



El Llanero

The Newsletter of the Sibley Nature Center

Construction near completion

As most of you know, the Sibley Nature Center began construction of a \$1,000,000+ project on the Center's Nature Trail and Learning Center. The improvements include, among other items, a new Wildlife Viewing room at the east end of the existing building which will overlook, logically enough, a



new Wildlife Feeding Area. In addition, there will be a new Outdoor Teaching Pavilion with a fire circle for night and cold weather programs, 2,000 feet of additional trail, new trail shelters, a new entry into the building with gardens and "Icons of the Llano Estacado"...with artwork from Sibley staffer Michael Nickell, new interpretive signage, a corral, barn, windmill, a water feature, an improved pond, and many other new things to see!

The grand opening for the public is planned for Saturday, May 22nd complete with entertainment

and a donor/Sibley member event is planned for Friday, May 21st. If you are a current Sibley member, you should receive a personal invitation in the mail prior to the event. We encourage everyone to attend the events to see and participate in the events planned and to take in all of the innovative improvements to the Center. It has been a rather long road to get to this point but through your participation and support, we are soon to enjoy a new Sibley Nature Center! Mark it on your calendars to attend the May 22nd event and keep an eye on your mail for the special Friday, May 21st invitation!

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Special points of interest:

- *Sibley to soon celebrate new facilities*
- *Summer programs return*
- *New programs*
- *Sibley asks for art displays*

A reminder

Just a reminder that your Sibley membership *can* include memberships to the Permian Basin Outing Club, a monthly trip featuring "high adventure" trips to participate in backpacking, canoeing, caving, camping, etc., and the Sibley Camera

Club—a traditional club wherein members can share their experience in the art of photography or learn the principles of photography from more experienced photographers. The club meets monthly at Sibley to hear programs on portrait

photography, landscapes, panoramic photography, and other areas of photographic skills. Both clubs are optional when you subscribe to a Sibley membership and both are included at no additional cost. Let us know if you want to be included!

Bug Camp returns

Michael Nickell is the “Bug Man! He is a lot more than that, actually. He is a superb artist specializing in natural history, illustrating books and other publications, and creating museum displays. Michael is also a martial arts instructor and an adjunct instructor of biology at UTPB. During his college years (on his way to a Master’s degree in Zoology and a Master’s degree in Museum Science) he became fascinated with insects and now has a collection with over 3,000 mounted specimens of West Texas arthropods that he has donated to the Sibley Nature Center.

The Sibley center is benefiting from Michael’s interest. There is not a professionally prepared insect collection for our part of West Texas. An insect collection is a valuable resource for homeowners, farmers and ranchers, pest control specialists, and students. The Sibley Center’s goal of being a bio-regional resource center is greatly enhanced by developing an insect collection. This summer he will be teaching three sessions of “Bug Camp” for students entering the 4th through 6th grades.

The sessions will run June 7-11, July 12-15, and August 9-12. They will start each morning at 9 a.m. and last until noon. The fee is \$50 for the 4 day class and two scholarships per session are available. The class limit is 15 so early

A large thank you!

A large thank you goes out to two generous donors. The Rea Charitable Trust recently donated \$4,000 for the purchase of a new high definition video system and sound system! The Sibley Auditorium is the site of many programs for our members and the general public and the 70-seat auditorium. The Rea Charitable Trust supports organizations in the field of

registration is recommended to get the week that works best for your child’s summer schedule. Call Michael at 684-6827 Monday through Friday to register or go to the website to download a form.

Camp participants will explore the forty-nine acres of the Sibley Nature Center’s Nature Trail, capturing every type of invertebrate that can be found. The students will dig in the dirt, climb trees, turn over logs and rocks, and seine the pond. It can be scary fun—carefully catching a bee or a wasp builds self confidence! With luck, students will get to “jig” a tarantula or other ground-dwelling spider from a burrow. Netting a dragonfly or other flying insect takes great hand-eye coordination—it is great challenging fun!

After the “hunt,” students will cool down during PowerPoint presentations on insect behavior and more. The last part of each session will introduce the students to the techniques of creating an insect collection. The insects will also be photographed for a digital inventory.

Join us for the fun of Sibley’s “Bug Camp!”

the arts. The Sibley Nature Centers emphasis on photography, field journaling, and other artistic endeavors will be greatly enhanced with our ability to produce and deliver programs and services in these areas.

Conoco-Phillips recently awarded the Sibley Nature Center with a six-

Facebook page a success

In just 8 months time we are nearing 800 Facebook friends. Each day we post two photos (or more) of West Texas flora and fauna. We now have friends in India, the United Kingdom, Canada, and 30 states, as well as hundreds of Texas friends. A wonderful network of naturalists help us identify what we cannot and we discover new things in science. (Supposedly birds do not eat soapberries, but after posting one photo of a robin eating a soapberry, three other people posted photos on the same day of other bird species doing so!) We have been getting wonderful compilations about our postings from our audience, and many other nature centers, state parks, and other conservation groups have taken our lead and are now reporting daily from their locations.

“Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.” - Frank Lloyd Wright

passenger cart for use on our Nature Trail. We are sensitive to the needs of our visitors that might not be as mobile as others and we want everyone to have the opportunity to see the nature that is afforded us! We would like to take this opportunity to thank both the Rea Charitable Trust and Conoco-Phillips for their very kind and generous donations.

Photo documentation of sites going national?

The photo essays on the Sibley Nature Center website often focus on recording the flora and fauna of a specific location throughout a year's period. Staff and volunteers have discovered many organisms where science had not previously recorded the existence. No other nature center or educational facility does such a thing, but the idea is beginning to catch on (especially within the community of facilities that now have a Facebook page.)

Sibley staff is promoting the idea of photo documentation to a larger audience. At present, we are discussing further development of the idea with the executive staff of the North American Association of Environmental Educators and the Children and Nature Network, as well as Jose Quintana, the CEO of AdventGX (an ecotourism and economic development consulting firm), and professors of Texas A&M who specialize in organizing and creating citizen science projects (like the Master

Naturalists). We are deeply appreciative of the encouragement and assistance by Quintana for believing the idea was worth taking to a broader audience.

If this group of people can receive significant funding from the National Science Foundation and similar donors, the idea could eventually become part of school curricula nationwide. Students would be doing real science, constantly monitoring the changing ecology of their home bioregion, documenting the spread of invasive organisms, documenting any changes in the fabric of a habitat (such as desertification, brushification, drought, urban sprawl, or even the much debated issue of climate change).

In recent years, a substantial number of publications have dealt with what

author Richard Louv terms "the Nature-Deficit Disorder." It is a proven fact that few children spend time outside in modern times, and organizations such as "No Child Left Inside Coalition" and the "Children and Nature Network" are dedicated to promoting ways to get children involved with the out-of-doors again. The photo-documentation project could become a valuable part of the effort.



Send us those email addresses

Sounding much like a broken record, we'd like to ask again, if you have an email address and would agree to receive your El Llanero and other notices from the Sibley Nature Center, we would very much appreciate receiving your email address so that we can save time money and postage costs..and you'll receive

your newsletter in color! We have received many email addresses and we appreciate your response. We also understand that many of you don't utilize email or would rather receive a hard copy of the newsletter. For those of you in that category, we will happily continue sending you info through the mail. Thanks again!

"The sun, with all those plants revolving around it and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do." - Galileo

Art Displays for members

The Sibley Nature Center is accepting photographs and art to be exhibited at the Center from Sibley members and entities that are associated with Sibley, i.e. Midland Archeological Society, etc. Photography submissions will be matted by Sibley staff (mats must be purchased by the submitter). Michael Nickell, Sibley's Museum Specialist, will make the final decision as to the nature and content that will be dis-

played. We have already displayed the photography of several Sibley members and the program has met with a great deal of enthusiasm from our patrons. Each submission of works will be displayed for about 6 weeks to 2 months before they are returned to the submitter. Call Michael Nickell at 684-6827 if you are interested.



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

New programs at Sibley

Beginning in June, the staff of the Sibley Nature Center will offer two regular “nature walks.” On Monday mornings at 9 a.m. we will welcome a parent (or grandparent) along with their children to join us for an hour’s exploration along the trail (and if bad weather, a program inside.) If parents or kids bring along a digital camera, we will spend some time “hunting” for great photos. Suggested fee is a \$1 per person, but Sibley Members get in free!

On Friday mornings at 9 a.m. we will lead senior citizen walks and talks. We won’t walk far, and we will spend more time sitting and talking than walking. We will explore the changing landscape along the trails, discovering the special plants and animals of the nature center property, and talking about the history of the region. Digital cameras are welcome – as a great way to closely examine your surroundings, so bring them along! Suggested fee is \$1 per person, but Sibley Members get in free! The trails are wheelchair and scooter friendly. We will use photos from both groups on our Facebook page and website, if folks are willing to share!

Another new programming feature is in the development stage – Matt Hanson, the founder of the Downtown Farmer’s Market would like to hold “Slow Food and a Movie evenings.” He would like to have folks join him for a cookout on our new teaching pavilion, cooking locally grown food, sharing recipes and stories, followed by a movie. The movies will be offbeat documentaries and feature films that celebrate “pride in place,” “living well,” and sustainable lifestyles. If you think you might be interested, let us know, so we can better gauge the success of the venture, and to develop an email invitation list to the first event.

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