



EL LLANERO

The Newsletter of the Sibley Nature Center

Winter 2008

Outreach Programming

This fall, the staff of the Sibley Nature Center met with students, civic groups, and other organizations all over the region. Staff Michael Nickell met with Forsan middle school students at the Big Spring County Park. Michael also helped Emmy Ulmschneider at Midland's Carver Center to help her guide her students through a biological assay of their diversity garden. Richard and Burr went to Andrews to work with the Andrews Middle School to help plan a demonstration Xeriscape garden. Richard also traveled to Big Spring for a civic group program.

Burr made quite a few trips throughout the region including helping Rankin students to design a nature trail behind their school, to Tahoka to meet with middle school students and Dr. Eileen Johnson of Lubbock Lake Landmark and on another visit to Tahoka to speak to middle school horticulture

students and to Ft. Stockton to lead third graders on an insect hunt through creosote patches. The center also gave programs to public and private schools in Midland and Odessa. Burr also gave programs to several retiree groups in Midland and Odessa.

Burr helped Dr. Darryl Birkenfield of Ogallala Commons at a Playa Festival in Whiteface and met with Birkenfield in Nazareth, Texas to further discuss joint programming. The Texas Plains Trail meeting introduced us to Wes Phillips, a leading naturalist of the Panhandle who retired from Alibates National Monument and curates artifacts at several museums in the region. Burr, acting in his capacity as a board member of the Texas Pecos Trails, attended meetings in Ozona and Monahans and discussed joint programming with the Monahans State Park director. Sibley hosted

another of the Texas Pecos Trails group in November. Burr spoke at meetings of the Texas Outdoor Education Association near Leakey and to the Texas Association of Environmental Educators in Austin as well as the New Mexico Association of Environmental Educators in Albuquerque. In addition, he was elected to the board of directors of the Texas association of Environmental Educators and will act as the liaison between Texas and New Mexico groups. While in Austin, Burr met with the staff of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildlife Center which the Sibley center is now affiliated. Finally, Burr attended a Texas Prairie Association board meeting and served as a resource person for a tour of their Maddin Prairie Preserve southeast of Colorado City and later met with the Director of Stewardship of the Nature Conservancy of Texas to discuss future programming in their new Yoakum Dunes Preserve.

- **Trail improvements construction to begin soon**
- **Sibley store open**
- **NASA Hubble prints to unveil at Sibley**
- **Master Naturalists to graduate in December**

Sibley Store

The Sibley Nature Center has established a new store at the Center. The store features t-shirt and casual shirts, nature items including the very popular nature calendars, note cards, and coloring books created by artist Ronna

Porter, science posters, nature jewelry and many other items aimed to please the nature lover. All proceeds go toward the operations of the center. We now have the capability of accepting credit cards, as well. If you are

looking for unusual gifts for the holiday season, come by and browse our store while supporting your center. We are open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m.

Inside this issue:

Sibley outreach programs	1
New Sibley Store	1
Region 18 collaborations	2
Master Naturalists graduate	2
Nature Trail improvements	3
NASA Hubble Image display	3



New Newsletters!

The Sibley Nature Center started three new newsletters this fall which can be found on our website by clicking the newsletter button on the homepage! The newsletters are **No Child Left Inside**, which is the product of speaking to over 400 teachers at MISD in-services, to discuss how the new C/scope Science curriculum can be augmented by Sibley. We were provided with the emails of 161 teachers at 23 elementary schools to distribute the newsletter which is produced every 6 weeks. Teachers can visit the website and follow up with a visit to the center. Also, the **"El Despoblado"** newsletter is now being produced for naturalists in the region

bounded by Borger, Abilene, Sonora, Lajitas, El Paso, and Portales. Naturalists from this region contribute essays, poetry, and photographs to be distributed to 600 people (who forward it to untold numbers!) One reader reported he received 10 copies of it forwarded to him! Readers range from Texas to New Mexico and Colorado. Burr volunteered, as a board member of the Texas Pecos Trails Association of the Texas Historical Association, to serve as editor of their newsletter and to publish the quarterly e-newsletter **Texas Pecos Trails**. The newsletter will now become a monthly edition. It will feature materials by people from the Texas Pecos Trails region which

extends down as far as Del Rio. Chamber of Commerce directors, Main Street Directors, and "hometown" museums directors. The newsletter will be on the Texas Pecos Trails websites as well as the Sibley website.

The two regional e-newsletters are part of Sibley's emerging marketing plan as we seek to become better known as a resource throughout West Texas. Our involvement in statewide and national environmental education groups and regional civic groups helps us become better known, as well.

Partnership with Region 18 Education Service Center

In 2008, the Sibley Nature Center presented two teacher trainings; one at the Mott Creek Ranch near Matador and one at the Sibley center for gifted and talented teachers. Both trainings were well received and in 2009 we will be presenting at least 5 more workshops. We will present trainings at Castle Gap, Big Spring State Park, Monahans State

Park, and again at the Mott Creek Ranch. This time we will have Region 18's Technology bus with us with state of the art computers, scientific equipment, cameras, and more. Region 18 staff also utilized the Sibley building for other teacher trainings in 2008 and will do so again in 2009. We will report the progress of each of these workshops in future newsletters and

will be on the constant lookout for new and innovative ways to provide services to the educational systems in our region and for the general public as we continue our growth. Ideas are always welcome from our members and through the schools systems and other educational entities and the general public. As always, your input is invaluable to us.

**"We cannot command nature except by obeying her."
- Francis Bacon**

The Llano Estacado Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist

This year 17 people will graduate from the Master Naturalist program (even though one of them is in Afghanistan at present.) This group traveled to many local ranches and other sites as they surveyed and photographed the eight major habitats of the Llano Estacado. Over 20 photo-essay for the Sibley website were created from their 700+ photographs. They 2008 class also has been keeping Sibley open on Saturdays as part of the 40 hours volunteer service that is part of the

course. They also helped during the spring plant sales at Sibley and in the Plant Propagators group that is producing material for 2009's plant sales. The Sibley Nature Center is deeply appreciative of all that they have done!



Happy

Holidays!

The 2009 class will begin January 17th. It costs \$75 or \$50 if you are already a Sibley member.

The class will meet once a month through November with graduation in December. The class is so much fun that members of the 2008 class will be attending many of the 2009 field trips! Email Burr at bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.com for information regarding the class. It is a great way to learn about our home!



Odds and Ends

We are attempting to provide a more diversified series of attractions at the learning center in the form of “hands-on” displays...things that students are encouraged to interact with..to touch and manipulate. When students come to the center they are asked to keep their hands off of displays and we recognize their need to interact with displays. One way that has proven successful to other science centers is to provide a series of animal pelts that students can actually touch. If we have any Sibley members that have such items and are willing to donate or loan animal pelts, please let us know so that we can provide a richer experience to students when they visit us.

On another matter, we are still in the process of gathering email addresses from our members in order to distribute our newsletters to you in a cost effective way. If you are willing to receive this and other newsletters by email rather than the more expensive method of using the postal service, it would be a great way of helping us provide services in a cost saving way. Email you email address to: richard@sibleynaturecenter.org...and thank you!

Remember, if you are interested in joining the Permian Basin Outing Club, a program of the Sibley Nature Center, simply

indicate your interest by letting Richard know through his email (listed on the prior paragraph) and he will place you on the roster of the club. The club is included in your current Sibley membership dues and will cost you nothing more than your current Sibley membership.

Finally, if you are looking for constructive ways to “redirect” some of your tax dollars, we would welcome your consideration of donating funds to the operations of the Sibley Nature Center. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and we will acknowledge your donation immediately with a letter of thanks on Sibley letterhead. Thank you!

Sibley Nature Trail Capital Improvements Update

We have successfully completed all fundraising for the \$1,027,000 capital improvements for the Sibley Nature Trail including the matching of a \$500,000 state of Texas grant! Drawings are being completed and several meetings with the state are still planned but the construction of the project should begin in the first quarter of 2009. The improvements

“There is a way that nature speaks, that land speaks. Most of the time we are simply not patient enough, quiet enough, to pay attention to the story.”

- Linda Hogan

include an outdoor teaching pavilion complete with a fire circle for night programs, an acequia water feature, a wildlife feeding station, a new room to be added to the existing building to view the feeding area, new shelters, a new entry feature, “Icons of the Llano Estacado”, new interpretive signage, new habitat gardens, refurbishing of the existing

Sibley pond, and many other new features designed to make your visit to the center a more enriching experience. We will announce a formal ground breaking and eventual grand opening in the near future. Construction should be complete within a year and possibly sooner. We would like to thank all of you that have show support for this project. What began as a mere dream two years ago is soon to be a reality!

Hubble Image Display at Sibley

The Sibley Nature Center was selected by NASA to receive, at no cost to Sibley, two enormous, high definition, multi-wavelength views of the spiral galaxy Messier 101 obtained by Hubble, Spitzer, and Chandra space telescopes. This is in recognition of Galileo’s first use of his telescope 400 years ago! The prints are 3x3 feet and 3x6 feet and will be unveiled at a Sibley Nature Center public event on Saturday, February 21st as part of the

2009 International Year of Astronomy. Additional information will be forthcoming in newspapers and through other media outlets. Only a few organizations in Texas were picked to receive these prints and we are honored to be among those numbers. There will also be a scientific teleconference with NASA scientists knowledgeable about the astronomy behind the images and this will be available for science centers, museums,

and planetarium professionals. Promotion for the event can now be found on the HubbleSite public website at <http://hubblesource.stsci.edu/events/iya/>. A limited number of lithographs of the photos will also be provided to give to regional teachers to enhance their studies of the heavens. When the construction at the Blakemore Planetarium is complete, the Sibley Nature will donate these prints for permanent display there.

The Sibley Nature Center
1307 E. Wadley
Midland, Texas 79705