



El Llanero

the newsletter of the Sibley Nature Center

Volume 3, Issue 1

Update on the Sibley Nature Trail Capital Improvements Project

As many of you know, the Sibley Nature Center board of directors and staff kicked off a \$630,500 capital improvements campaign to add major components to the Sibley Nature Trail and the Sibley Learning Center. The additions will create new opportunities for interpretive programs and learning experiences including a new Wildlife Viewing Area that will actually be located within the confines of the climate controlled Learning Center and overlooking an outdoor Wildlife Feeding area. Another feature will be a Teaching Gazebo that will be designed for daytime or night time presentations.

To date, without going public on the project, we have raised \$140,000, with \$125,00 actually collected and another \$15,000 verbally committed. This represents 3 foundations.

The Sibley board of directors is in the early stages of planning the announcement of the campaign locally and initiating a local and regional campaign. If you have ideas about potential donors, please let us know or if you would like to personally donate to this very worthwhile cause, please let us know. Thousands of school kids visit the Sibley

Nature Center annually with their teachers. The center is experiencing unparalleled visitations and is already planning extensive programming around the planned expansion. The Sibley Nature Center is growing dramatically in programming, services and visitations. If you want to participate in the upcoming local campaign or have capital campaign experience, please let us know by email, phone, or simply by coming by. We will need volunteers for the local and regional campaign and welcome all that are interested. Be a part of the "new Sibley!"

Inside this issue:

<i>Outdoor Club</i>	2
<i>PBOC 2007 Calendar</i>	2
<i>Wish List</i>	2
<i>Save the Boom!</i>	3
<i>Inside Story</i>	4

Groundbreaking begins!

The first element of the master site plan development has begun. The promotion of drought adapted ornamental plants for home landscaping for water conservation has been part of the Sibley Nature Center tradition since 1982 (5 years before the building was erected.) The City of Midland granted the Center \$2000 to begin construction of a plant propagation and sales area at

the end of 2006. In February the board of directors of Sibley voted to okay the purchase of a 30' by 60' shade structure to be placed just west of the Junior Master Gardener compound. On February 12th, contract employee Mark Webb began clearing the land, using the skid-loader belonging to Sibley board of director member David Crum.

Webb has taught horticulture for Howard College and helps teach the Junior Master Gardener activities. He will be the project director, enlisting the help of volunteers to produce "xeriscape" plants that are not now readily available at local nurseries. This project has the potential for growing into an important "earned income" source of funding for the Sibley Nature Center.



Another reminder!

We want to remind you again that, as a Sibley Nature Center member, you can opt to be included in Sibley's Permian Basin Outing Club. The club takes a trip each month to various locations and participates in hiking, backpacking, canoeing/kayaking, caving, and many other "adventure" trips. We have included the club's 2007 Annual Calendar in this issue of the El Llanero. Membership in one organization includes membership in the other. All you have to do is notify Richard at the Sibley center by phone, visit, or email to indicate an interest in inclusion on the outdoor club's mailing list.



One of 2 Waterfalls that we saw on our January Big Bend trip!

Wish List

One of the primary things that every museum/nature center has to keep foremost on its "to-do list" is the preservation and maintenance of its displays. The animal displays at Sibley are experiencing the ravages of time and restoration is in order. When a display of a stuffed animal is open to the elements for a period of time, infestations can take place (not affecting people...by the

way) that slowly destroy the display. In the past a costly and complicated method was used to rid the display of insect infestation. Now, displays simply have to be placed in a deep freeze storage area for a prescribed time. The Sibley Nature Center is seeking a working chest type deep freeze to be donated to the center. We are also looking for shelving and display cases for the new Sibley Store

which we will be starting construction on soon. Finally, we could really use 1 to 5 gallon plastic buckets to be used for the Junior Master Gardener's program. If you are willing to part with any of these items, please let us know. Remember, you can write off your donations when it comes tax time!

2007 Permian Basin Outing Club

Calendar

- January 23 – PBOC Meeting (All meeting locations to be announced)**
- January 26-28 – Big Bend National Park, Backpacking – Pat Dearen**
- February 20 – PBOC Meeting**
- February 23-25 – Chinati Springs, Touring, Day Hiking, Spa – Bill Bentley**
- March 27 – PBOC Meeting**
- March 30-April 1 – Mott Creek Ranch, Texas Panhandle, Archeology, Touring – Richard Galle, Rick Day**
- April 24 – PBOC Meeting**
- April 27-29 – Mariscal Canyon, Big Bend National Park, Canoeing – Richard Galle**
- May 15 – PBOC Meeting**
- May 18-20 – “Fandango Scavenger Hunt”, Davis Mts./Big Bend – Sammy Hunnicut, Richard Galle**
- May 29 – PBOC Meeting**
- June 1-3 – Ruidoso Backpacking, Day Hiking “Gold Panning” – David and Kay Crum**
- July 24 – PBOC Meeting**
- July 27-29 – Cottonwood and Black Caves, New Mexico, Caving Trip – Bill Bentley**
- August 14 – PBOC Meeting**
- August 17-19 – Big Bend National Park, South Rim, Backpacking – Pat Dearen**
- September 18 – PBOC Meeting**
- September 21-23 – Llano River, Canoeing/Touring – Bill and Kathy Lupardis**
- October 16 – PBOC Meeting**
- October 19-21 – Pat Barber’s Ranch, Colorado City, Fishing/Hiking/Whatever (pending) – Pat Barber**
- October 30 – PBOC Meeting**
- November 2-4 – Guadalupe Mountain National Park – Day Hiking – Steven Schafersman**
- December 1 – PBOC Christmas Party – Location to be Announced – Jan and Roger Artley**

Sibley Membership Categories

Aquila (Golden Eagle)	\$5,000—up
Grulla (Sandhill Crane)	\$1,000-4,999
Cibolo (American Bison)	\$500-999
Tejon (Badger)	\$250-499
Tortuga (Box Turtle)	\$100-249
Chupafloor (Hummingbird)-Family	\$30
Lobo (Wolf)-Individual	\$25
Tecolote (Owl)-Senior	\$20
Correcamino (Roadrunner)	
-Student	\$10

Remember, membership with the Sibley Nature Center includes new and exciting privileges; Members Only Events at the center, special education trips for members only, inclusion to the Permian Basin Outing Club, discounts for purchases at select stores, the quarterly El Llanero Newsletter, and much, much more.

If you haven't done so yet, please send us your email address so that we can send your El Llanero by email thereby saving postage AND getting you the newsletter in full color!

Please send your email address to:

richard@sibleynaturecenter.org

(We won't share your address with anyone without prior consent)

Save the Boom!

The Lesser Prairie Chicken is “the stuff of legends.” Prairie chickens are secretive birds despite their large size. Few Llaneros have ever seen them. Only 5000 remain in Texas. At the time of the settlement of the Llano Estacado hundreds of thousands were present. They were sometimes so tame that a person could walk among them and kill them with a club. Today they are confined to the sandy soil regions that the plow never reached. When the ground was first

broken, the prairie chickens learned to eat the seed of the corn and other grains right after the farmer planted. In a drought in the 1890's a number of farmers in the Andrews area banded together and killed thousands for the game market sales in Fort Worth. The birds so distrust humans that they will not nest within a mile of a large structure such as a power plant, or within a quarter mile of a often traveled road. Raptors, their major predator, perch on electric lines, so they will not nest within a quarter mile of any similar structure such as a cell phone tower.

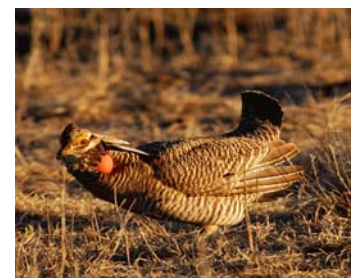
David Crum, the executive director of the June Leland Wildlife Foundation, leases a ranch in Yoakum County specifically for lesser prairie chicken

conservation. Graduate students from Texas A&M have monitored radio-tagged birds on the ranch for several years. Mr. Crum won the prestigious Land Steward award from the Texas Parks and Wildlife in 2004 for his work. In January, Mr. Crum joined the Sibley Nature Center's Board of Directors. One of the goals of the Sibley Board was to nurture the Sibley Center into being a regional nature center, and the group decided working with the June Leland Wildlife Foundation would involve the Sibley Nature Center at a new level.

On April 13th, the staff of the Sibley Nature Center will 2 13 passenger vans. At 6 p.m., at the Sibley Nature Center, the staff will present a dinner program (with a catered meal) to members of the Sibley Nature Center that sign up to take a field trip to see the prairie chickens “boom.” In April, prairie chickens gather together in large groups and dance and “sing.” This is an Incredible sight – this rare experience is a way to connect with the Llano Estacado that reveals it to be a very special place. The group will drive to accommodations near the ranch and spend the night. At 4 a.m. the next morning (April 14th) the staff will provide breakfast burritos, and then we will go to the booming grounds (leks) well before daylight. We will sit quietly

until the birds arrive at first light. For an hour and a half, we will observe them. Bring your cameras! Afterwards we will walk among the dunes and the staff of the Sibley Nature Center and Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists will discuss the ecology of the sandylands. After a picnic lunch, we will return to Midland. On April 20th, the staff of the Sibley Nature Center will repeat the trip, for members of the Midland Naturalists and the Southern Llano Estacado Master Naturalists chapter. Please sign up now! Call 684-6827.

Both trips have limited seating. For the Sibley Nature Center to not lose any money participants must pay \$125 a person or \$175 per couple. For these first two trips, we would prefer for the participants to be adults. These are “trial trips,” offered only to our supporters and associates so the staff can learn about guiding field trips. Later in the year we plan to offer weekend trips to our members and associates to the Independence Creek Texas Nature Conservancy preserve, and another one to a Jumano buffalo kill site archaeological dig in Motley County, near Matador.



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Sibley Nature Center**

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The Sibley Nature Center is the only regional nature center specializing in the study of the flora, fauna, human and natural history of the Southern Llano Estacado. The center is near Hogan Park in Midland, Texas and features a Learning Center, gardens, and a 49-acre Nature Trail that is open to the public 365 days a year.