



# El Llanero

The Newsletter of the Sibley Nature Center

Volume 3, Number 3

## Sibley Academy

Well it appears that the much discussed Sibley Academy is finally going to get off of the ground. This Sunday's, August 26th, Midland Reporter Telegram, contains the first of the Academy's catalogs for the months of September to December 2007. If successful, we will



*Extra catalogs can be obtained at the Sibley Nature Center*

be issuing catalogs for January through May, a summer catalog, and another September through December issue. We think that the idea will start out slowly but gain momentum later on.

A total of 28 classes will be listed including arts, photography, nature classes, outdoor recreation skills, classes,....even classes to teach students how to track both man and beast. Many of the classes are "portable" and can be taught at other locations. We will be distributing catalogs to assisted living and retirement agencies as well, encouraging activities directors to use our

classes for the education and enjoyment of their patrons. If you know of an agency or institution that might benefit from the classes taught at the Sibley Academy, email us or give us a call and let us know where those opportunities are. We believe that the Academy will broaden our reach in teaching people about the Llano Estacado and the unique human and natural history of our region. If you have questions or requests for classes, or if you have expertise in an area that you would like to teach at the center, please call Richard at the Sibley Nature Center or email him at:

[richard@sibleynaturecenter.org](mailto:richard@sibleynaturecenter.org)

We hope to see you at our classes!

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### Special points of interest:

- *Sibley Academy to kick off in September*
- *Capital Trails Improvement grows in scope*
- *Junior Master Gardeners Program grows*
- *Become a dual member of Sibley and the PBOC!*

## The Sibley Greenhouse

The Sibley greenhouse will soon be operational. Due to an exceptionally wet summer and some problems that we encountered with furnished building materials, we should have the greenhouse completed by early fall. The greenhouse is part of the

nature trail improvements and is designed to both teach the techniques of propagation and maintenance of plants and to stress the importance of landscaping with drought resistant plants. In addition, the center will sell the xeriscape plants to cre-

ate additional income for our center. It can't be stressed enough in West Texas, the importance of water conservation and the use of plants that require little irrigation. And there's the added advantage of low maintenance!

## JMG Camp a Wonderful Success

Each year the Sibley Nature Center hosts the Junior Master Gardener's program. The program is designed for young people to learn the skills needed to be a successful gardener and how to propagate and care for plants. The participants plant a variety of fruits and vegetables, maintain them, and eventually harvest and use their crops. Peppers, tomatoes, strawberries, and squash were just some of this year's crop. The participants meet throughout the summer and then meet through the school year. The JMG program has a beautiful "compound" on the grounds of the Sibley Nature Center's Nature Trail

that is theirs alone to develop and maintain. They have constructed many attractions including a pond, a fountain area, raised growing beds, and an incredible sundial that requires the user to stand on the proper month in order for their shadow to indicate the hour. The program averaged a dozen kids a week this summer and each had a great time learning the skills necessary to be



*Have your kids learn the skills of a successful gardener!*

a successful gardener. The program is free to participants but is limited in size. If you have an interest in your children or grandchildren being involved in this very successful program, call the Sibley Nature Center for details and registration procedures. The program is maintained by volunteers lead by the very capable Eloise Taylor, a master gardener in her own rights!

## Phytosaur Display

The Sibley Nature Center has been blessed by an incredible display featuring a 220 million year old "crocodilian" like creature from the Triassic. Rick Day, a science teacher with the Andrews Independent School District has made a long term loan to the center of this very impressive display. The creature was the primary predator of the Triassic waters and grew to over 30 feet in length.

Lauren Maddox, a Midland High School volunteer that spent much of the last

year earning her Girl Scout Gold Award at the center, designed the display case that the fossil now resides and, with her father's help, built a very impressive display case for the exhibit. Sibley staffer, Michael Nickell, is developing interpretive signs to be placed on the exhibit to better explain the creature's size, life, and habitat. The exhibit dominates the lobby of the Sibley Nature Center and it's not uncommon to hear the door open with exclamations of "Wow, look at that!"

**"Man's heart away from nature becomes hard." ~Standing Bear**

## Permian Basin Outing Club

The PBOC continues to grow in numbers and has had successful trips each month including a record setting 40 participants that had a wonderful time canoeing/kayaking Mariscal Canyon in Big Bend National Park in April and almost 40 participants to Pat Barber's Ranch near Colorado City. The club has events scheduled each month of the year and will soon be scheduling 2008.

Every Sibley member has an automatic membership in the PBOC and vice versa (dual memberships) when they indicate their desire to be included in the club. Call Richard at Sibley if you're a current member of the Sibley Center and want to be included in the club. We send out a monthly newsletter announcing upcoming meetings, reports of recent trips, etc. Inciden-

tally, membership in the club allows a 10% discount on all purchases at Ski Skeller in Midland!



## Llano Estacado Room has additional displays!

The Llano Estacado Room at the center now sports displays of 4 of the 8 habitats of the Southern Llano Estacado. We will soon have “the urban forest” display completed and on display. Michael Nickell, staff artist and scientist, is creating these very informative displays that teach visitors about the unique animal and human history of each of the regions habitats. Michael holds advanced degrees in museum sciences and biology and has been an incredible asset to the Sibley Nature Center. He is an accomplished artist who has done work for National Geographic, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and

is currently working on a second paleontology book for Dr. Chaterjee of Texas Tech University. Michael also completed the 4 “seasonal habitat” panels on display in the Sibley Auditorium and the landscape featured on Sibley’s back door. If you haven’t seen these new displays, make time to come by the center and view



them. All 8 habitats are scheduled to be completed soon. Thousands of school children and their teachers enjoy these new displays each school year. They are both entertaining and informative.

Michael and Burr are both available for special showings and lectures of the center’s habitat displays. If you or your groups are interested in a special program at the Sibley Nature Center, feel free to call us and schedule an event.

## Capital Campaign Update

The \$630,500 Nature Trail capital campaign has been increased to a possible \$1,000,000 improvement plan. Through the generosity of the Texas Legislature, a \$500,000 matching grant has been issued to the Sibley Nature Center for improvements to the center and trail. We believe that we have identified sufficient funds to provide for the, now “Phase I” of the improvements and we will be developing plans to flesh out a full \$1,000,000 improvement plan. The current plan includes a new wild-

life viewing room to be constructed at the east end of the current Learning Center, a wildlife feeding area adjacent to the viewing room, a teaching gazebo, complete with a fire circle, new habitats, water features, interpretive signage, a windmill, and many other new and innovative features. We believe that the Sibley Nature Center is very unique in its ability to provide educational opportunities to the region. Completion of the trail improvements will nicely round out our abilities to provide

*If you haven’t done so already, please consider providing us with your email address so that we can send you your newsletter via email. See your newsletter in full color and help us save postage.*

a complete picture of the natural and human history of our home.

## More updates!

Record numbers of programs and volunteers have been recorded at Sibley this year! As we attempt to market the Sibley Nature Center, more and more people are discovering the programs and services that we provide. Over 30,000 page hits on the Sibley website were recorded in July with well over 1,000,000 total page hits since the websites inception. Over 30,000 different

computers have logged onto the site, as well. The Animal Behavior section on the website now features several photo-essays and more are being developed each month. The Sibley website has been recognized as one of the most dynamic research sites in the area and we receive phone calls repeatedly for additional information and ideas for new features for the site. If you haven’t

visited our website, please take the time to visit it and let us know if you’d like to see other features that we might develop. The site is:

[www.sibleynaturecenter.org](http://www.sibleynaturecenter.org)

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