



# El Llanero

## Sibley Academy

A couple of years ago we experimented with a series of classes here at the Sibley Nature Center and dubbed the program the “Sibley Academy.” We were surprised at the response, which was really good...but we made an error in offering too many classes at once! Each class made but was small (except for the camera class) and we found that there is a lot of interest out there but it’s important not to dilute the class sizes by offering too many choices.

This fall, we will be offering several classes that proved to be successful in the past. These classes include:

*Natural Dyes (Ethel Matthews), Xeriscaping (Burr Williams), How to Use Your Camera—Dials and Buttons (Richard Galle), Rappelling (Richard Galle), Introduction to Nature Drawing (Michael Nickell).* All classes will be taught at the Sibley Nature Center with an additional day in the Davis Mountains to complete the rappelling course, and Sibley members, as always, will be offered a discounted fee for the classes.

*Natural Dyes* will be taught by Ethel Matthews, a biology instructor at Midland College. Ethel will explain in a short, one hour course, methods of collecting West Texas plants, preparation of the plants, and methods to apply natural dyes to cloth and apparels. Ethel has been teaching these techniques for years and many students that wish to learn these unique skills have benefited from her knowledge. These are special skills that are not readily available to the general public!

*Xeriscaping* will be taught by Burr Williams. Burr will give a rundown on the wealth of plants that can be used in a home landscape that only needs to be watered once a week, even in the driest of times. Students will not only view PowerPoint's but also tour the gardens at the Sibley Nature Center where many of the plants can be examined. The resources found of the Sibley website and other websites will also be discussed. Fall can be a great time to plant and winter is the perfect time to plan future changes!

*How to Use Your Camera—”Dials and*

*Buttons”* will be taught by Richard Galle, an avid photographer and member of the Sibley staff. Richard doesn’t claim to be a great photographer but has a technical grasp of the uses of camera features such as aperture priority, shutter priority, depth of field, and many other aspects on both film and digital cameras and when and where to use your camera’s controls.

*Rappelling* will be taught by Richard Galle who has spent many years teaching the mountaineering/climbing/caving skill of roping oneself down a mountain or into caves to explore or for the sheer thrill of the adventure. Richard was trained in vertical rescue when he served as a U.S. National Park ranger and has taught vertical rescue teams, SWAT teams, fire departments, and general climbing enthusiasts. Learn rope dynamics, knots, anchors, gear, belaying techniques, signals, and all aspects of rappelling

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### Special points of interest:

- *Sibley Academy fires up again!*
- *Sibley membership privileges*
- *Xeriscaping an important issue*
- *Teacher workshops announced*

## Sibley Goes to Schools

With the tightening of school district budgets, the Sibley Nature Center is making a concerted effort to go to the public and private schools or the region. Staff plan to visit every school in Midland (and hopefully other towns) with information about programs that we can do at the school as well as information about our website, weekly newsletters, and more. We hope to visit with the PTAs at each school as well.



## The “landscape changing” Drought

We have been living through the worst drought in our history. In a 175 mile circuit of West Texas recently, a member of the Sibley staff and his wife found only a single one mile stretch where the roadside was green. In many places hackberry and soapberry trees stood leafless, creosote bushes were brown and crispy, up to 40 percent of the stems of shin oaks had brown leaves, and junipers appeared dead on some of the slopes of the Stockton Plateau mesa country just to the south of the Llano Estacado. Biologist Phillip Dickerson with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recently commented; “This is a landscape changing drought.”

Two more Brown Bag Luncheons are scheduled for September 26th and November 28th at the Sibley Nature Center auditorium.

The previous four Brown Bag Luncheons have been well attended and an average audience of 45.

The planned speakers; Judge Junell and Richard Galle on mountain climbing (Judge Junell on Africa’s Kilimanjaro and Richard Galle on Switzerland’s Eigernordwand...Eiger North Face.) Also, Dr. Calvin Smith of the Western Heritage Museum in Hobbs, will speak on the discovery of a mammoth in Lea County. Watch for announcements in the Midland Reporter Telegram. The Sibley Brown Bag series is sponsored by a generous grant from Concho Resources.

## Sibley website usage

The Sibley Nature Center website has seen a marked increase of use this summer. Part of the growth might be attributed to the horrible heat and drought and more people staying inside looking for something to do. Part of the increase might also be attributed to the Facebook page of Burr Williams (which has over 1,500 folks following the daily posts of photos and text.) Williams also began posting one photo or one link to the Sibley website to ten other Facebook

pages with large followings (Facebook birders, Remembering Midland, Remembering Odessa, Remembering Big Spring, Edible Plants, Medicinal Plants, American Birding Association, among others.) Seventy percent of the 1,500 folks that follow Burr’s page live on or near the Llano Estacado with the rest living in 47 of the 50 states and

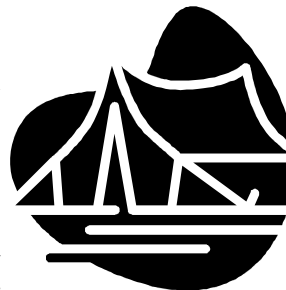
25 countries. These postings have generated hundreds of daily responses from people hitting the “like” button to in-depth discussions that generate dozens of comments. Join in the fun!

*“We do not see nature with our eyes, but with our understandings and our hearts.”*  
*William Hazlitt*

## Sibley memberships

Just a reminder that all memberships will come due on December 31, 2011...which is still a bit off. We will send you a membership renewal at that time but we wanted to remind you that when you join the Sibley Nature Center, you are actually aligning yourself to three memberships in one. Not only do you have access to the Sibley quarterly newsletter but to the Permian Basin Outing Club and the Sibley Camera Club, as

well. Sibley members-only events are being planned each year and, as a member, you will get personal invitations to many of these events. The outdoor club takes “high adventure” trips each month and distributes a monthly newsletter as does the



Sibley Camera Club which meets monthly to talk about all of the uses of both digital and film cameras, how to use them, etc. Club members range from professionals to rank amateurs that are completely unfamiliar with the tools and opportunities of camera usage. If you’re not already in either of the “auxiliary clubs and wish to be included, let us know!

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## Weekly Newsletters

We have been putting out two weekly newsletters this year. One, "This Week on the Llano Estacado," always features one organism you are likely to see as you go about your daily life, with occasional listings of special "wild" visitors. The other weekly newsletter, "This Week at the Sibley Nature Center-La Comancheria" announces what is happening at Sibley the coming week, often along with photos of things recently seen at Sibley or more stories about local flora, fauna, ecology, and history. Email Burr Williams at:

bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.org

to be placed on the mailing list for one or both of the newsletters. Over 300 folks already have!

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## Bird Migration

This summer has seen some amazing birdlife come to Midland. At the top of the list was a Golden Cheeked Warbler, an endangered species normally seen in Central Texas (and never before here!) A Greater Kiskadee wandered up from South Texas and hung out at the area around the sewage treatment plant. A Northern Waterthrush spent several days at the Sibley Nature Center pond along the nature trail. During migration, birds are looking for water first and foremost, so the urban forest attracts many species. Be sure to keep your cameras handy and if you see an unusual bird...take some photos and send them to:

bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.org.

And remember, the Sibley Wildlife Viewing Room here at the Center is a

great place to sit in the comfort of the indoors and see a large variety of birds and other animals that frequent the garden on a daily basis. We keep seed and other foodstuffs plus a watered area full so that wandering species of birds are attracted to the area. Of course, we have the acrylic beehive that attracts a lot of visitors but we're always amazed at the variety of birds and mammals that visit our facility.

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## Teacher Workshops

The Sibley Nature Center is currently working with the Region 18 Education Service Center in the planning of 6 new Teacher Workshops designed to provide opportunities for public school teachers in our region to obtain their required continuing education needs. Four of these classes have been identified and are in the planning stages. These include: *Archeology*, taught by Mr. Rick Day of

Andrews Independent School District, *Drawing from Nature*, taught by Sibley staffer Michael Nickell, *Taxonomic Keys*, taught by Michael Nickell, *Nature Journaling*, also taught by Michael Nickell, and *Astronomy*, taught by Andrews Independent School District

*"In wilderness I sense the miracle of life, and behind it our scientific accomplishments fade to trivia."*

*Charles A. Lindbergh*

Planetarium Director Charles Hemann and Sibley Nature Center's Richard Galle. Please be on the alert for class dates and times in Region 18 Education Service Center's announcements and let your fellow teachers know about these upcoming events!

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## October 8th Fall Festival

On October 8th, 2011, the Sibley Nature Center is planning an all day event. The current plans is to get the San Angelo Nature Center to bring their snakes, the South Plains Wildlife Rehab Center to bring birds and bats, and the Midland 4-H to bring their petting zoo animals for the little ones. We will announce the final lineup for the event in our weekly newsletter and local papers when we line up all participants. We wanted to give

Sibley members a heads-up on this event so that you can bring your friends and family. We had a similar event last year and were astounded to see the hundreds of people that showed up. All of the presentations were fabulous and the petting zoo was a favorite of the younger crowd. We hope to see similar numbers for our fall offering!



## Sibley Academy Classes...continued

### THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SIBLEY NATURE CENTER

Sibley Nature Center  
1307 E. Wadley  
Midland, Texas 79705  
Phone: 432-684-6827  
Fax: 432-685-3396  
Email: richard@sibleynaturecenter.org

*Introduction to Nature Drawing* will be taught by Michael Nickell. Michael has spent years in the field of nature drawing and has contributed his skills to many of the displays currently seen at the Sibley Nature Center. Michael has illustrated books and has done work for the National Geographic Society, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and various other institutions and publications.

We're on the web at:  
[www.sibleynaturecenter.org](http://www.sibleynaturecenter.org)

### Registration for Sibley Academy Classes

Please contact the Sibley Nature Center at (432) 684-6827 or email Richard Galle at: richard@sibleynaturecenter.org for registrations. All registration deadlines are one week prior to the first class.

## Sibley Academy Classes Schedule and Fees

### Introduction of Nature Drawing

Mondays—6:30—8:30—Sibley Library  
September 12, 26, October 3, 17, November 7.  
Class Fee: \$50-Sibley member  
\$80- Non-member

### Xeriscaping

6 -8 p.m.—Sibley Auditorium  
September 26 and 27  
Class Fee: \$50 Sibley member  
\$80—Non-member

### How to Use Your Camera

“Dials and Buttons”  
Sibley Library—6-8 p.m.  
September 5 and 7  
Class Fee: \$25 Sibley member  
\$35 Non-member

### Natural Dyes

7—8p.m.—Sibley Auditorium  
October 20, 2011  
Class Fee: Free—Sibley member  
\$10—Non-member

### Rappelling

7-9 p.m.—Sibley Auditorium  
October 10 and 12—Day trip to Davis Mountains for field work—October 15  
Class Fee: \$30 Sibley member  
\$50 Non-member

