



El Llanero

The Newsletter of the Sibley Nature Center

Volume 3, Issue 2

The Sibley Academy

The Sibley Nature Center will soon be announcing a new service; the Sibley Academy. The idea of the Academy is to find and employ people with special skills and interests that would be willing to share their knowledge with others. Classes will be held at the Learning Center and on the grounds at Sibley. Naturalist classes, nature art, photography or other skills that might relate to



the mission of the Sibley Nature Center will be offered.

We have long felt that the Learning Center at Sibley has been underused, that nights and weekends should be made available to Sibley Members and the general public. The Sibley Academy will afford the staff and instructors the opportunity to reach a wider audience while fulfilling the obligation of the center to provide learning experiences. We will be soliciting ideas from our members and the general public for potential class ideas and for finding instructors. Development of the Academy should take

place over the summer and a general announcement and catalogs made available through the newspapers and at Sibley by late summer.

If you or someone you know has a particular interest or skill and would be willing to spend a little of your time teaching, we want to hear from you. We will charge a reasonable fee for the classes and instructors will receive compensation. Classes will be scheduled during the work week, during the day, evenings, and weekends. If you have an idea for a class or are willing to teach a class, call Richard at the center at (432) 684-6827.

Summer Camps

The Sibley Nature Center will be offering **two** camps this summer! One will be the returning Junior Master Gardeners program and the other offered by Midland's Mad Science program. This program is designed for kids ages 9 to 15. The program teaches wildscape and vege-

table gardening. If interested, call the Sibley Nature Center. The program will take place every Tuesday and Thursday throughout June from 9 a.m. to noon and is free. Registration is limited.

The second camp is pro-

moted by Mad Science of Midland. The program will take place between 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily the week of July 16th and is listed on the Sibley website. The program is designed for 4th graders and emphasizes physics and

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Special points of interest:

- *Sibley offers new programs this summer and fall*
- *Capital Trails Improvement project update*
- *Sibley Nature Center reaches out to smaller regional students*
- *New partnership with the June Leland Foundation*

Summer Camps cont...

chemistry. The cost is \$250. Mad Science may be reached at (432) 570-4477.

Both camps will take place at the Sibley Nature Center at 1307 E. Wadley.

This summer will be the fifth year of operation for the Junior Master Gardeners program. The program has met with great success in preceding years and fills up quickly. Both programs are sponsored by the Sibley Nature Center. Watch for additional youth programming in the near future.

Master Naturalists

The Southern Llano Estacado Chapter of the Master Naturalist program, sponsored by the Sibley Nature Center recently finished the training for the first graduating class. A total of 22 will be graduating. The program meets monthly and studies the ecology of the southern Llano Estacado and prepares participants to serve as volunteers for regional state parks, schools, local nature groups, and nature centers as naturalist interpreters. Fifty hours of volunteer service are required each year. Volunteers have maintained

Sibley Kid's Club

The Sibley Kid's Club, started by Kim Carlson in March of 2006, is designed for kids aged 5 to 12. The club meets from 9 a.m. to noon on selected Saturdays each month of the year.

The club introduces youth to the ecology of the southern Llano Estacado. Each session focuses on seasonal natural events such as winter birds and spring wildflowers. Ages 5 to 12 are encouraged to become involved in this program. The cost is \$25 annually which includes a Sibley membership. The program requires at least one parent to attend with their child.

Volunteer instructor Andrew Franks and Sibley Executive Director Burr Williams plan each month's activities according to the season. Members are encouraged to keep a notebook of writings, drawing, and photographs and are asked to research an organism and take a short daytrip to a nearby location to observe wildlife. The club currently has 15 children/adult pairs. The club has a limited capacity so it is important for interested parties to call soon. The May event will be all about insects.

trails on City of Midland property, participated in Audobon Society bird counts, and Colorado City State Park wildscape installations. At present, the Chapter is recruiting for next year's class which begins in January of 2008. The cost of the program is \$75 per person or \$125 per couple. Annual dues thereafter are \$35. The group meets monthly for field trips and presentations by regional biologists. If interested, please call the Sibley Nature Center at (432) 684-6827 and ask for Burr Williams. Group size is limited.

"The Earth laughs when flowers bloom" - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sibley's regional outreach—Spring 2007

Students from Midland, Whiteface, San Angelo, Andrews, Garden City, and Odessa participated in programs provided by the Sibley Nature Center. The Whiteface students, in conjunction with ECYBERMISSION, studied a local playa and won the regional ECYBERMISSION field science program competition and attended nationals in Washington, D.C. Sibley staff served as a

resource for the group. The middle school students benefited greatly from the program. The Sibley staff will present a teacher training opportunity in September for developing ethnobotanical gardens for small town schools. The schools will receive drought resistant plants from Sibley's new Plant Propagation facility located on the center's nature trail.



The Sibley Nature Center stresses youth education!

Sibley Survey

Several weeks ago we developed a survey that can be accessed through the Sibley website at www.sibleynaturecenter.org. We have received many responses (but would like more). We have discovered that the participants of the survey recognize the importance of understanding the area in which we live and, even more importantly, the need to conserve our precious resources. A large number of responders indicated a recognition and celebration of the ethnic diversity of the southern Llano Estacado and indicated an interest in learning of

the culture in the area. In addition, many responders indicated a strong agreement that more needs to be done in making the public aware of water issues in our part of the country and in the importance of using xeriscape or drought resistant plants in their landscape plans. A total of 85% of the responders felt that they would use drought resistant plants in their landscaping if the plants were more readily available for purchase. One of the things that was revealing in the

survey is that only a small number continued to visit the Learning Center after a few visits. This, as much as anything, drives home the concept that the Sibley Nature Center needs to continue its efforts to vary the programming, displays, and the features found on the Nature Trail. All agree that remaining in stasis is inviting a declining trend in visitations. The upcoming capital improvements plan and the Sibley Academy are specifically designed to address this concern.

Our Wish List

In our last issue of the El Llanero, we asked if anyone might have a chest type freezer that they might want to donate to the Sibley Nature Center in order for us to do some restoration work with some of our displays that were suffering from infestation. Bill Rust was kind enough to donate a retired freezer and we are in the process of restoring many of our existing displays.

We have another need. In order for the Sibley center to complete our Plant Propagation facility, we will need to construct many tables for the plants. Our plan is to utilize cinder blocks for the table supports. Though this is a bit of an unusual request, we were in hopes that someone out there was possibly in possession of cinder blocks that they had no plans for or had over-ordered on a project, or had torn down a cinder block fence or building and had separated the blocks into individual pieces. We have started construction of the facility and will soon be working on the interior and will have a great need for tables. If you have, or know of someone who has cinder blocks that they are willing to donate, we would appreciate you sending them our way. We appreciate all donations and will acknowl-

Bat's are not Creepy!

On Saturday, June 16th at 1 p.m. Gail Barnes of the Southern Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Lubbock, Texas will be presenting a program on **bats** featuring live bats. The event will take place at the Sibley Nature Center auditorium and is free to Sibley members. Bats are fascinating creatures.....many people fear them but they are very beneficial to the overall ecological balance. She will return in July with hawks and owls, though the date has not been finalized.



Email Addresses

Anytime anyone starts a conversation with: "Not to sound like a broken record," you know that they're about to sound like a broken record.....and here we go. We have received many email addresses from members who have chosen to receive their newsletters, notices, etc. by email, thereby making our operation a lot more efficient, not to mention saving the center in postage and materials. Again, if you are willing to share your email with us, (if indeed you have an email account), we would very much appreciate you sharing it with us. The center's outdoor club almost exclusively uses email to announce meetings, deliver updates on trips, and receive monthly newsletters. This has been very successful and provides for feedback on articles and a quick and easy way to ask questions regarding events, etc. This issue of the El Llanero will go to 68 of our members by email. We will send it out by "blind carbon copy" meaning that other's email addresses will not be seen by anyone else. If you have a fear that sharing your email with others will open the door to unwanted solicitations, etc., that will not be a problem with our method. Please consider this method of receiving materials from us.....and thank you.

Prairie Chicken Development with the June Leland Foundation

In 2007 the Sibley Nature Center became an active partner with the June Leland Wildlife Foundation's "Bring Back the Boom" lesser prairie chicken conservation project. The JLWF administers Equip funds specifically for lesser prairie chicken conservation. Sibley staff is also helping the JLWF present land owner meetings, public information campaigns, and serving as consultants in sand dune ecology. The Sibley Nature Center sponsored a 20 participant field trip to Yoakum County to observe the mating behavior of the birds in April. Go to the Sibley Nature Center website at www.sibleynaturecenter.org and go to the Animal Behavior Section to see the bird's behavior. The trip was a great success. Participants enjoyed a bar-b-que lunch provided by the 2B R a n c h Catering Service of Needmore, Texas.

The participants met at the Sibley Nature Center for supper on Friday night and traveled to The Denver City Motel where they were awakened at 4 a.m. to arrive on the booming grounds at 6 a.m. The booming grounds are located 30 miles north of Denver City. The participants observed over 30 birds and two separate booming grounds. An early lunch was enjoyed afterwards. On the trip home participants enjoyed a sand dunes wildflower lesson in Andrews County.

In May, a lizard ecologist from Hardin-Simmons University joined JLWF directors David and Kay Crum and Sibley staff at the ranch leased by JLWF for prairie chicken conservation to determine if the rare sand dune lizard was present. Hardin-Simmons has become partners with the JLWF to continue conservation efforts.

Permian Basin Outing Club Continues to Grow

Sibley's Permian Basin Outing Club, an outdoor adventure group, continues to grow each month. Currently, over 70 people are registered in the club. The group plans and participates in monthly activities such as backpacking, caving, rappelling, canoeing, and other "adventure activities." The PBOC recently completed a canoeing trip through Big Bend National Park's Mariscal Canyon. Forty members participated in the activity. All Sibley members are automatically entitled to membership in the club simply by contacting the Sibley Nature Center and indicating an interest. Conversely, all PBOC members are automatically enrolled in the membership r o l l s of the Sibley Nature Center. The club maintains a website at www.pboc.info where monthly "e-newsletter", pictures from trips, the club calendar, and links to features of each trip may be found. Any Sibley member interested in becoming an active member of the PBOC needs to simply email Richard Galle at richard@sibleynaturecenter.org or call the center at (432) 684-6827 for inclusion in the club. No further fees are involved.



Members enjoying an afternoon on the river



Mariscal Canyon

Capital Trails Improvement Project update

The Sibley Nature Center continues receiving funds for the \$630,500 Capital Trails Improvement Project. The Project calls for many new additions and improvements for the center's Nature Trail. Some of these additions include a wildlife viewing area, water features, a teaching gazebo, new interpretive stations including new habitat areas, a windmill, and many other natural and man made history displays. The center will publicly announce the fundraising effort in September but, meanwhile, is raising funds through individuals and foundations. An initial \$165,000 has been raised so far and more is expected.

One of the features will be a Plant Propagation facility that will serve both to teach and to raise drought resistant plants. In addition, the center will conduct an annual plant sale to help support Sibley's programs and services. Early construction on the facility has begun. The facility will be located within the confines of the Sibley Nature Trail. The facility will house plants in a 1,800 square foot area. The structure enables us to grow adapted plants that are specifically bred to resist west Texas d r o u g h t conditions and water conservation....both important issues in our region.



Work begins on the Plant Propagation Facility

Students In Philanthropy

The Sibley Nature Center recently received \$1,000 each from the Midland College, Midland High School, and Greenwood I.S.D. for the propagation facility, part of the center's Capital Trails Improvement Project. The Abell-Hanger Foundation supports the Students In Philanthropy program and encourages students to participate. Students who are chosen to be in the program receive classroom instruction on voluntarism and nonprofits. The program was created to increase student awareness in the value of service to the community through philan-

thropy. The students have several fundraising activities through the year and then receive donor requests from many of the community's nonprofits. Students, quite often, will visit the agencies to better learn their missions and specifics of the donor request.

The Sibley Nature Center would like to thank each school and the students who were involved in this very worthwhile effort!

Students give back to the Sibley Nature Center

Volunteer Corner

No nonprofit would function without the generous efforts of their volunteers. The Sibley Nature Center would like to recognize the efforts of Sammy Hunnicutt. Sammy has been a friend of the Sibley Nature Center for years and currently volunteers as the primary coordinator of the Master Naturalist program. Sammy spends countless hours in preparation in and the conducting of

the monthly programs and lesson plans. He also is very active in the Permian Basin Outing Club and shares his love of the outdoors with others...and always with a smile. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sammy for all of his fine work!



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We're on the web! at
www.sibleynaturecenter.org