

Hummingbird Festival 2017



Sumita holds up a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Photo by Kristina Arndt.

This year's Hummingbird Festival was held on a wonderful "fall" day. The cool, dry, sunny weather was a welcome preview of the months to come. There were plenty of hummingbirds and a steady stream of visitors to keep everyone engaged throughout the day. As predicted, our attendance numbers after Harvey were considerably below previous years. However, 685 is a respectable number of visitors, and our volunteer attendance remained steady. We are so grateful that 70 of you were able to lend a hand. Of course, the star of the day was hummingbird bander Sumita Prasad. This year Sumita and her assistant Jim Renfro, also a licensed hummingbird bander, deployed a walk-in trap which worked extremely well. Jim was able to catch birds and keep Sumita busy banding throughout the day. Sumita banded 20 hummingbirds, 17 Ruby-throated and 3 Rufous. She also caught a Rufous Hummingbird that she originally banded here in 2013. This same bird was also caught at the 2015, 2016, and 2017 Hummingbird Festivals. In fact, this year the bird was caught three times during the day. It seems to like Sumita as much as our human visitors do.



At left, Jim Renfro captures a hummer in the walk-in trap. Photo by Hao Vo. Center, Sumita Prasad places a hummingbird into a child's hand for release. Photo by Albert Holba. At right, a male Rudy-throated Hummingbird at Kleb. Photo by Hao Vo.

The children's activities seem to increase in popularity every year. This year we had a higher percentage of children than ever before (39%). I think you, our volunteers are largely responsible for that. Your enthusiasm and active engagement with the children makes this an exceptionally fun day for them.



At left, a volunteer measures a child for "banding." Photo by Kristina Arndt. At right, the couple from Wild Birds Unlimited engaged children at the wing span activity. Photo by Jim Pulliam.



At left, the craft activities are always popular and often the tables were full of industrious kids. Photo by Jim Pulliam. At right, a child is weighed on the Cypress Top Historic Park freight scale at the Eat Like a Hummingbird activity. Photo by Jim Pulliam.



Our give away table is always popular with visitors, and no one has more fun manning their booth than these volunteers. Photo at left by Truman Louderback, photo at right by Hao Vo.

The Master Naturalists again did a stellar job preparing for nature walks for our visitors. They cleaned and placed almost 100 labels for plants within the preserve. They also came up with a plan B which allowed visitors to learn something about nature while avoiding many of the pesky mosquitoes on the wetland trail.



The Master Naturalists are ready to show visitors the plants and critters around Kleb Woods. Photo by Truman Louderback.

Each year, many of the people that attend Hummingbird Festival have never previously visited Kleb Woods. This year 40% were new to us. Consequently, activities like watching a blacksmith demonstration or touring the 1896 Kleb farm house or visiting the Young Naturalist Room were as new and interesting as watching a hummingbird being banded. We are fortunate to have volunteers who are passionate about these things to make the experience special every time they engage visitors.



At left, Dave Koenig entralls visitors with his work. Photo by Truman Louderback. Center, Jay Gavitt of the Cypress Historical Society brings history to life for kids and adults. Photo by Albert Holba. At right, kids make discoveries in the Young Naturalist Room. Photo by Glen Hill.

For the last two years, we have had constables bring their 4-wheelers to patrol and assist visitors while parking. They have proven to be a big hit with the visitors. Children have positive interactions with the uniformed officers. In one of the pictures below, two bird-masked children are perched in the driver's seat. I suspect it was the highlight of their day.



At left, a friendly wave. At right, two children are in the driver's seat. Photos by Kristina Arndt.



Houston Audubon Society's Mary Ann Weber displays a Barred Owl to an appreciative crowd.

The Houston Audubon Society has been a big part of Hummingbird Festival since its beginning. They bring their raptors for display and allow people to photograph them while Mary Ann Weber passes along tidbits and facts about owls, hawks and other birds. This year she brought some of the newer members of her troop. Dawn Monachino brought her guitar and sang some catchy songs. She was assisted by a young girl with a sandwich sign that allowed everyone to sing along. They also brought a rooster, a recent Harvey rescue that visitors could pet. Hummingbird Festival would not be complete without the resources and talents of the Houston Audubon Society.



At left, a minstrel for the visitors. Photo by Kendra Kocab. At right, touching hawk specimens was a special experience for the kids. Photo by Glen Hill.



At left, Mary Ann with a Great Horned Owl. Photo by Jim Pulliam. At right, a real star, RC the mini rooster. Photo by Glen Hill.

There are many other volunteers whose roles are integral to making the festival a success. Our set up and clean-up crew is obviously important and they did a great job. Setting canopies up on Friday was a blessing. Our cart drivers kept people moving all day. Our registration crew was flawless and our lunch ladies again made a beautiful spread to keep volunteers fed and happy.

We are so very grateful to each and every one of you for taking the time to volunteer for the preparations and then the event itself. It is your dedication, enthusiasm and generosity that make this such a great festival.

Thank you.

Kleb Watermelon made by Nina Rach.
Photo by Megan Ahlgren.

Megan Ahlgren

Margo Herman

Kaitlin Will



Kendra Kocab

Linda Martin-Rust

Jim Wilson

Fred Collins