



El Llanero

Construction on Sibley Nature Trail Scheduled!

Inside this issue:

<i>Nature Trail Improvement Update</i>	
<i>Permian Basin Outing Club</i>	1
<i>Summer Bug Camp</i>	2
<i>Nature Camp</i>	2
<i>Junior Master Naturalists</i>	2
<i>Learning Center Changes</i>	3
<i>A word from Burr</i>	3

After what seems like an eternity, the \$1,000,000+ Sibley Nature Trail Capital Improvements project should begin construction in June. The total budget of the project is \$1,027,000 and will include an additional room attached to the Learning Center that will overlook a new Wildlife Feeding area, several new gardens including expansion of the existing garden in front of the building (the existing front parking lot will be removed to enlarge the existing garden), an outdoor Teaching Pavilion, complete with a fire circle for evening programs, a water feature called an *acequia*, a windmill, new trail shelters complete with new interpretive

signage, new habitat displays, an interpretive entry into the Learning Center titled *Icons of the Llano Estacado*, and many other additions to the Center. Construction bids have been received and will be reviewed to select a contractor. If all falls into place as expected construction will soon follow and by this time next year...or sooner, we will be planning a grand opening!

The board and staff of the Sibley Nature Center are also working diligently to provide for new displays and services for the Learning Center, as well. Thanks to a generous grant by ConocoPhillips, we

have recently purchased a new weather station that will provide conditions at the Center online for visitors, a wildlife viewing camera overlooking the Wildlife Viewing Area, which will also be viewable from our website a new dissecting microscope complete with a camera lucida and a digital camera attachment so that staff and students can publish their findings on the website, and a new endoscope, a device that can "travel" down spider holes, burrowing owl habitats and other habitats. The endoscope is capable of recording both still and video shots that will be published on our website. A lot is happening at Sibley!

Special points of interest:

- Sibley Nature Trail Capital Improvement project construction on the horizon!
- Sibley offers three camps for kids this summer
- Additions to the Learning Center coming soon!

A Reminder

We like to remind our members on a regular basis that their Sibley Nature membership also includes an *optional* membership to the Permian Basin Outing Club. The PBOC takes monthly trips to various places in West Texas and New Mexico and participates in activities such as backpacking, canoeing/

kayaking, caving, rappelling, and "car camping." The club has no additional membership cost to Sibley members and offers the advantage of carpooling, sharing equipment and skills, and in many cases, allows us access to otherwise inaccessible areas! If you are a current Sibley member or would like to become and

member and have an interest in the Permian Basin Outing Club, contact Richard at the Center at 684-6827 or email him at:

richard@sibleynaturecenter.org. The membership also includes a monthly newsletter and discounts at Ski Skeller Sports!

Bug Camp



The Sibley Nature Center will, once again, be offering its Summer Bug Camp. Staff member Michael Nickell, who has Master's Degrees in zoology and Museum Science, and a great deal of knowledge in entomology, will lead students through a week-long collection and study of insects. Students will collect insects for study on the Center's 49-acre Nature Trail (giving the construction crews a wide berth!) The camp is designed

specifically for students that *will be going into* the 4th through 6th grades or that *have just gone through* the 4th through 6th grades. The camp is very specific for these grade levels. Students in last year's camp collected an impressive array of insects, learned about their habitats and behavior, learned about insect anatomy and how insects can both be harmful or beneficial to humans and other life. A set of PowerPoint presentations will be presented

to the students throughout the week followed by field experiences.

The camps are one week in length and run from 9 a.m. to noon each day. The cost of the camp is \$50 (Sibley members will receive a 10% discount). Camps are scheduled for the weeks of June 15th, July 13th, and August 17th. Call the Sibley Nature Center at 684-6827 for more information and registration procedures.

Nature Camp

"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves." -

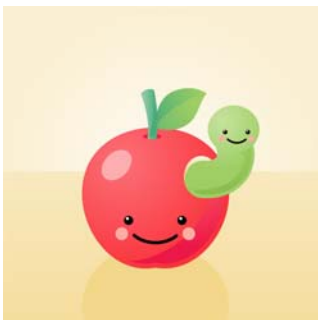
Mohandas K. Gandhi

The Sibley Nature Center will be hosting a summer camp for **minority students** in the 4th through 6th grades. Students who have an interest in science and wildlife are encouraged to attend. Daisy Dominguez from Texas Tech will lead the camp. Daisy has raised funds for this and will serve as a summer intern for Sibley. Students will spend outdoors

hiking the trails and learning about local flora and fauna. They will also be using digital cameras to create their own booklets to relive their adventures. Texas Tech will provide professors as guest presenters and staff from the Ector County Independent School District and Sibley staff will also act as presenters. Students will receive t-shirts

and other items and the camp is free to all participants. The camp will be limited to 15 students per session. Sessions are scheduled for the weeks of June 29th, July 6th, July 20th, and August 4th and will take place from 9 a.m. to noon each week. Interested parties should contact the Sibley Nature Center or email daisy@sibleynaturecenter.org.

Desert Bloomers



The Junior Master Gardeners are repeating their summer activities again this year at the Sibley Nature Center. The Desert Bloomers group will have activities at the Learning Center and at the Youth Garden each Tuesday and Thursday morning in June and July. This group has been

meeting each summer at Sibley since 2002 and on several weekends during the school year. The kids learn about plant propagation and care and plant different "crops" each year. They then return and gather their vegetables, peppers, etc. to take home and even contribute to the local

soup kitchens! This group is already full!

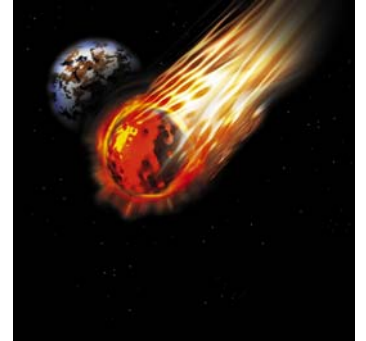
Come by and see this group in action. The kids are really knowledgeable about their work and they show a great deal of enthusiasm!

Changes in the Learning Center

The Sibley staff will soon be embarking on a new project to “spruce up” the existing wall space in the Learning Center. We recognize the fact that exhibiting the same materials over months at a time doesn’t provide much incentive to re-visit the center if there is nothing new to see. One example is the inclusion of a new wall exhibit titled “Skies of the Llano Estacado.” The wall will feature a new exhibit each quarter about both astronomy and weather. We

hope to develop a wall on archeology and geology, mammals, reptiles, etc. and, hopefully, some space where Sibley members can show off their photography and art skills on a monthly rotating basis! Each “theme wall” will be changed quarterly but at least some wall space will be changed every month, giving visitors a new experience every time they visit (assuming they visit at least once a month!) We will be developing a budget for this project and will be

approaching individuals and businesses to provide an annual wall sponsorship. Much of the work will be done internally and we don’t feel that the process will be that costly. Each sponsor will be credited beside their sponsored wall. We are looking for theme ideas and, as always, a sponsor. We should have those budgets soon! If you know of a business or individual that might be interested in sponsoring a wall, please let us know!



From Burr

I presented a program on bioregional storytelling recently at the World Environmental Education Conference in Montreal, Canada and had many questions from the audience of 60—and had positive comments about the bioregional approach. (The positive responses were, “that makes sense, and I don’t know why we don’t do it. We should tell the stories of our home too!”)

I manned my poster promoting bioregional educational websites for two evenings and during two lunches. This was where I had the best conversations. During the time period of the conference, and for a week after, our website almost tripled in

visitations, which I attribute to all of the people that I talked to, and it appears that those visitors suggested for coworkers to visit too. (On the week ending May 17th we had over 168,000 server requests on the website, three times the normal traffic, and the most we have ever had by 60,000! This translates into about 7,000 separate page requests, so it appears that the visitors thoroughly explored the website.) That was also the week for the highest number ever for IP addresses logging on—more than 1,000 more than had ever visited the site in a week (3,500 versus less than 2,500 per week.) (By the way, we have had a mind-blowing 116,000 different IP addresses visit our website this year, January to present.)

When I was at my poster about bioregional websites I conducted a “research project.” Everyone that came up to the poster I planned to ask two questions: 1. What is the name of your bioregion? 2. What are the major habitats of your bioregion? Over the conference period, I asked those questions to over 250 people, from over 40 countries. Only three people knew the name of their bioregion—one from Italy, another from Finland, and another from Ontario, and each had websites devoted to their regions. The results totally flabbergasted me—environmental educators not knowing the answer to such a basic question.

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

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SIBLEY NATURE CENTER

The Sibley Nature Center

1307 E. Wadley

Midland, Texas 79705

Phone: 432-684-6827

Fax: 432-685-3396

We're on the web at:

www.sibleynaturecenter.org
