

# El Llanero

the newsletter of the Sibley Nature Center

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

October 20, 2005

## Living history comes to the Sibley Nature Center

“What is a nature center doing holding a living history event?”

That is a legitimate question – blunt and to the point. Simply put, “nature” is an artifact of past human endeavor. The nature that surrounds us now is product of choices that we west Texans have made in the past. For thousands of years west Texas was a buffalo prairie. By setting grassfires to rejuvenate the quality of the grass, the pre-settlement Indians maintained what we late-comers called wilderness.

In the late 1870’s we killed off of the buffalo

and brought cattle here. We began raising crops, and around Lubbock we virtually erased “nature,” and instituted a grid of farms in that region that imposed our will on the landscape.

The time period from 1850 to 1880 is the time when “nature” changed. What changed it? The answer is easy; the defeat of Comanche and the Apache and the annihilation of the great southern buffalo herd.

Citizens of the region should know the stories of the men and women that settled west Texas during that time period.

The role of history

is twofold; to learn about our place of residence, our home region, and to learn about ourselves. History is more than just dates and events. It is also about people and how they deal with the forces of human history beyond their control.

At a living history event, the audience participates — asking the re-enactors to tell their stories and to explain the use of each artifact.

**SEE YOU**

**OCT. 29TH**

**10 A.M.—5 P.M.!**

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## MEMBERS-ONLY FUNCTION OCTOBER 28TH 6 P.M.

From 6 p.m until 7.30 p.m. come talk with Montie Goodin, the executive director of the Charles Goodnight Historical Center. Come chat with the re-enactors that have come from all over

West Texas to present their stories to almost 900 Midland schoolchildren earlier that day, and who will present their stories to the public on the 29th. Meet the board of directors of the Sibley Nature

Center, too!

A light snack and drinks will be served in the Sibley Center library, and members can tour the encampments of the re-enactors as the sun sets.

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### Special points of interest:

- *Living History at the Sibley Nature Center – October 28th for Midland Schools and October 29th for the public*
- *Strategic Planning*
- *Sandhill Cranes*

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ALL OF THE DISPLAYS?

The previous displays had been utilized for 5 years. It served as a broad introduction to west Texas ecology and history.

As part of the strategic planning process that the board of directors of the Sibley Nature Center initiated this summer, an organizational analysis was performed.

After listening to hours of

input from a wide variety of people, a plan began to emerge — to utilize the large entry room in several new ways; a bigger sales area, a welcome to Sibley display, a display about the trail, a display area for other groups that celebrate west Texas, and a small alcove for seasonal displays.

A new teaching display is being designed for the “lab.” Af-

ter discussions with MISD representatives, we decided to focus on plant and animal adaptations to the varied conditions and habitats of the Llano Estacado. The Llano divides the humid and forested ecosystems to the east from the arid desert grass and brushland ecosystems to the west.

The new arrangement will be completed by spring.

## PHASE TWO OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Four nature centers in Texas (Amarillo, Wichita Falls, Boerne, and Kerrville) have been selected for study by a committee of the board of directors of the Sibley Nature Center. Each has a market area similar to the Sibley Center. Each site will be visited this fall and winter to be compared and contrasted with the Sibley Center.

Another committee of the board of directors is researching grounds development ideas ranging from landscaping to construction of new buildings. New signage at the entry to Sibley was their first concern.

Executive Director Burr Williams is developing a unified curriculum plan, coordinating presentations, displays, and me-

dia utilization.

“Strategic plans are absolutely necessary. A strong strategic plan takes a year or more to complete,” Non-Profit Management Center Director Cookie Wetendorf informed the board of directors of the Sibley Center earlier in the year. “Do it right and it will pay immense dividends!”

## Thank you, supporting donors!

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# SANDHILL CRANES — THE WINTERTIME ICON OF THE LLANO ESTACADO

The bugling clarion of sandhill cranes circling high draws me outside to search the limitless sky. If I am lucky the cranes are low enough to be seen. Frequently though, their voices are the only evidence of their presence, resounding like angels, purity without corporeality.

Their trumpeting speaks of the centuries. Archaic Indians, the Folsom culture, mammoths and dire wolves all heard the cranes. In migration, cranes fly as high as 13,000 feet and travel at night. Winter foragers soar purely for pleasure on clear warm afternoons—there is no other explanation.

Hearing them, their call

infiltrates my being. If I could only join their flight...if I only could!

Cranes demonstrate an intelligent curiosity. The cranes' analytical watchfulness draws upon extensive memory. Their vision is as far-reaching as their voices, encompassing two miles or more.

Thousands of sandhill cranes winter on the Llano Estacado. Every citizen of the Llano Estacado should get to know sandhill cranes. They are the wintertime icon of the region.

They spend every night standing in the water in the salt playas that are scattered throughout the region.

Each day they fly to grain fields to glean the bounty left behind.

Go looking for cranes this winter! Go south of Sprayberry to the Midland Sewer Farms at sunrise or sunset!

It seems that each crane calls in turn, their music undulating the length of the curved flightline, a chant as holy and sonorous as those of medieval monks.

## Thank you, supporting donors!

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THE AQUILA LEVELS  
RECEIVE A FREE CAP!  
COME PICK YOURS UP  
OCTOBER 28TH!**

**El Llanero;  
the newsletter of the  
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**The Sibley Nature Center Celebrates  
the southern Llano Estacado.**