

Sibley Nature Center

Annual Report

2006

The Sibley Nature Center experienced a considerable growth pattern in 2006 in activities, attendance, diversity in programming, financial growth, volunteerism, memberships, website activity, and upgrades in facility and grounds.

The Sibley Nature Center Board of Directors took an approach to healthy growth of the center in all areas; completing a aggressive but attainable 5-Year Strategic Plan with particular interest in agency financial growth and diversification of programs and services. The 2006 budget allowed the Executive Director to employ outside specialists in areas of programming, development of grounds and facilities, and overall development of financial development and operations of the center. The Sibley Nature Center experienced positive trends in all of these areas.

The following documents highlights of fiscal year 2006 in areas of development of center grounds and facilities, the agency website, the living history event, management, visitations and programming, membership services, marketing, funding, volunteerism, board involvement, and financials. The report does not attempt to reflect all 2006 activities of the Sibley Nature Center but to give an overall picture of the growth and strengths of the agency. A complete financial overview of the Sibley Nature Center will be forthcoming in the agency's IRS Form 990 that will be completed by the 2nd Quarter.

Grounds and Facility

The Executive Director hired Mark Webb in 2006 to develop a drip and irrigation system for the grounds of the Sibley Nature Center. Mark's talents were not limited to the irrigation system. He proved to be an asset in the development of computer programming and setting up laptop computers that were purchased for the use of students when visiting the center. Mark also taught several classes and was extremely instrumental in furthering the mission of the Junior Master Gardener's program. In 2006 the irrigation system was upgraded on the Nature Trail, the Junior Master Naturalist's compound, and at the Learning Center facility. Both irrigation and drip systems were repaired and upgraded. Mark continues to fine tune and maintain the system and provides expertise with computer programming. Mark also began planning the design of a specialty Xeriscape plant sales area to introduce new plants to the local horticultural palette.

Sibley Website

The Sibley Nature Center website, www.sibleynaturecenter.org was established in 2006 with the help of Eric Siegmund, Burr Williams, and Steven Schafersman. A "Virtual Nature Trail" representing aspects and features of Sibley's nature trail was completed and made available on the website. Features of the website were designed to enhance the learning experience of both online users and students and other visitors to the Sibley Nature Center. Habitat of the Llano Estacado were highlighted along with archives of past essays and photo-essays. The website enabled visitors to download nature photographs of their own, adding to the overall experience of the site.

Viva El Llano Estacado - Living History Event

In October 2006 Sibley presented the 2nd annual living history event "Viva El Llano Estacado." Almost 1,400 visitors attended the event. The living history event was not considered profitable financially but provided many intangible benefits including the good will produced to attendees, educational opportunities, cementing bonds with local school districts, networking, and many other benefits that can only be generated by such events.

Management

Great strides in management practices were made in 2006 including the initiation of a user-friendly system for Library cataloging all of the center's books, the creation of board of directors books to make available an entire year's records, the addition of a cash register to record all monetary transactions, the setup of bulk mailing capabilities, a new petty cash system, the successful completion of the annual IRS 990 submission, the development of a

viable volunteer program, and a new accounting system. A volunteer recruitment and training program was initiated in 2006.

Visitations and Programs

A Mural Project was completed by local artist Michael Nickell using local high school students to help in the research, design, and actual production of the 4 panels. Mr. Nickell also completed a 13 panel display depicting the sandhills habitat. Additionally, Mr. Nickell served as the key speaker in one of the quarterly "Members Only" events, presenting many of his works and making a presentation on dinosaurs of the Llano Estacado. Richard Galle resurrected the Permian Basin Outing Club, an outdoor "adventure" group that took monthly trips and participated in activities such as canoeing, backpacking, caving, etc. The club continues to grow in numbers every month. The center also successfully offered a nature art class and a photography class. The Sibley Nature Center hosted a Region 18 workshop for teachers, as well. Burr Williams gave 295 programs and produced 52 columns for the Midland Reporter Telegram. The Sibley Nature Center also hosted the Master Naturalist Program. The program is a collaboration of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and sponsoring agencies to graduate volunteers specially trained to deliver naturalist programs and work with students and the general public. A total of 10,842 visitors and 926 drop-ins enjoyed the center and uncounted visitors utilized the Nature Trail.

Board of Directors

The Sibley Nature Center added Bill Loos and David Crum to their numbers in 2006. Burr Williams and several board members visited other nature centers in the state to generate ideas for Sibley, as well. The board developed, edited, and eventually adopted new By-Laws for the Sibley Nature Center. They also considered the possibility of forming an endowment fund for the center with a presentation from the Permian Basin Area Foundation's Executive Director Jack Swallow. The board completed a 5-Year Strategic Plan for the Sibley Nature Center which included long-term goals for programming, staffing, facility additions and improvements, and funding. Finally, the board developed and completed a Capital Trails Improvement Project plan and kicked off efforts to raise funds for the project.

Membership

The Sibley Nature Center's membership roles grew to over 200 individuals and groups in 2006. A "Tiered Membership" system was devised and adopted. The new system was designed to provide more programming and services, thereby creating more value to memberships and providing incentive for others to join. A more comprehensive membership database and renewal system was also devised and membership cards were designed and distributed with the caveat that membership to the Sibley Nature Center also included membership in the Permian Basin Outing Club and an automatic discount at the local outdoor shop Ski Skeller.

Members Only events were scheduled every quarter and promoted within the membership. The Sibley Nature Center newsletter, the "El Llanero" was distributed quarterly and a monthly "e-newsletter" was produced and sent to all members that established an interest in the outdoor club.

Marketing

Several marketing efforts were made during fiscal year 2006 promoting the Viva El Llano Estacado living history event and other events at Sibley through both the website and through member-wide mail outs. Thirty-second television commercials advertising the website and the living history event were written and edited by the Sibley Staff. There was a general feeling among the staff and many board members that a viable and more far reaching marketing plan would be beneficial to the center and should be devised.

Funding

In 2006 Richard Galle researched and completed a comprehensive "Foundations Catalog" to be used for grant applications. A total of 12 donors provided funds for 6 projects and general operations. A total of \$260,203 was raised via major donors in fiscal 2006. The Sibley Nature Center was asked to host the annual donations awards program by the Permian Basin Area Foundation; the first time that Sibley was asked to host the event.

Volunteerism

A total of 36 people served as volunteers for the Sibley Nature Center in 2006, generating 1,083 man hours. This translates to over \$5,577 in staff savings when using minimum wage standards. Volunteers participated in board meetings, program presentations, trail maintenance, library work, the living history event, artistic endeavors, the Sibley website, construction, and many other important areas of programming, maintenance, and services.

Financial

Fiscal year 2006 was very successful for the Sibley Nature Center. Total assets of the agency was \$98,069 at the start of 2006, including both operating and restricted funds. At year's end the total assets worth of the center was \$254,797 including \$125,000 in funds raised for the Capital Trails Improvement Project. Individual and corporate donations surpassed any prior year of the center and funding through major donors and foundations was unrivaled. The staff and board of the Sibley Nature Center will continue raising funds and creating earned-income programs as well as continued funding for the capital improvements plan throughout 2007 and into the future.

The Llano Estacado Room

Funding and planning for the Llano Estacado Room began in 2006. During the next 4 years educational materials will be researched and produced on the 8 major habitats of the Llano Estacado for the room. Initially, a plan was devised to write grants for and purchase 8 computers and a microscope with a master computer so that students could observe objects under a microscope on a large screen while using the laptops to go on-line and further their studies. A grant was received and 8 laptops were purchased. An economical microscope was also purchased to investigate the furtherance of the program. Many civic and school groups chose the new program activities on the sandhills habitat. Burr Williams and Michael Nickell developed hands-on activities and 13 posters on the sandhills habitat.

Grants

Potts-Sibley Foundation	\$30,000	General Operating
Abell-Hanger Foundation	\$16,000	General Operating/Staffing
McGraw Brothers	\$ 1,000	Viva El Llano Estacado
Prairie Foundation	\$ 5,000	Llano Estacado Room Project
City of Midland	\$ 2,000	Propagation Area Project
Chaparral Foundation	\$ 1,000	Viva El Llano Estacado
Buddy Davidson Foundation	\$ 250	Viva El Llano Estacado
Permian Basin Area Foundation	\$ 5,277	Outdoor Education Program
Midland Assembly of the Arts	\$ 1,500	Seasonal Calendar Project
Helen Greathouse Charitable Trust	\$25,000	Capital Trail Improvement
Dora Roberts Foundation	\$100,000	Capital Trail Improvement
Potts-Sibley Foundation	\$16,000	Matching/General Operating
Potts-Sibley Foundation	\$10,000	General Operating
Anonymous	\$40,000	General Operating
Lisa Canter	\$ 5,000	General Operating
Helen Greathouse Charitable Trust	\$ 1,926	Viva El Llano Estacado
Sara Davidson	\$ 250	Viva El Llano Estacado

Twelve foundations and individuals donated funds for 6 projects and general operating funds totaling \$260,203.

Volunteer Projects

Board of Directors	212 Hours	Sibley Operations/Fundraising
Frank Gray	102 Hours	Trail Maintenance/Construction
Larry Hall	96 Hours	Trail Maintenance/Construction
Beverly Wise	35 Hours	Library Work
Rebecca Arevinas	24 Hours	Secretarial Work
Dustin Smith	24 Hours	Mass Mailing
Michael Nickell	100 Hours	Back Door Artwork
Lauren Maddox	20 Hours	Panel Project Artwork
Bailee Hennis	112 Hours	Panel Project Artwork
Justin O'Neill	10 Hours	Mass Mailing/Janitorial
Dave Swenson	4 Hours	Photography
Sharon Jones	4 Hours	Photography
Assorted High School Students	68 Hours	Secretarial/Photography/Viva
Lucy Thames	19 Hours	Library Work
Enid Davis	20 Hours	Library Work
Bobbie Henderson	5 Hours	Library Work
Chris Cherry	12 Hours	Photography/El Llano Estacado
David Crum	14 Hours	Viva El Llano Estacado
Kay Crum	14 Hours	Viva El Llano Estacado
Nick Hartley	13 Hours	Viva El Llano Estacado/Research
Ryan Scheel	6 Hours	Mass Mailing
Richard Galle	166 Hours	PBOC/Viva El Llano Estacado
Cat	3 Hours	Research
Total	1,083 Hours	