gray Fox, or Cooper’s Hawk or Great Horned Owl. Whoever brought it here thinking it may have a beautiful new home, has actually put it in great peril by placing a tamed wildlife species where it does not belong.