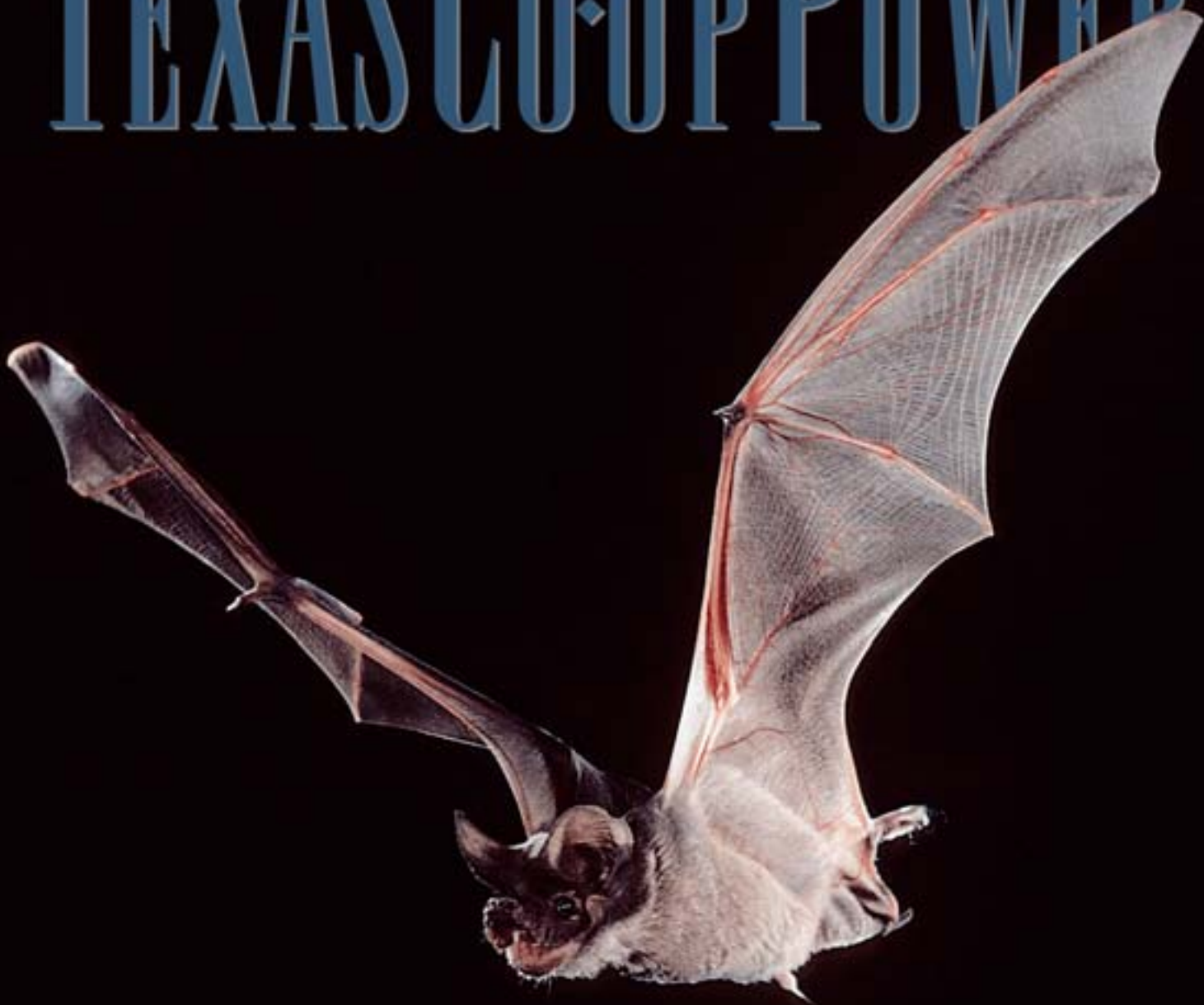


TEXAS CO-OP POWER



Why We Like Bats

PLUS:

Plum Delightful
Tex-Mex Cooking
Quitman's Spring
Swing Festival

TAME YOUR TREES

Tree Trimming


We love our trees, but when branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and safety concerns.

Here are some rules to follow:

- If a tree or a large branch is touching or falls on an electric line, call your electric cooperative immediately. Tree sap is an excellent conductor of electricity, so a downed branch on a line is an electrocution hazard as well as a fire hazard.
- Never trim trees that grow close to power lines; that is a job for professionals. Call your electric co-op for assistance and guidance.
- Don't allow children to climb trees or build tree houses close to power lines.
- When planting a tree, plan ahead. A tiny tree may eventually grow large enough to damage power lines and possibly interrupt power during storms. At maturity, your trees should not be within 10 feet of a power line.
- Plant appropriate distances from all power lines—those along the street or right-of-way, as well as those running to your home and outbuildings.



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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

May Miracles

Here in Austin, bats are the unofficial mascot. Approximately 1.5 million of the winged mammals live under the Congress Avenue Bridge, and people go down to the shores of Town Lake to watch them appear at twilight. Other towns may not be as appreciative of bats as Austin, but everyone should know they are a great addition to our urban and rural landscape.

Our second feature harkens back to a time-honored rural tradition—picking and preserving wild plums. Thanks to photographer Wyman Meinzer for accompanying his wife and family on this delightful trip down memory lane.

Our Home Cooking topic this month is the beloved Tex-Mex cuisine. Be sure to check out the Tex-Mex Posole Stew and the extraordinary Green Sauce. Jim Gramon's festival column takes us this month to Quitman, new home of the Light Crust Doughboys Hall of Fame and the Spring Swing Festival. The school projects highlighted in Focus on Texas are imaginative and funny. And the Texas, USA feature on Father's Day in Ammansville makes me yearn to return to a hometown I never had.

Enjoy!

keo

Peg Champion
VP, Communications/Publisher



When Bryan High School geometry teacher and Bryan Texas Utilities member **JENNIFER WELLMAN** assigned a project using geometric shapes, she had no idea that three of her students would come up with this "bird-brained" project they named Disco Flamingo. The students—**CRYSTAL BIGLEY, KATIE WEST-MORELAND** and **ASHLEY MOORE**—received an "A" for their geometry-project-turned-art! For more School Projects, turn to page 37.

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CHERYL TUCKER

A cloud of bats emerges from the private Bracken Cave near San Antonio.

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By Elaine Acker

Q: What flies at speeds of 60 mph, eats 1,000 tons of insects every night, and attracts thousands of tourists to Texas every year?

A: Mexican free-tailed bats!

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Picking and preserving wild plums is a grand old Texas tradition.

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By Karen Matthews

Father's Day in Ammansville

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

VOLUME 62 MAY 2006 NUMBER 11

Texas Co-op Power is published by your electric cooperative to enhance the quality of life of its member-customers in an educational and entertaining format.

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Texas Electric Cooperatives

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LETTERS

Simply the Best

Your March magazine is the absolute best issue of Texas Co-op Power I have ever read. The article on butterflies is so full of good information and colorful pictures. And "Doctoring Your Dirt" is so well written, even I can understand how to make compost now. Both these articles will be very useful to me.

GINGER UNDERWOOD

Bend

Another Butterfly Fan

"Summa Excellence!" That's your Texas Co-op Power publication of March 2006. I have shown it to all my neighbors who are not fortunate enough to be supplied electricity by Deep East Texas Electric Co-op. Your customer education and entertainment format is certainly predominant in this issue! Particularly for us who have butterfly gardens.

CORINE M. FLETCHER

Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative

Three Generations Enjoy Homegrown Goodness

The article by Joanna Davenport Athey ["Nearer God's Heart in a Houston Garden," March 2006] reminded me of the treasured time I have spent in the gardens of my grandmothers (Emodine Boydston and Tommie Ann Hodges—both Wise Electric Cooperative members) and of my mother (Jo Atkins—Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative member).

Although the gardens were a necessity to provide sustenance for our family, I learned a true respect for God's hand in nature (insects, snakes, drought and flood) and enjoyed a wonderful variety and the true taste of "homegrown" vegetables from these ladies. In true tradition, my 2-year-old (Dalton Patton) is already addicted to homegrown okra and squash.

Thanks for publishing articles that touch the lives of people like me.

MRS. C.J. PATTON

San Bernard Electric Cooperative



BUTTERFLY POSTER AVAILABLE

Co-op members may purchase 16"x20" posters for \$15 each. The price for nonmembers is \$20. To order a poster, please mail \$15, the name of your co-op and your name and address to Texas Co-op Power, Butterfly Poster, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704.

Roof Vents Make a Difference

First of all, I enjoy your magazine and what co-ops are doing for us in Texas. We just moved here from Missouri and bought a new house with attic storage above the garage. While putting storage items in the attic, I put a thermometer up there and got a 140-degree reading when it was 100 degrees outside. I researched on the Internet and found plenty of articles saying 140 degrees would reduce the life of shingles, wood rafters, etc., plus have an effect on energy usage.

I bought two wind-driven attic vents, had them mounted high on the house, and dropped the attic temperature 40 degrees on a 100-degree day. The total cost was \$105: \$65 for two units and \$40 for installation. The roof vents can be purchased from Lowe's, Home Depot or your local lumberyard. I would recommend this to your many customers.

J.D. LENDERTS

Magic Valley Electric Cooperative

Edom Has New Festival

I am delighted that Judy Alter has rediscovered Edom, as she wrote in your February article, "Edom On My Mind." However, I must shed some light on her reference to the Edom Arts Fair, which relocated to Tyler several years ago and has now been discontinued. Rising in its place almost five years ago was the well-received Edom Festival of the Arts, which is sponsored by the Edom Area Chamber of Commerce. This year it will be held October 21-22.

There was an error in the reference to the "new restaurant," the Edom Bakery and Grill, owned and operated by Bud and Ann Berry. Their monthly "gourmet night," when they import a chef from Dallas, is held on Saturday nights, not Fridays.

CAROLYN HARGROVE

Edom Area Chamber of Commerce

Curing Cast Iron Skillets

The April 2006 story on cast iron cooking might have been even more

helpful if it had included a word about proper curing of cast iron cookware. Even if space wouldn't permit a lengthy discussion, there are a number of websites that cover the subject.

ROY MOSES

Cooke County Electric Cooperative

EDITOR'S NOTE: For information on seasoning cast iron cookware, go straight to the horse's mouth. Visit the Lodge Manufacturing website at www.lodgechef.com and click on Use & Care.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM OUR READERS.

Send letters to:

Editor, *Texas Co-op Power*,
2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704

Or e-mail us at letters@texas-ec.org

Please include the name of your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and will be printed as space allows.

SAFE LIVING

What You Can Do To Prevent Electrical Fires

We use electricity almost everywhere in our homes—it's an important part of our lives. Yet it only takes one old or poorly wired plug to prove just how powerful it is; the wires don't even need to touch for a spark to jump and a fire to start.

Any one of our home appliances is connected to enough power to start a fire instantly, so how can you check your home appliances to ensure that they are operating safely?

Danger signs—Hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow for no obvious reason, flickering lights, and scorch marks on sockets or plugs are all signs of loose wiring or other problems.

Badly wired plugs—If wires are sticking out of the plug, not only could they be pulled loose, but water and debris could get inside the plug.

Fraying or repaired cords—If the

outer covering of the cord is damaged, or if it has been taped, water could get in or the tape could come loose. Never join two electric cords by taping them together.

Overloaded sockets—If you plug too many appliances into an outlet, you could overload it, which can lead to overheating.

Cords in vulnerable positions—Don't leave power cords where they can be tripped over, near a source of water, or close to the stovetop.

Appliances near water—Don't let cords or plugs get wet, and keep liquids away from electric appliances. Don't put a vase on top of the TV, for example.

Maintenance—Electric appliances, especially ones that run at high speeds and contain motors (like the washing machine and clothes dryer), should be serviced regularly.





Why We Like Bats

BY ELAINE ACKER

Q: What flies at speeds of 60 mph, eats 1,000 tons of insects every night, and attracts thousands of tourists to Texas every year?

A: Mexican free-tailed bats!

Barbara French puts on magnifying lenses and gently lifts a single Mexican free-tailed bat out of a shoebox. A kindhearted Texan found the bat on the sidewalk and brought it to French, hoping the bat could be nursed back to health. The young, female bat is probably one of last year's pups making her first spring migration back to Central Texas. Against the light, every tiny vein and bone in the translucent wing is visible.



SHE'S DEHYDRATED, AND SHE'S GOT A broken wing, but I can fix that," says French with a confident smile. "This bat may look fragile, but really, Mexican free-tailed bats are the Lance Armstrongs of the bat world—very aerodynamic, high endurance, high-speed flyers."

French is the founder of Austin Bat Hospital, a nonprofit educational facility affiliated with Bat World Sanctuary in Mineral Wells. She rehabilitates more than 100 bats like this one every year. The bats that cannot be released into the wild find a permanent haven at Austin Bat Hospital, where they make a valuable contribution to science.

For more than a decade, French has studied numerous Texas bat species. She's studied young bats' insect hunting habits with scientists from Indiana University, social group communication among bats with researchers from the Univer-

sity of Texas, DNA paternity studies with scientists from the University of Tennessee, rabies investigations with state health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and educational programs with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

French's extensive knowledge of bat biology has earned her the nickname "Bat Doc," and she has been described as "the Jane Goodall of bats" in an article by *National Geographic*. She and Amanda Lollar were the first to document the language bats use to communicate with each other. Their work is now being followed by professors and students from the University of Texas. "Our early findings suggest bats may be using a simplistic form of grammar," says French. "Bats have been documented using a series of beeps, peeps, buzzes and trills as they chatter to one another in their roost.

They greet each other, argue over favored roosting spots, hop and play together, and even sing courtships songs." With a sly smile, French adds, "Perhaps bats are more like us than we realized."

Texas has 33 species of bats on record, according to Meg Goodman, Texas Parks and Wildlife's state bat coordinator. "That's more than any other state in the United States," she says. "And even though Central Texas is the region most famous for huge populations of Mexican free-tailed bats, bat species are found in every corner of the state, from caves to forests, where they control some of our worst insect pests."

Bats are agricultural allies because they are an effective alternative to chemical pesticides. "Bats are a critical part of our environment," says French. "Some people are afraid of them, or have misconceptions about them, or simply don't understand

Where To See Bats

It is possible to watch huge bat colonies emerge each evening from roughly March through October from numerous Texas bridges, caves and tunnels.



EARL NOTTINGHAM, TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

CAPROCK CANYONS STATE PARK, SILVERTON

Clarity Tunnel, Caprock Canyons State Park, Silvertown

Contact the park at (806) 455-1492, or www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/caprock_canyons.

Congress Avenue Bridge, Austin

Located about a mile south of the Capitol, the world's largest urban bat colony has 1.5 million bats. The *Austin American-Statesman's* observation area is at the south-east corner of the bridge. Call the *Statesman's* bat hotline for more information: (512) 416-5700, category 3636.



© KAREN MARKS, BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

CONGRESS AVENUE BRIDGE, AUSTIN

Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area, Rocksprings

For information, contact the Devil's Sinkhole Society in Rocksprings: (830) 683-2287 (BATS) or www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/sinkhole or www.devilssinkholetx.com. Tours are offered Wednesday through Sunday, April through October, by reservation. Adults, \$12; over 65, \$10; children 4-11, \$6; children under 4 are free.

Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve, Mason

Managed by The Nature Conservancy of Texas, the cave is home to approximately 6 million bats. Tours available from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday through Sunday, mid-May through mid-October. Group tours available by special appointment. To learn more about tours and admission fees, visit www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/texas/preserves/art6022.html.



LYNN MCBRIDE/THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

ECKERT JAMES RIVER BAT CAVE PRESERVE, MASON

Frio Cave, Concan

The state's second largest rural colony has 10 to 12 million bats. Guided tours are offered through Hill Country Adventures. Adults \$10, children 5-12 \$5, younger children free. Reservations must be made in advance at www.hillcountryadventures.com or by calling (830) 966-2320.

Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area, Sisterdale

Hours of operation: Seven days a week at the upper viewing deck for free; lower viewing deck is open Thursday through Sunday. Adults, \$5; seniors, \$3; children 6-16, \$2; children 5 and under are free. For information, call Old Tunnel at 1-866-978-2287 (BATS) or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wma/find_a_wma/list/?id=17.

Stuart Bat Cave, Kickapoo Cavern State Park, Brackettville

To visit Stuart Bat Cave, make reservations in advance at (830) 563-2342. For tour information and prices, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/kickapoo.

Waugh Drive Bridge, Houston

This new bat-watching site is being developed by the City of Houston Parks Department. The Buffalo Bayou Partnership offers boat tours and Diana Foss, Texas Parks and Wildlife's urban biologist, is tentatively scheduled to host bat night, with a question/answer session, on the third Friday of the month during "bat season." For information, call Foss at (281) 456-7029.

just how important these tiny mammals are in helping control insects in Texas. The Mexican free-tailed bats, for example, dine on moths that lay eggs, which later develop into caterpillars that feed on many different crops like corn and cotton.”

The Mexican free-tailed bats that live in Central Texas during the summer are estimated to consume about 1,000 tons of insects every night. The bats emerge in such large numbers that they, and their insect prey, can be detected on Doppler radar. By consuming massive numbers of moths in flight, they can prevent the growth of the destructive larva and limit the numbers of moths migrating further north into other parts of the United States.

Because bats are so valuable to Texas, many landowners are actively helping conserve the state’s populations. Like many species, Mexican free-tailed bats are cave dwellers. Over the years, caves have been explored, commercialized, used as trash dumps, or mined for guano



WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Barbara French holds Tony, a yellow bat.

When Bats Aren’t Welcome

The first encounter many people have with bats is when one finds its way into a home, or when a bat is found lying on the ground. People should never handle bats with their bare hands. A bat on the ground is more likely to be sick, or injured, and could bite in self defense. And like most other mammals, some bats could carry rabies.

A bat on the ground can be captured by simply putting a small box over it and gently scooting a flat, sturdy piece of cardboard or stiff paper between the box and the ground so the bat is trapped inside. Keep a lid on the box and tape it shut. If anyone has had direct contact with the bat, it should be turned over to the Texas Department of Health for rabies testing. If no one has had contact with the bat, e-mail a bat expert such as Barbara French at batdoc@concentric.net and take it to a facility that can care for it.

“If a bat flies into your home,” says French, “close the doors to other rooms so the bat remains isolated in a single room. If you are certain no one had contact with the bat, just open the windows and doors, stand in a corner, and simply wait for it to fly back out. Or if it lands on the ceiling or wall, slowly place a box over it and slip a piece of cardboard between the box and wall, trapping

the bat inside.” The box can then be moved outside, preferably onto a ledge 6 feet or higher from the ground, which will allow the bat to more easily gain flight. Then remove the lid and allow the bat to fly away. If the bat appears injured and does not fly away, replace the lid on the box and contact an expert.



© MERLIN D. TUTTLE, BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

(valuable both as a fertilizer, and during the Civil War for saltpeter content). Private landowners with caves on their property are helping restore vital natural habitat by limiting cave visitation, cleaning up debris, and closing old guano mining shafts that may have altered the cave's original airflow.

For landowners who want the benefits of bats, but who do not have caves on their property, artificial roosts such as bat houses can attract bats. "Bat houses are one of the simplest ways to manage bats," says Goodman, "because they work in both urban and rural settings."

LANDOWNER J. DAVID BAMBERGER, who opens his Hill Country ranch, Selah, to tourists, has been described as a "bat rancher," and has created the ultimate bat house, making bats a permanent part of his nature tourism business. In 1998, despite the doubting looks and good-natured teasing he endured from fellow landowners, he undertook construction of a one-of-a-kind artificial roost—a man-made cave—that last year finally became home to 200,000 bats. "We've got cave bats and Mexican



CHERYL TUCKER

A translucent bat wing reveals tiny veins and bones.

free-tailed bats living in there now," says Bamberger. "And this year we even had mother bats raising pups."

You don't have to build a large artificial cave to help conserve bats on your land. Bat conservation can be as simple as installing a bat house or providing adequate water sources. "Even small steps toward bat conservation can have long-term impacts on Texas' ecology," says Goodman.

To learn more about bats, call Meg Goodman with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department,

(512) 912-7042, or e-mail meg.goodman@tpwd.state.tx.us.

To support bat conservation in Texas and learn more about Barbara French's work in rehabilitating bats, visit the Austin Bat Hospital website at www.austinbathospital.com or e-mail French at batdoc@concentric.net.

Elaine Acker has written about Texas bats for more than a decade. She lives in Austin, where she and her husband enjoy renting little electric boats on Town Lake and sharing summer evening picnics while watching the bats fly from the Congress Avenue Bridge.

Ways To Help Bats

Bats are the world's only flying mammals, and occupy a wide variety of habitats worldwide, from forests to caves to abandoned mine shafts. Most species in the United States feed on insects, including mosquitoes. Some pollinate flowers and disperse seeds that regenerate healthy plants (such as the giant saguaro cactus in Arizona and the agave plant, from which tequila is produced) year after year.

Contrary to popular myth, bats can see just fine. They do not become entangled in human hair or attack people. Although bats can potentially contract rabies, only 1 in 200 will do so, and even bats that are sick rarely bite unless handled.

People are the biggest threat to bats' survival. Bats deserve a break from myths and misinformation because of the vital role they play in our environment.

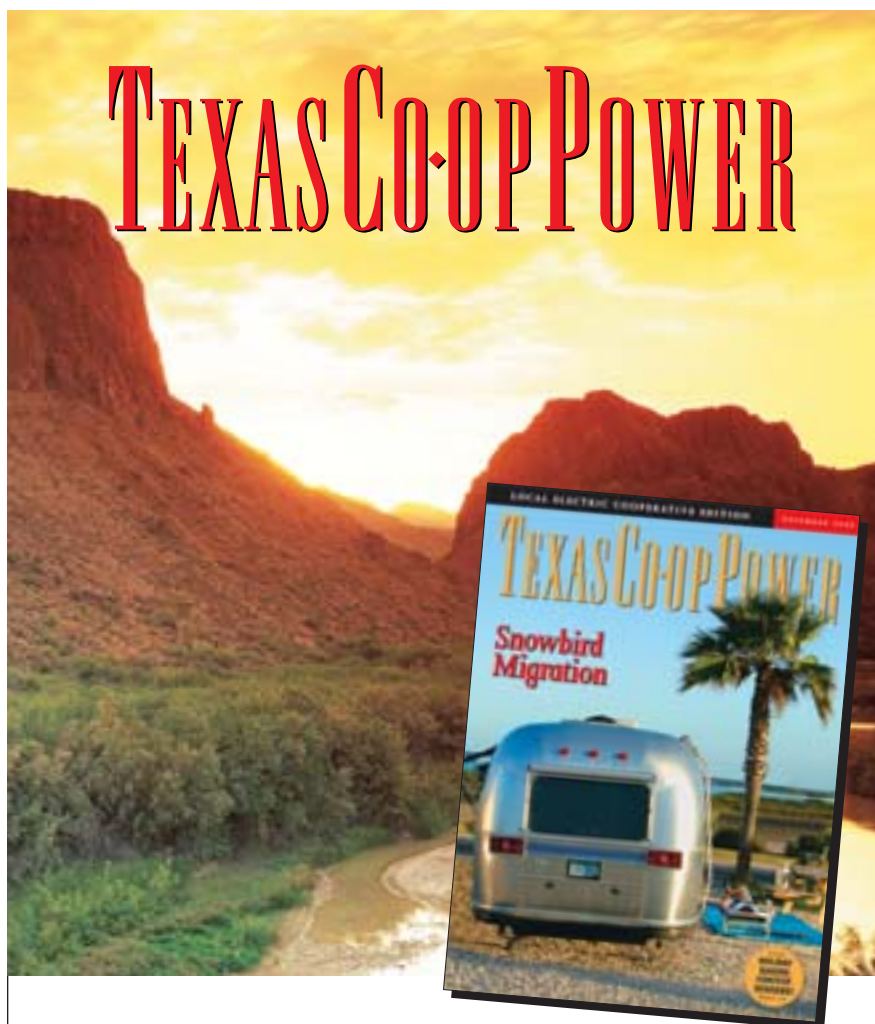
Texas landowners can play a part in conserving Texas' bat populations. Here's how:

1. Provide water sources. As with any wildlife, clean and readily available water sources are critical. Unobstructed openings allow bats to drink on the fly. Cut overhanging branches away from streams and ponds, and maintain water levels in cattle tanks.
2. Leave snags and mature trees in the landscape. In forested areas, snags, hollow trees, and large, mature trees with sloughing bark can provide valuable habitat. In South Texas, dead hanging palm fronds offer sanctuary for yellow bats. The fronds can be left on the tree, rather than trimmed, to provide habitat.
3. Consider leaving old buildings in place. Barns and other outbuildings that are structurally sound can become good bat houses for several species.
4. Clean up trash from caves and water sources. Remove obstructions such as debris or barbed wire, which often create death traps for bats and birds, and provide "escape ladders" for trapped animals.

Bat Facts & Myths

- Bats are not related to rodents. In fact, fruit bats may soon be reclassified as primates.
- Bats are the only flying mammals in the world. (Flying squirrels do not fly, they glide.)
- Of the world's 1,000-plus species, only three are vampire bats, limited mostly to Latin America. Vampire bats do not attack humans. They are very small and generally drink the blood of poultry and other animals.
- Seventy percent of all bat species eat insects; most of the remaining 30 percent eat fruit, pollen and nectar.
- Less than one-half of 1 percent of bats contract rabies. However, a grounded bat should never be handled because it may bite in self-defense. Call a wildlife rehabilitator or an animal organization for help.
- Bats amount to approximately a quarter of all mammal species. They are found everywhere in the world except in the most extreme desert and polar regions.
- Most bats navigate with high-frequency sounds. Using sound alone, they can detect obstacles as fine as a human hair in total darkness. The sophistication of their unique echolocation system surpasses current scientific knowledge.
- Bats are exceptionally long-lived; some species can live up to 34 years.
- Like dolphins, most bats are extremely intelligent. Some bats have a highly complicated social structure that includes over 20 different vocalizations.

— Bat World Sanctuary



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Texas Co-op Power is the Texas living magazine with a rural, suburban and small town focus. Each month you will read entertaining articles about Texas people, Texas history, Texas nature, Texas travel and Texas food.

And, in every issue we feature a personal look at chosen towns in "Texas, USA" along with "Around Texas," featuring selected events around the state.

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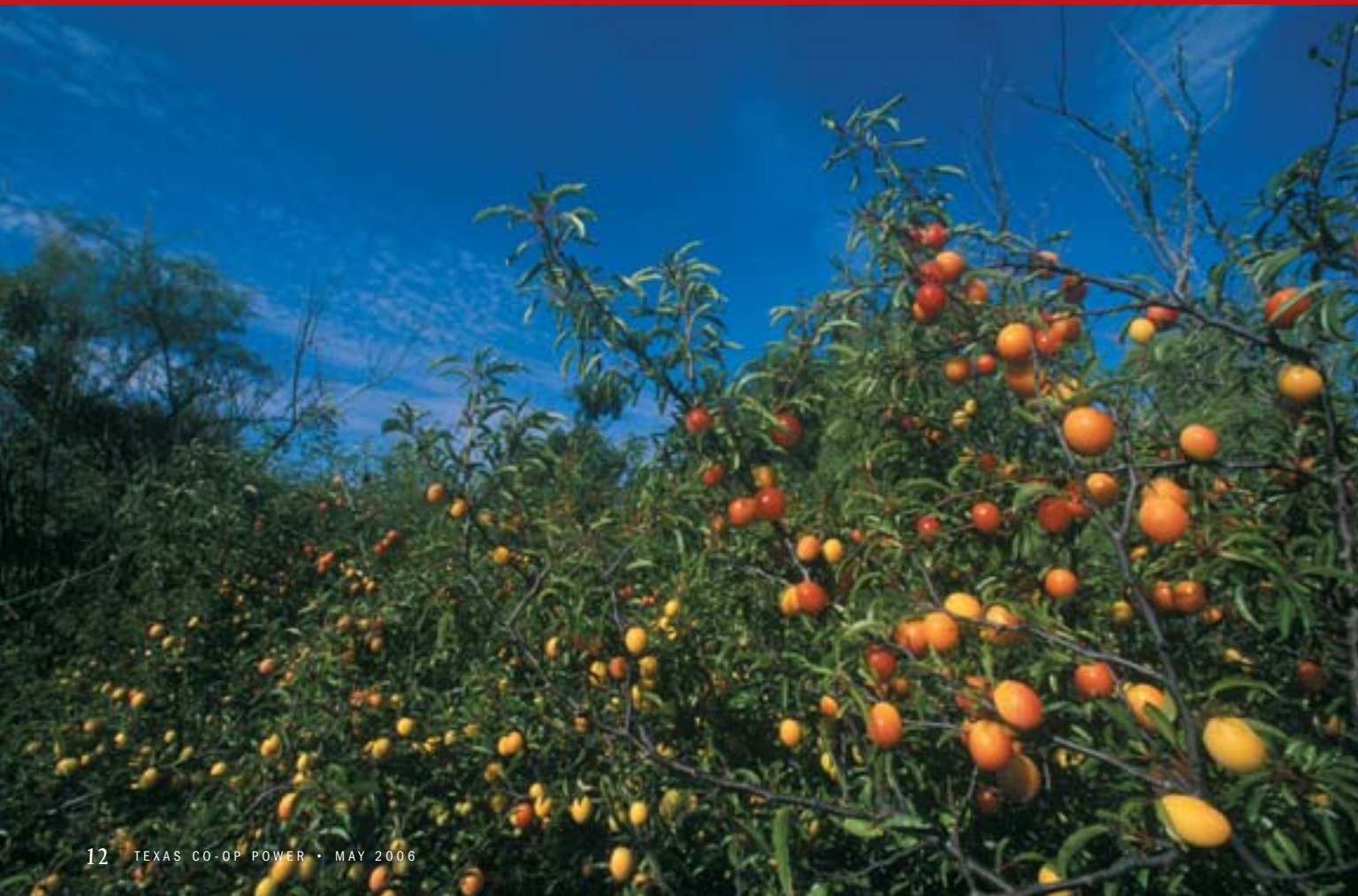
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PLUM *Delightful*

PHOTOS BY WYMAN MEINZER
INTRODUCTION BY STACI SEMRAD



Photographer Wyman Meinzer remembers the paradise of his youth on the Rolling Plains, when on warm June days in the 1950s, he and his siblings would traipse down to the river with their mother to pick wild plums.

In especially good years, the plums would weigh down the branches of thorny thickets along the creeks and roads of his hometown of Benjamin, and people from the area would make a family adventure of collecting the fruit. Always careful not to disturb snakes, wasps and other wildlife hiding in the shade, collectors would reach into the bushes, pluck the tiny

plums, and toss them into bushel baskets or five-gallon buckets.

Plum picking harkens back to the earliest recorded days of the plains of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, where wild plums grow voluntarily in moist soil. For Indians and settlers, the tart fruits were wild-growing desserts and a necessary part of the diet.

Collecting the plums and making them into jellies and jams is a tradition that continues in some families of the region today, such as those of Wyman and his wife, Sylinda Hunter-Meinzer.

Inspired to preserve the tradition through photos, in June 2004 Wyman tagged along with

● The best time for plum picking is June, so plum pickers wear wide-brimmed hats for relief from the hot Texas sun and long sleeves and gloves to protect against thorns. On this particular outing, Cedonia Simons of Bangs, her sister and her niece picked some 15 gallons of plums. ● The tarest wild plums tend to be redder and firmer, while the sweeter, riper ones tend to be softer to the touch and darker. Wild plums usually only mature to as big around as a dime or quarter. In Texas, they grow naturally in moist soil in canyons and near rivers and creeks, from the Panhandle to the area south of Abilene. Their scientific name is *prunus angustifolia*.



Sylinda and her mother and aunt to collect the fruit. In that banner year, a sea of plums lined the roads and creeks around the Salt Fork of the Brazos River, on land where Wyman grew up and his father was once a ranch foreman.

Later, back in the kitchen, Sylinda's mother, Novella Newman, and Aunt Cedonia Simons coordinated the production of wild plum jelly and wild plum jam—delicacies Wyman especially enjoys on toast with eggs.

Benjamin is served by Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

Wyman Meinzer has photographed and/or authored 19 books on Texas landscape, history, wildlife and other subjects.

Staci Semrad is an Austin-based freelance writer and a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative. She formerly covered areas where these wild plums grow as a reporter for the Wichita Falls and Abilene newspapers.

- Sylinda Hunter-Meinzer most enjoys the quality time she gets with her mother when plum picking and making jams and jellies. Sylinda also values tips her mother has shared about making the sweet-tart condiments.
- Wild plums retain some of their tartness even after cooked into jellies and jams. If canning is inconvenient at harvest, the plums can be stored in the freezer for up to two years.



Because many pieces of farm equipment reach heights of 14 feet or higher, always remember to look up when entering fields and barn lots to make sure there is enough room to pass beneath electric lines. Electric contact accidents can result in loss of limbs or even death.


Farm Safety Rules:

- The number one electrical farm hazard is the potential contact from a grain auger to a power line. Always look up before raising or moving an auger.
- The same is true of metal irrigation pipe, often stored along fence lines under an electric line. Never raise or move irrigation pipe without looking up. A few seconds of caution can mean the difference between life and death.
- Be sure hand tools are in good working order and use them according to manufacturers' instructions.
- Ensure that the wiring in your workshop is adequate to handle your tools. And never operate any electric tools near water.
- Read labels and handling instructions carefully and follow them when using chemicals and herbicides. Never leave chemicals where children or animals can get into them; store them in a locked cabinet if possible. Safely dispose of containers.

CULTIVATE FARM SAFETY



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LAUNDRY DAY CONSERVATION TIPS

Before we had the convenience of electric washers and dryers, laundry day was quite a chore—requiring a great deal of

physical energy. With today's appliances, that physical load has been reduced substantially as we allow electricity to perform the majority of the labor. But there's no reason to have laundry day consume any more kilowatt-hours of energy than necessary to get the job done. Here are some tips to help keep the load on your meter at a minimum.

CLOTHES WASHERS

- Follow detergent instructions carefully. Adding too much detergent actually hampers effective

washing action and may require more energy in the form of extra rinses.

- Set the washing machine temperature to cold or warm and the rinse temperature to cold as often as possible.

- Wash only full loads of clothing, but do not overload the machine.

- Sort laundry and schedule washes so that a complete job can be done with a few cycles of the machine carrying its full capacity, rather than a greater number of cycles with light loads.

CLOTHES DRYERS

A typical home uses 360 to 1,400 kilowatt-hours per year to operate the clothes dryer. To become more energy efficient with your laundry, follow these tips:

- Hang your laundry outside when weather permits.

- Clean the lint filter thoroughly after each use.

- Dry towels and heavy cottons in a separate load from lighter-weight fabrics.

- Avoid over-drying. This not only wastes energy, but harms the fabric as well.

- Run dryer loads back-to-back to take advantage of the heat that is already in the dryer.

BUYING TIPS

If you're in the market for a new washer or dryer, consider these suggestions:

- Look for a clothes washer with several water level options (to adjust to different loads). Also, look for pre-soaking and suds-saver options.

- Consider using a front-loading or horizontal axis washing machine.

- Look for units with automated moisture sensors to reduce drying time.

- Look for the energy-efficiency label and compare consumption. Brands with the Energy Star logo are good choices.



BREAK OUT THE SHOVELS—AND CALL YOUR COOPERATIVE

May is the month when lawns come to life. Weekend gardeners plant their flower beds, do-it-yourselfers mend fences, and weekends are chock-full of home improvement projects.

Before you pull out that trowel or posthole digger, though, call your electric cooperative to make sure you won't be disturbing underground electrical wiring.

Even if you're not attempting a large excavation project, your electric cooperative will appreciate it if you call before you dig. Just planting a tree or installing a fence could put you in danger because some wires are only a few feet underground.

Before you begin, mark the area where you will dig. Notify your electric cooperative—and other utilities that might have buried lines—at least two working days before you break ground. Your cooperative will check



your digging area against its map of electrical wires and let you know if it's safe to get started.

AN EVENING OUTDOORS CALLS FOR ENERGY-EFFICIENT LIGHTING

As spring nights grow warmer, your family may want to spend more evenings enjoying the outdoors on your deck or porch. Make sure the extra outdoor lighting you use doesn't send your electric bill spiraling.



Many outdoor lights aim to provide security, but some do this by producing large amounts of light and splaying it all over, including up and out. This means you pay for light that will be lost in space—or that will shine through your neighbor's windows instead of onto your deck.

If you are still using incandescent or high-wattage bulbs, you are using much more energy than you need to enjoy the outdoors at night.

Follow these tips for more energy-efficient outdoor lighting:

- Install properly shielded overhead security lighting. The shield will concentrate the light, making the best use of it and reducing light pollution.
- Don't use more light than you need. Too much light can give off an uncomfortable glare, which actually lowers visibility. Shielded lighting will allow you to use a lower-wattage bulb

and prevent your deck from looking like a stadium.

- With lighting used strictly for security, install a motion sensor instead of leaving it on all night.
- For security, walkway and porch lighting, use fixtures with a timer or photovoltaic cell unit so the lights will turn off in the morning.
- For security lighting, use a low-pressure sodium bulb, which gives off the same amount of light with less wattage. For other lights, switch to compact fluorescent or metal halide bulbs, which are the most energy efficient.
- Position outdoor lights to illuminate the largest area possible.
- Try surrounding the area with large candles for a warm, energy-efficient glow. Citronella candles contain a natural bug repellent. Save reading and other light-intensive tasks for indoors.

FIND THE RIGHT ELECTRICIAN FOR THE JOB

Electrical Safety Month in May is a great time for an electrical inspection of your home. Old wiring can cause electrical shorts, a fire hazard you need to attend to.

If you didn't buy your home new, or if it is more than 20 years old, you should have an electrician check your electrical system to be sure it can safely handle your family's growing electricity needs.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International offers tips for selecting the best electrician for the job.

- Look in your phone book or an Internet directory under "electrical contractors." Choose a local contractor.
- Ask the electrical contractor to show you current insurance certificates for liability, property damage

and workers' compensation.

- Do not hire electricians who go door-to-door asking for work. Reputable companies don't need to do that.
- Call more than one electrical contractor for estimates so you can comparison shop.
- Ask the contractor for local references or check with the Better Business Bureau.
- Determine if the electrician is part of a national or regional electrical association. Membership doesn't guarantee a quality inspection, but associations offer educational programs to keep members up to date on technological advancements.

You'll find tips for preparing for your inspection at www.electrical-safety.org/esfilib/indoorsafety.pdf.



**YOUR CO-OP
WISHES YOU
A HAPPY
MEMORIAL DAY.**

Van Zandt Revolt a Fiasco

BY JUDY ALTER

If I owned Texas and Hell, I'd rent out Texas and live in Hell," General Philip H. Sheridan reportedly said. Sheridan was in charge of Texas during Reconstruction, the post-Civil War era of freedmen and Republican government. Perhaps it was the Van Zandt County War that fueled his anger at the Lone Star State.

Van Zandt County lies in northeastern Texas, almost directly east of Dallas. Before the Civil War, it was a land of small farmers who raised corn and hogs, hunted the fox, squirrels and rabbits that ran in the woods, and never thought about owning slaves. Only a few large landowners had slaves. Yet the county voted for secession, and most of its men went off to fight for the Confederacy.

Not everyone supported the war. A local legend has it that the town of Ben Wheeler is named after a postman who refused to carry the mail for the Confederacy. Better documented is the small but vocal minority, mostly Scandinavian immigrants, who objected to the war and to slavery on moral grounds. At least three of them were lynched, and others were arrested. But, in the main, the county supported secession and the fight against "northern aggression."

Sometime during or after the Civil War, Van Zandt County became known as the "Free State of Van Zandt," and therein lies the historical puzzle. One story is that the opposition of the small, Scandinavian minority gave rise to the name. That's not the official version. The story verified in the always-reliable *Handbook of Texas* is that a slave owner, looking for a safe place to hide his slaves during the conflict, came through the county. He looked around, saw no slaves, and said, "I'd as soon leave my slaves in a free state."

There is a third story.

The period after the Civil War was hard on Van Zandt County, as it was on Texas and the South in general. Northerners held office and seized the banks, land values dropped, citizens had few rights, outlaws and bandits

roamed freely, as did the Ku Klux Klan, which was responsible for several lynchings of freedmen. Residents of Van Zandt County were fed up, and their frustration erupted in the Van Zandt County War.

Although the *Handbook of Texas* makes no mention of the war, *History of Van Zandt County* by W.S. Mills (privately printed, 1950) devotes almost two pages to it. According to Mills, the war took place in 1867. The citizens of Van Zandt County voted at a convention that Van Zandt would be a



free and independent state, free of the State of Texas, the Southern Confederacy and the United States of America. It would be the Free State of Van Zandt, and its citizens gave notice that they were prepared to fight for their independence.

General Sheridan sent troops to quell what he saw as a rebellion. His troops rode toward Van Zandt County in perfect military formation. But they were unprepared for the farmers of the county, who adopted tactics from the Revolutionary War. Van Zandt County was not then plowed, planted and populated as it is today. Much of

the land was covered with forests—not the thick and grand Piney Woods farther east, but a few pines, more post and blackjack oak, mesquite, pecan and elm trees. The farmers hid in the trees and took potshots at the approaching cavalry. The soldiers had no choice but to retreat.

The farmers thought they had scored a huge victory. They went into Canton, the county seat, and built a huge bonfire to celebrate. But they also celebrated with the local moonshine. One can almost sense the end of this story—the soldiers returned from all directions, surrounded the town and arrested all the celebrating men and boys, who were by then in no shape to resist.

A wooden stockade was hastily built on the edge of town, and the prisoners were kept there in shackles. They had no place to get out of the elements, no dry clothes, and no place to sleep. They managed to file the shackles off with a knife the guards had not discovered. Then the spring rains came, and the prisoners found the ground had softened enough that, by throwing their weight against the stockade posts, they could push the posts apart. One by one the men slipped away into the night. Later, when it was safe, some returned to Van Zandt County. Others never came back. But that's how the county became the Free State of Van Zandt.

Is the war fact or fiction? Mills claimed that the story came to him through a chain of reliable sources that traced back to a "superannuated Methodist minister." In either case, it makes a great story. Where did the Free State name come from? We may never know the truth, but there are still some businesses and organizations in the county today that proudly carry the name, Free State of Van Zandt.

Van Zandt County is served by Trinity Valley, Farmers and Wood County electric cooperatives.

Novelist Judy Alter wrote "Edom On My Mind" for the February 2006 edition of *Texas Co-op Power*.

Tubular Skylight a Bright Idea

BY JAMES DULLEY

Dear James: I want more natural light to lower my use of electric lights. I am not a big do-it-yourselfer, so a skylight with a lightwell is not an option. Will a tubular skylight help?

—Chris

Dear Chris: Installing a tubular skylight is a good alternative to a standard skylight and is less expensive. The tubular skylight I installed in my own garage provides adequate light for working during the daytime.

Most tubular skylight kits are designed similarly. A small tube, usually in the 9- to 21-inch-diameter range, runs from a hole in the roof to a hole in the ceiling below. The interior surface of the tube is highly reflective. Only a low percentage of its brightness is lost as the light reflects back and forth inside the tube as it travels down from the roof.

The roof end is covered by a clear bubble dome. This allows it to catch more light. Some tubular skylights use a prismatic dome designed to capture more of the sun's lower rays during morning and near evening, and direct them down into the tube. The lower end of the tube, which is flush with the room ceiling, is covered with a frosted diffuser cover so it looks similar to a recessed light.

A tubular skylight will not produce as much light as a large skylight and it obviously provides no attractive view of the sky. As you noted, though, installing a skylight in a room with an attic above requires the construction of the lightwell from the ceiling to the roof. This often requires a professional installer.

Another advantage of a tubular skylight over a large standard skylight is

energy efficiency. Even the best skylights, with efficient glass or triple-pane plastic, have a much lower insulation R-value than the roof. A tubular skylight requires only a small hole from the ceiling to the roof, and the interior of the reflective tube is relatively airtight. It will lose much less energy at night than a skylight and gain less heat during the summer.

commonly used length of straight reflective tubing. If you need elbows or additional tube length to fit around trusses or other obstructions in the attic, they are available from the manufacturers. They generally recommend the maximum length of tube for adequate light.

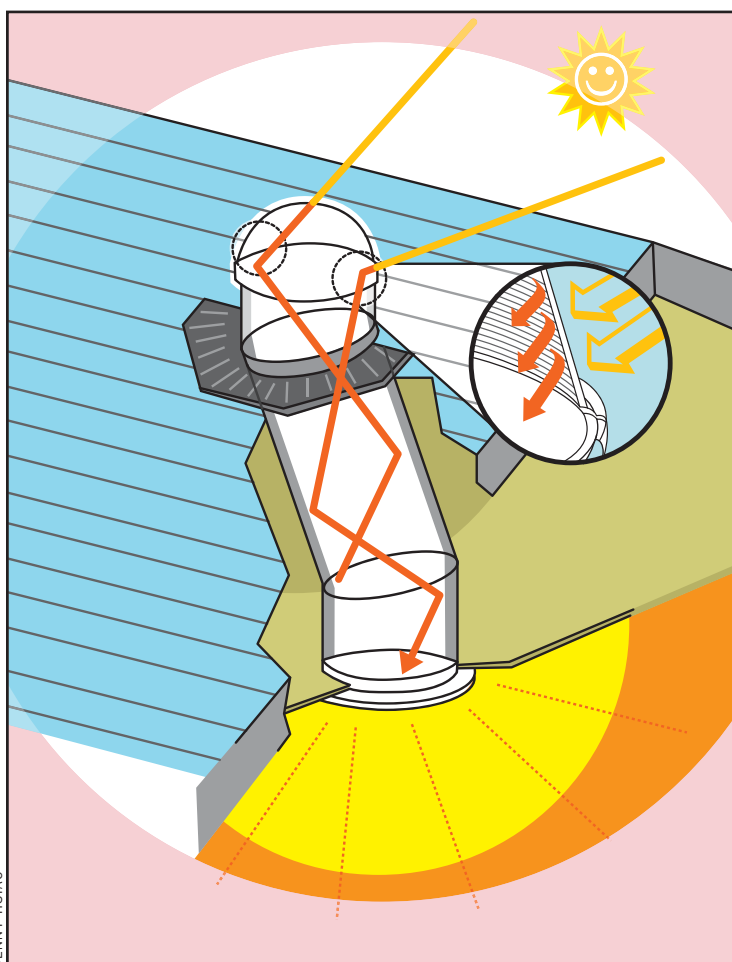
If you have a problem finding a relatively straight and direct path from the roof to the room ceiling, another option is to install a flexible tubular skylight. These are made of a reflective accordion-like tube that can be flexed around attic obstructions. This makes installation much easier, but some brightness is sacrificed due to the twists and turns in the tube wall.

Still another option would be several tubular skylights in one room or one each in several rooms, as a grouped design. The reflective tubes run from each of the diffusers in the room to a single opening, similar to a small rectangular skylight in the roof. Various sizes can accommodate two or four tubular skylights.

The following companies offer tubular skylight kits: Solatube, 1-800-966-7652, www.solatube.com;

Sun-Dome, 1-800-596-8414, www.sun-dome.com; Sun Pipe, 1-800-844-4786, www.sunpipe.com; Sun-Tek, 1-800-334-5854, www.sun-tek.com; Tru-Lite, 1-800-873-3309, www.tru-lite.com; and Velux, 1-800-888-3589, www.veluxusa.com.

James Dulley is a nationally syndicated engineering consultant based in Cincinnati. Send inquiries to James Dulley, Texas Co-op Power, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit www.dulley.com.



JENNY HSIAO

You have several options when selecting a tubular skylight. First, check the roof area for shady spots you should avoid. Also, go up into the attic and look for a clear path for the tube from a sunny roof location to the room you want to brighten. The straightest and shortest path for the tube is best. Even though the interior of the tube is highly reflective (up to 98 percent), more length and bends reduce the brightness at the ceiling diffuser.

Most tubular skylight kits include a

FUN FOOD TOURS

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS • ILLUSTRATION BY EDD PATTON

What's not to love about a factory tour? Whether watching paper cups being shaped or a spaceship being assembled, what a delight to see man's imagination at work. And if the factory produces something to eat or drink, so much the better.

A visit to Talk O' Texas Crisp Okra Pickles in San Angelo, for example, might well stop your children from complaining that the maligned vegetable is too slimy to even consider eating. For nearly 60 years, the Ricci family has been turning out millions of jars of okra pickles, all hand-packed and guaranteed crisp. The little sticks are a snacker's delight.

Today, owner Lawrence Ricci is showing me how his factory—a complex of faded yellow-green metal warehouses set on the eastern edge of San Angelo—magically transforms those prickly pods of okra into a tasty treat that even kids adore.

First, though, Officer Manager Cheryl Power hands me a hairnet. "Everyone who goes out there has to wear one so we all look odd," she says with a grin.

Okra pickling season at Talk O' Texas runs from May through September. Each week, 75 employees—working in a finely tuned assembly line—process 120,000 pounds of okra grown in Mexico.

The cycle begins at a huge washing machine that rinses and brushes the okra to remove bugs and dirt. The pods then fall onto a grading belt, where workers cull those with blemishes and worm holes. Pods longer than 4 inches are also discarded.

Standing at long, high tables piled with okra, hand packers swiftly fill glass jars, nimbly fitting the pods inside like pieces of a puzzle. "Their wages are dictated by how many cases they pack a day," Power explains.

Placed back on a conveyor belt, the jars pass through a "head spacer" machine (a contraption invented by Ricci that firmly packs the okra into jars), then beneath a cascade of brine (a mixture of vinegar, water and spiced oil). A capping machine twists metal lids onto the jars before they're rolled into a long pasteurizer, which precisely cooks and cools the okra for 45 minutes.

Finally, the jars roll back onto one last conveyor, where they're stamped with a coded date and boxed for shipment nationwide.

As Power and I stroll through the warehouse, I'm amazed to see the seemingly endless numbers of cases stacked way up high. Now that I've tasted a sample, I'm confident that each and every jar of Talk O' Texas Crisp Okra Pickles—mild or hot—will be bought and relished by folks of all ages.

Talk O' Texas Crisp Okra Pickles, 1610 Roosevelt St., San Angelo; 1-800-749-6572 or (325) 655-6077; www.talkotexas.com. To arrange a free tour, call Cheryl Power at least 24 hours in advance. Tours run 30 to 45 minutes. Groups limited to five people at a time. Visitors receive a complimentary sack of products.

Below are more fun factory tours available to the public across the state.

Dublin Dr Pepper Bottling Company Dublin (Erath County)

Every second week in June, the City of Dublin officially changes its name to Dr Pepper, Texas. Folks here even switch out the city limit signs in honor of the famous soft drink's birthday. The weekend celebration features a carnival, music, cook-offs, parades, free tours of the bottling company, and even birthday cake.

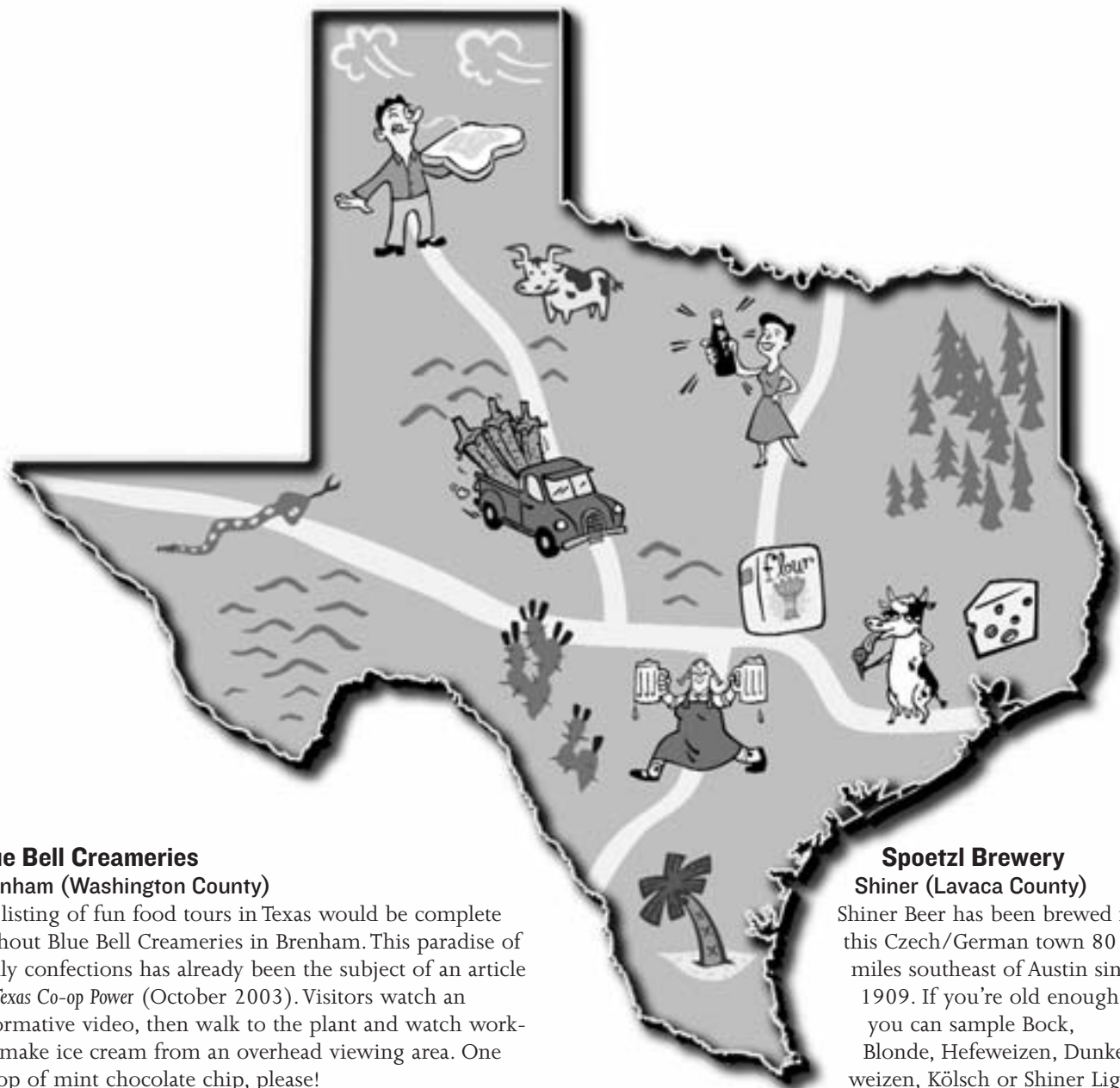
Throughout the year, visitors can tour the 115-year-old plant, an adjoining museum of Dr Pepper memorabilia, and a soda/gift store called Old Doc's Soda Shop. A half-hour tour includes a free bottle of Dublin Dr Pepper, still sweetened with Imperial Pure Cane Sugar.

Dublin Dr Pepper, 105 E. Elm, Dublin; 1-888-398-1024; www.drpep.com. Bottling line operates Wednesdays when needed. Groups limited to 25. Tours daily. Adults, \$2; seniors, \$1.50; children 6 to 12, \$1; under 6, free.

Mrs Baird's Bakeries Abilene, Lubbock, Waco

The heavenly scent of baking bread greets those who visit a Mrs Baird's Bakery. A 45-minute tour provides a walk through the plant. Afterward, everyone's treated to warm bread with butter and honey. Children receive a gift bag.

Children must be at least 6 years old; one adult per 10 children must be present. Call for details: Abilene, (325) 692-3141; Lubbock, (806) 763-9304; Waco, (254) 753-7381, or visit www.mrsbairds.com/fun/visit.html. Tours are also available at plants in Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio.



Blue Bell Creameries

Brenham (Washington County)

No listing of fun food tours in Texas would be complete without Blue Bell Creameries in Brenham. This paradise of chilly confections has already been the subject of an article in *Texas Co-op Power* (October 2003). Visitors watch an informative video, then walk to the plant and watch workers make ice cream from an overhead viewing area. One scoop of mint chocolate chip, please!

Blue Bell Creameries, 1101 S. Horton St., Brenham; 1-800-327-8135 or (979) 830-2197; www.bluebell.com. Tours are available weekdays only, year-round. The plant's Country Store and Ice Cream Parlor are open most Saturdays. Groups of 15 or more must make reservations. Tour times: 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 2 p.m., 2:30 p.m. General admission, \$3; seniors and children, \$2 (admission includes a serving of ice cream).

From October through February and holidays, tour schedules vary, so call ahead.

Cheesemakers Inc.

Cleveland (Montgomery County)

The makers of Lone Star Texas Goat Cheese and Jaimito Mexican-Style Cheese want you to see how it's made. For \$6, you'll get cheese samples, a history of Cheesemakers, a film on cheesemaking, and a tour of the plant. *Texas Co-op Power* enthused over the family-owned plant in the May 2003 edition.

Cheesemakers Inc., 2266 S. Walker Road, Cleveland; 1-866-593-1319; www.cheesemakers.com. Call Kate for tours by appointment only at (936) 537-3570; \$6 per person. Visit the store and buy products without an appointment.

Spoetzl Brewery

Shiner (Lavaca County)

Shiner Beer has been brewed in this Czech/German town 80 miles southeast of Austin since 1909. If you're old enough, you can sample Bock, Blonde, Hefeweizen, Dunkelweizen, Kölsch or Shiner Light during free weekday tours.

Spoetzl Brewery, 603 Brewery, Shiner; www.shiner.com; (361) 594-3383. Tours are available Monday through Friday at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., or by special arrangement for groups of 20 or more. *Prost!*

The Guenther House and River Mill Store

San Antonio (Bexar County)

At the foot of the King William District in San Antonio sits the historic Guenther House, once occupied by flour magnate C.H. Guenther. He's best known in Texas for manufacturing products under the Pioneer and White Lily brands. His spectacular home, now on the National Register of Historic Places, is just across the San Antonio River from the Pioneer Mill, once the tallest structure in San Antonio.

The mill does not offer tours, but you may visit the house. There's a restaurant in the original family living room, plus the San Antonio River Mill Brand Store.

The Guenther House, 205 E. Guenther St., San Antonio; (210) 227-1061. Call for hours.

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers is a frequent contributor to *Texas Co-op Power*. She has two children and lives in Blanco.

Tex-Mex With Flair

If you ever find yourself just west of Austin, where the city meets the Hill Country, stop into Hudson's on the Bend restaurant (www.hudsonsonthebend.com). There you'll find food by Chef Jeff Blank that is rooted in Texas but fused with ingredients and techniques from many cultures, a process not unlike that which gave us our beloved Tex-Mex in the first place.

Tex-Mex may have had a negative connotation at one time, but today we recognize it as a unique cuisine that developed as the cultures crossed the border over and over again. It's neither Southern cooking, nor Mexican cooking, but a blend of the two that became something totally different.

Although Chef Blank's cooking is influenced by many cuisines, the most prevalent come from that borderland between Texan and Mexican foods. In his second cookbook, *Fired Up!*, he delivers dishes with exciting flavor combinations like Green Chile Corn Pudding and Dos Gringos Tamales With Strawberry Raspberry Sauce.

The energy in the title is carried throughout the book, from the recipes to the artwork. Adding the hot zing of peppers in unexpected places is one of the ways Chef Blank puts a spin on his dishes. Below we've included the recipe for one of our favorites in this vein, Way South of the Border Ancho Pepper Pecan Pie. A true Tex-Mex original, it combines the sweet, mellow flavor of Texas pecan pie with the Mexican pop of hot pepper. Together they smolder and satisfy.

Way South of the Border Ancho Pepper Pecan Pie

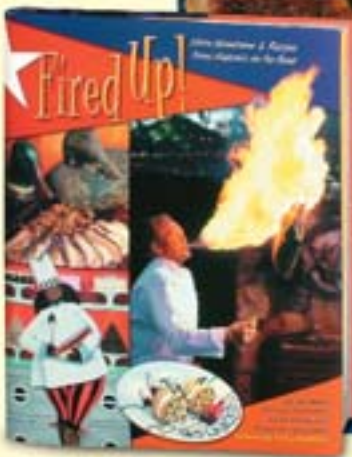
1 deep-dish pie shell (9 inches)

from the dairy case in your grocery store

7 egg yolks



LAURIE SMITH



- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 cup dark brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1/2 stick butter, melted
- 3 cups Southern Comfort bourbon
- 2 cups pecan halves
- 1 cup ancho pepper purée*
- 1 pinch salt
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons vanilla bean paste (or vanilla extract)

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. In saucepan, over high heat, reduce Southern Comfort to 1/4 cup. (Caution: When heating alcohol, a 3-foot flame can result.)

In sauté pan, add both sugars and corn syrup and bring to a boil. Add the reduced Southern Comfort, ancho purée, cocoa, salt, vanilla and butter to

the boiling sugars and continue to boil.

Whisk egg yolks in a bowl. Slowly add the bubbling sugar mixture to eggs. Do this very slowly, adding just a small amount at a time, as you will scramble the eggs if done too quickly. Remove from heat and whisk in flour. Place pecan halves in pie shell. Pour filling into pie shell. Place on a sheet tray and bake for 40 minutes at 300 degrees. Serves 8 to 10.

Timing: This should be made at least 6 hours ahead of time so it has time to gel and cool.

* To make ancho purée, seed and de-stem 8 to 10 ancho peppers, then soak them in hot water for 30 minutes or until soft. Puree in blender. Leftover puree may be stored in refrigerator for up to 6 weeks or frozen for later use.

Our readers' enthusiasm for Tex-Mex is contagious. We sat around the testing table, debating the merits of one recipe over another, discussing ingredients, comparing and contrasting the dishes before us to our families' Tex-Mex favorites. As Texans, we understand the intricacies of really good Tex-Mex:

- Spicy, but not so hot you can't taste anything else.
- Cheesy, whether cheddar, Monterey jack or "yellow cheese."
- A little bit of grease—don't fight it.
- Fresh flavors like cilantro, lime and raw onion.

Put it all together and you've got great dishes that combine the best of Texas with the best of Mexico.

JERRY GOODWIN, a member of Wood County Electric Cooperative, knows just how to combine these flavors in his Tex-Mex Posole Stew. He writes, "Experiment and make it as hot as you like. Serve with corn tortilla chips or hot flour tortillas with butter, and iced tea or margaritas." He also says to try it for breakfast sometime.

Tex-Mex Posole Stew

1 small (1½- to 2-pound)
pork tenderloin or pork roast

2 cans (14 ounces each) chicken broth
2 stalks celery, diced large
4 cloves garlic, diced
1 tablespoon crushed red pepper
1 large onion, diced (divided)
2 cans (15.5 ounces each) yellow hominy
3 cans (4 ounces each) diced green chilies
Pinch oregano
1 bunch cilantro, chopped (divided)
4 corn tortillas, torn into pieces
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
Salt and pepper to taste
Sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
3-4 limes, cut in wedges

In slow cooker, combine pork with chicken broth, celery, garlic, red pepper and half of diced onion. Cook on high setting for 5 to 6 hours or until pork is done and can be shredded. Add water as needed to keep pork in plenty of liquid while cooking. Do not let it dry out.

In slow cooker, shred cooked pork using two forks. Add hominy with its liquid, green chilies, oregano, ½ cup cilantro, corn tortilla pieces, cumin, cayenne pepper, and salt and pepper to taste. Mix all ingredients well and cook for another 1 to 1½ hours. Add water as needed to keep mixture soupy but thick.

Serve the posole hot in bowls

along with separate platter of onion, cilantro, cheese and lime wedges so guests may add ingredients to their own taste. Serves 6 to 8.

Serving size: 1 bowl. Per serving: 334 calories, 22 grams protein, 14 grams fat, 30 grams carbohydrates, 1,122 milligrams sodium, 57 milligrams cholesterol

Green Sauce

3 medium green tomatoes, chopped
4 tomatillos, husks removed and chopped
1-2 jalapeños
3 avocados
2 cloves garlic
Salt to taste
1½ cups sour cream
3-4 sprigs cilantro

In saucepan, place tomatoes, tomatillos, jalapeños and enough water to cover. Bring to boil and reduce heat, simmer for 10 minutes, drain. Process tomatoes, tomatillos, jalapeños, avocados, garlic and salt in blender until blended. Pour into serving dish and stir in sour cream. Chill, covered, until ready to serve. Serves 12 to 14 as a dip.

Serving size: ¼ cup. Per serving: 135 calories, 2 grams protein, 12 grams fat, 7 grams carbohydrates, 175 milligrams sodium, 11 milligrams cholesterol

DEBBIE MASTERSON

Rusk County Electric Cooperative



WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Sour Cream Chicken Enchilada Casserole

1 can (14 ounces) chicken broth
1 can (14 ounces) cream of chicken soup
1 large onion, chopped
1 can (4 ounces) diced green chilies
1 carton (8 ounces) sour cream
10 corn tortillas, torn into quarters
2½ cups chopped, cooked chicken
1 package (8 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
Sliced green onion and chopped tomatoes

In large saucepan, stir together chicken broth, cream of chicken soup, onion and green chilies. Bring to boil, reduce heat, and cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Stir in sour cream. Alternate layers of tortillas, chopped chicken, soup mixture and

cheese in a 12x7x2-inch baking dish. Bake uncovered at 325 degrees for 30 minutes. Garnish with sliced green onions and tomatoes. Serves 6 to 8.

Serving size: 1 square. Per serving: 349 calories, 25 grams protein, 19 grams fat, 20 grams carbohydrates, 574 milligrams sodium, 81 milligrams cholesterol

CELIA GIVAS, CoServ Electric

Easy Mexican Rice With Pork

1 onion, chopped
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 cup white rice (uncooked)
1 can (15 ounces) Rotel
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1½ teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon dry mustard

2 pounds chopped, cooked pork

In saucepan, sauté onion and celery. Add rice, Rotel, 2 cups water, brown sugar, salt and mustard. Add pork. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes. Serves 6 to 8.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Some testers thought it was too sweet, though many liked it as is. You may want to halve the brown sugar the first time you make it and see what you think.

Serving size: 1 large serving spoonful. Per serving: 279 calories, 19 grams protein, 11 grams fat, 25 grams carbohydrates, 463 milligrams sodium, 56 milligrams cholesterol

BARBARA FLYNN

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative

CONGRATULATIONS, ANNA!

RICK PATRICK



An excited murmur went around the office as we learned that the winner of the *Texas Co-op Power* Holiday Baking Contest (December 2005) also had won the 2006 Pillsbury Bake-Off ... and \$1 million! **ANNA GINSBERG**, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, won the national contest for her Baked Chicken and Spinach Stuffing. *Texas Co-op Power* congratulates Anna and wishes her continued success in her cooking!

TEXAS CO-OP POWER Holiday Recipe Contest

\$5,000 in Total Prizes!

SPONSORED BY 

GRAND PRIZE WINNER TAKES HOME \$3,000.
FOUR RUNNERS-UP WILL EACH WIN \$500.



We're looking for the best recipes from your holiday celebrations. All recipes must be original and the ingredients must include Pioneer Brand Gravy Mix, Pioneer Brand Biscuit & Baking Mix, or Pioneer Brand Frozen Biscuit or Roll Dough. Winners will be announced in our December issue.

Up to three entries are allowed per person. Each should be submitted on a separate piece of paper and include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your electric cooperative. All entries must be postmarked by September 8, 2006. Send entries to Holiday Recipe Contest, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, or fax to (512) 486-6254. To enter by e-mail (recipes@texas-coop.org), you must include "Holiday Recipe Contest" in the subject line and submit one recipe per e-mail (no attachments). For official rules, visit www.texascoopower.com or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.



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COUPON GOOD THROUGH JULY 2006

May

- 4-6. Viva! Cinco de Mayo, state menudo cook-off, **San Marcos**, 1-888-200-5620 or www.sanmarcoscharms.com
- 4-7. HFA Cornyval & PCRA Rodeo, **Helotes**, (210) 695-2103 or www.cornyval.com
5. First Fridays, **Bryan**, (979) 778-3688 or www.downtownbryan.com
5. Cinco de Mayo, **Fort Stockton**, (432) 336-7562
5. Lion's Carnival, **Seguin**, (830) 379-6382 or www.seguintx.org
5. Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
5. Garden Club Tour, **Weimar**, (979) 263-5824
- 5-6. Cinco de Mayo, **Lockhart**, (512) 398-9600 or www.lockhartspanicchamber.org
- 5-6. Mesquite Tree Festival, **Coolidge**, (254) 786-4814
- 5-6. Pioneer Days/Fireman's Fest, 100th birthday of **Pilot Point**, (940) 686-6488
- 5-7. Wildflower Trail Ride, **Mason County**, (325) 347-5598 or www.masoncountytailrides.homestead.com
- 5-7. Pilgrimage Tour of Homes and Spring Festival, **Jefferson**, (903) 665-3733
- 5-7. Old Mill Trade Days, **Post**, (866) 433-6683 or www.oldmilltradedays.com
- 5-7. Cinco de Mayo Celebration, **Sonora**, (325) 387-2880 or www.sonoratx-chamber.com
- 5-7. Highway 290 Trade Days, **Burton**, (979) 357-2552
6. Butterfield Stage Days, **Bridgeport**, (940) 683-2076
6. Fire Department Barbecue Fundraiser, **Mason**, (325) 347-6440
6. Mayfest/Car Show, **Creedmoor**, (512) 243-3117 or www.CreedmoorCCFA.org
6. Ice Cream Festival, **Brenham**, 1-888-273-6426 or www.brenhamtexas.com
6. Bull Bash and Barrel Race, **Mt. Vernon**, (903) 588-2482
6. Blanco National Bank's 100th Anniversary, **Blanco**, (830) 833-4538 or www.blancobank.com
6. Civil War Grand Ball, **Jefferson**, (903) 665-2672
6. Market Days, **Elgin**, (512) 376-6115 or www.elginchurch.com
6. Airing of the Quilts, **Huntsville**, (936) 294-0212 or www.tallpinesquiltguild.com
6. May Day, **Sebastopol**, (830) 379-6382
6. Wheels Around the Square Car Show, **Seguin**, (830) 379-6382 or www.seguintx.org
6. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
6. City Wide Market, **Sinton**, (361) 364-2307
6. Sidewalk Cattlemen's Association Steak Dinner and Dance, **Madisonville**, (936) 348-1300 or www.sidewalkcattlemens.com
6. Blackjack Grove Day Festival, **Cumby**, (903) 994-2892
6. Volunteer Fire & Rescue Benefit, **Willow City**, (830) 685-3385
6. Market Days, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201
- 6-7. Bazaar, **Livingston**, (936) 377-4638
- 6-7. Art Walk, **Fayetteville**, (979) 378-2113 or



LANA RICHARDS

Fort Chadbourne Living History Days in Bronte on May 20 features 170 reenactors of the Indian Wars.

- www.TexasArtWalk.org
- 6-7. Crafts Guild Crafts Fair, **San Angelo**, (325) 655-4136 or www.sanangelo.org
- 6-7. Spring Antiques Show and Sale, **Comfort**, (830) 995-3670 or www.texasantiqueshow.com
- 6-7, 13-14, 20-21, 27-29. Scarborough Renaissance Festival, **Waxahachie**, 1-888-5-FESTIVAL or www.ScarboroughRenFest.com
7. Boys Haven Crawfish Festival, **Beaumont**, (409) 866-2400 or www.beaumontcvb.com
7. Tradin' Day, **Conroe**, (936) 597-6860
7. VFD Barbecue Fundraiser, **Cut-N-Shoot**, (936) 264-1313
- 7-13. 160th Anniversary Trail Ride, **New Braunfels to Fredericksburg**, (830) 625-9606 or www.texastrailriding.com
8. Jamboree, **McDade**, (512) 273-2307
- 11-13. May Days, **Mineola**, (903) 569-2087
- 12-13. Lone Star Irish Dance Feis, dance and music competition, **Austin**, (512) 292-8746 or www.irishdance.org
- 12-13. Maifest, **Brenham**, 1-888-273-6426 or www.brenhamtexas.com
- 12-14. Flea Market Days, **Jewett**, (936) 348-5475
- 12-14. Trade Days, **Livingston**, (936) 327-3656 or www.cityoflivingston-tx.com/tradedays
13. Spring Home Garden Tour, **Tyler**, (903) 586-3776 or easttexasgardening.tamu.edu
13. Coyote Squadron Fly-In, **Corsicana**, (903) 872-7627
13. Soap Box Derby, **Beaumont**, (409) 932-8013
13. Craft Show and Rummage Sale, **Bandera**, (830) 796-9369
13. Armadillo Hill Country Classic, benefit bike tour, **Liberty Hill**, (512) 260-0943
13. Car Show & Car Games, **Ballinger**, (432) 580-8297 or www.ballinger.tx.org
13. Founders Day, **Fredericksburg**, (830) 997-2835 or www.pioneermuseum.com
13. Garden Tour, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201
13. Czech May Fest, **LaGrange**, 1-888-785-4500
13. Blanco Bonanza Bulls & Barrels, **Blanco**, (830) 833-4418
13. Stagecoach Stopover, **Anderson**, (936) 825-6600
13. Marsh Madness, birding event, **Waco**, (254) 848-9654 or www.wacowater.com
13. Gedenke! Festival, **Weimar**, (979) 725-9511 or www.weimartx.org
- 13-14. Golden Triangle Cat Show, **Beaumont**, (409) 838-3435 or www.beaumont-tx-complex.com
- 13-14. Antique Show, **Boerne**, (830) 230-5414 or enchantedspringsranch.com
- 13-14. May Days Festival, **Mineola**, (903) 569-2087 or www.chamber.mineola.com
- 13-14, 27-28. Chicken House Flea Market, **Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888
- 13-15. Art Fest and Songwriter's Showcase, **Port Aransas**, (361) 749-7334
14. Mother's Day Homecoming, **Loebau**, (979) 540-2001
16. Farm and Ranch Tour, **Athens**, (903) 675-5181
- 18-20. Fire on the Strings Bluegrass Festival, **Montgomery**, (281) 636-9419 or www.bayareabluegrass.org
- 19-20. Moonlight Jubilee & Outhouse Races, **Mount Pleasant**, (903) 572-8567 or www.mtpleasanttx.com
- 19-20. Relay for Life, **Center**, (936) 598-6953
- 19-20. Texas Steak Cook-Off, **Hico**, 1-800-361-HICO
- 19-21. Texas Hill Country Art Exhibit and Sale,

AROUND TEXAS

- Marble Falls**, (830) 693-5134
 19-21. Live Oak Festival, **Columbus**, (979) 732-8385 or www.columbus-texas.org
 20. Pioneer Round-Up, **Plainview**, (806) 293-8283
 20. Habitat for Humanity Spring Event, **Mason**, (325) 347-0634
 20. Texas Natural & Western Swing Festival, **San Marcos**, 1-888-200-5620 or www.sanmarcoscharms.com
 20. Market Days, **Bay City**, 1-800-806-8333
 20. Frontier Day and World Championship Bison Cook-Off, **Santa Anna**, (325) 348-3535
 20. Market Day, **Flatonina**, www.flatoniamarketdays.com
 20. Classic Car Show, **Blanco**, (830) 833-5348
 20. Chisolm Trail Fire Rescue Barbecue Cook-Off, **Niederwald**, (512) 398-3727 or www.ctfr.us
 20. Good Ol' Times Festival, **Hawkins**, (903) 769-4482 or www.hawkinschamberofcommerce.com
 20-21. Hill Country Art & Wine Trail, **Lakeway to Tow**, www.artandwine.org
 21. Bay Area Volkswagen Club's Monumental Bug Bash, **San Jacinto Battleground Park**, (713) 398-0183
 21. High Grove Cemetery Annual Picnic,

- Red Rock**, (512) 303-1447
 25. Country Opry, **Mason**, (325) 597-2119 or www.hillbillyhits.com
 25-27. Spring Bluegrass Festival, **Texarkana**, (903) 255-0408
 25-June 11. Kerrville Folk Festival, **Kerrville**, 1-800-435-8429 or www.kerrvillefolkfestival.com
 26-27. Crawfish Festival, **Fredericksburg**, (830) 997-8515 or www.tex-fest.com
 26-28. 40th Annual National Polka Festival, **Ennis**, 1-888-366-4748 or www.visitennis.org
 26-28. Pro Rodeo, **Bandera**, (830) 796-7207 or www.banderarodeo.com
 26-29. Texas State Arts & Crafts Fair, **Kerrville**, 1-888-335-1455 or www.tacef.org
 27. Trades Days, **Coldspring**, (936) 653-2009 or coldspringheritage.org
 27. Bluegrass Music Show, **Quitman**, (903) 763-4411 or www.quitman.com
 27. Antique Tractor & Equipment Show, **Decatur**, (940) 627-1565
 27. Cowboy Breakfast, **Leakey**, (830) 232-5199
 27. Hay Day Parade and Festival, **Gordonville**, (903) 523-4161 or www.hayday.us
 27. Pioneer Day, **Floyd County**, (806) 983-3434

27. Shrimp Boil, **Leakey**, (830) 232-5222 or www.friocanyonchamber.com
 27. Fiddle Fest, **Whitewright**, (903) 364-5166
 27. 125th Anniversary Celebration/Parade, **Dawson**, (254) 578-1669
 27-28. Festival of Wines and Culinary Arts, **Rockport**, (361) 729-1271
 27-28. 150th Birthday for the Eighth Dang Time Celebration, **Luckenbach**, www.luckenbachtexas.com
 28. 70th Annual May Festival, **Ellinger**, (979) 378-2311
 29. Memorial Day Open Car Show, **Kerrville**, (830) 634-2698

June

- 1-4. Old Mill Marketplace, **Canton**, (903) 567-5445 or www.oldmillmarketplace.com
 2. Concert in the Park & Fireworks, **Stephenville**, (254) 965-6190 or crosstimbersarts.org
 2. First Fridays, **Bryan**, (979) 778-3688 or www.downtownbryan.com
 2-3. Oakland Fireman's Festival, **Weimar**, (979) 725-9511 or www.weimartx.org
 2-3. Fiesta Juan Seguin, **Seguin**, (830) 379-6382

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH

BY JIM GRAMON

Spring Swing Festival: Quitman, May 6-7

Quitman is now headquarters of the Light Crust Doughboys Hall of Fame, and there's no better way to celebrate the legendary band than at the Spring Swing Festival.

The band's name originated in 1931 when the father of Western swing, Bob Wills, and some of his band members agreed to go on the radio to promote Burrus Mill, manufacturer of Light Crust Flour, as the Light Crust Doughboys. Along with

their emcee, W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel, general manager of the flour company, the band took rural Texas by storm.

On the political front, O'Daniel became so popular he was elected governor of Texas in 1939. On the musical front, Wills, the Doughboys and O'Daniel's later campaign band, the Hillbilly Boys, introduced a new style of music, Western swing.

The Spring Swing Festival will give you the chance to hear and learn about the Doughboys, who are said to be longest continuously performing country music band. You can also visit their Hall of Fame, which moved to Quitman from Mesquite last year. On Saturday, the current incarnation of Doughboys will be

onstage at Governor Jim Hogg City Park from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

The park will be open to visitors at 10 a.m. on Saturday, and again on Sunday for art exhibits and other activities. Following the Doughboys, entertainment will continue until 10:30 p.m.

Sunday activities begin at 10 a.m. with a cowboy church service, followed by cowboy gospel music until about 3 p.m. There will be an \$8 admission fee on Saturday. Admission is free on Sunday.

Quitman is halfway between Dallas and the Louisiana state line at the crossroads of Highways 154 and 37. Wood County Electric Cooperative is headquartered in Quitman.

For more information, call (903) 763-2701 or go to www.quitmanheritage.org. It's a good idea to check with the festival sponsor in case of changes in the schedule.

Jim Gramon is the author of FUN Texas Festivals & Events. Jim@JimGramon.com,

FORT WORTH MAGAZINE, JEREMY ENLOW, PHOTOGRAPHER



The current Light Crust Doughboys will perform at the Spring Swing Festival in Quitman.

- or www.seguintx.org
- 2-4. Heritage Balloon Festival, **Palestine**, (903) 723-1914 or www.museumpalestine.org
 - 2-4. City Celebration, **Post**, (806) 495-3529
 3. Lavender Festival, **Blanco**, www.blancolavenderfestival.com
 3. Pioneer Day, **Jacksboro**, (940) 567-5410
 3. City Wide Market, **Sinton**, (361) 364-2307
 3. Market Days, **Rockdale**, (512) 446-2030
 3. Market Days, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201
 3. Market Days, **Elgin**, (512) 376-6115 or www.elginchurch.com
 3. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
 4. Sacred Heart Spring Festival, **Flatonia**, (361) 865-3568 or www.destinationflatonia.com

Event information can be mailed to Around Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, faxed to (512) 486-6254, or e-mailed to aroundtx@texas-ec.org. It must be submitted by the 10th of the month two months prior to publication. E.g., July submissions must be received prior to May 10. Events are listed according to space available. We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they cannot be returned.



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Three-year-old JAMES BRIDGER had fun watching the ants at work in his sister's ant farm. The project was part of homeschooled KATELYN's kindergarten science curriculum. Their parents are JIM and MICHELLE BRIDGER, members of Cooke County Electric Cooperative.



An edible human cell replica? Sure, if you're KENNY BLACK, who topped a cake with candies to create a replica of a human cell! Wood County Electric Cooperative member MARTHA BLACK submitted her son's yummy science project.



Longtime HILCO Electric Cooperative member and art instructor MICHELE LEECH submitted this photo of 24 dinosaurs made by all 116 of WHITNEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S SECOND-GRADERS. "Each of 24 groups researched and designed all of the dinosaurs from recyclable objects," she said. "They papier-mâché, painted and carefully accented each one with detail. The project took five weeks to complete."

School Projects

We weren't sure what to expect when we selected **School Projects**—a new topic—for this month's Focus on Texas. We certainly didn't anticipate the colorful photos you see here, which just goes to show you once again, our readers and their offspring are pretty inventive and talented folks—and smart, to boot!

Close Calls is the topic for our July issue. Send your photos—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Close Calls, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before May 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to focus@texas-ec.org. (If you have questions about your camera's capabilities and settings, please refer to the operating manual.)



While studying dinosaurs, STOKER WILLIAMS and TRENTON STEELE constructed this Tyrannosaurus rex out of tubes they had been collecting for several months. STOKER and TRENTON are third-graders at Arp Elementary. Their teacher, JANET SHUTTLESWORTH, is a member of Rusk County Electric Cooperative.



After big brother STERLING finished his insect collection for a seventh-grade science project, AVERY points out one of his favorite bugs. The boys are sons of RICHARD and EILEEN BEHRENS of Fayette Electric Cooperative.

UPCOMING in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
July	Close Calls	May 10
August	Classic Vehicles	June 10
September	Murals	July 10
October	Scarecrows	August 10
November	Mailboxes	September 10
December	Christmas Morning	October 10



Father's Day in Ammansville



GENO ESPONDA

For 364 days a year, Ammansville is just another sleepy Central Texas village. Cattle ranches and cotton farms dot the landscape. A single stop sign marks the center of town where the old general store stands, now deserted. In the afternoons, the local men gather in a single-room building, little more than a shed, to drink cold beer and share stories.

But one day each year, on Father's Day, the town opens the doors and hangs up the welcome sign. And the two dozen families who reside here, primarily of Czech heritage, watch the population swell to about 5,000 for the annual Ammansville Picnic. No one can say with any certainty why the picnic is on Father's Day, but some of the older folk say it's a traditional time for children to visit.

I moved to Ammansville from Los Angeles in 2002 when I went to work as director of marketing for Scott & White health facilities in Temple. My

little blue house was directly behind the KJT meeting hall, home of "The Picnic," and just down the road from St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, which the picnic supports. St. John's is one of the famous "Painted Churches" of Central Texas, known for its ornately decorated interior. My daughter and I would sit on our porch, watching busloads of tourists visit during the spring and fall. We would wake up to the bells ringing on Sunday morning. The church and life around it became part of us.

I'm neither

Czech nor Catholic. Yet, once I arrived, I was immediately indoctrinated into the ways of "The Picnic." Generally attributed to be in its 135th year, the picnic takes a lot of planning. The entire community is encouraged, if not expected, to lend a hand. We must collect items for the live auction, prepare the fried chicken, staff the bake sale, lead the bingo games, etc. Since I was new, I wasn't given anything really official. Whip up an apple pie for the bake sale, work a couple of hours at the country store selling homemade dewberry jam or bags of candy to the kids, fetch tea or snacks for the ladies making change. Promotions are rare. A cushy job like taking change might be handed down from mother to daughter.

This is no ordinary picnic. Glenda Stavinoha, who has worked nearly 30 Father's Day events, says Ammansville kicks off the church picnic season. Later picnics will benefit the churches in

Dubina, High Hill and Praha, but this one sets the bar. "If Ammansville has a good picnic, everybody does," she says.

Generations of families attend the annual event, coming from as far away as Houston and Austin to participate. The biggest crowds usually arrive in late morning. They can enjoy a hot lunch, let the kids play games, maybe catch Tony Janek's polka band, and visit with old friends. The party goes on until all the chicken is eaten, the beer runs out, and the band goes home.

Susan King, a nearby resident and second-generation picnic volunteer, isn't surprised to see old friends from the city. "It's like a great family reunion," she says. Stavinoha sees tradition: "It's the Czech heritage. People come back because they miss this in the big city."

The live auction, which kicks off early in the afternoon, is one of the biggest attractions. Community spirit and one-upsmanship drive the prices. It's not uncommon for a jar of homemade pickles to go for more than \$100 or a handmade quilt to fetch more than \$300. It's all for the sake of the church. One of the more unusual items on the auction block is a battered plastic crow. Retired from its original decoy job, it now makes the rounds at church auctions, fetching big money. Last year, Derek Jones paid \$175 to take it home. But, it will be back at this year's picnic, as will I. After all, it's tradition. I should start saving my money now. That crow won't come cheap.

Fayette Electric Cooperative serves Ammansville.

Karen Matthews now lives in Temple.

Father's Day is June 18 this year. There is no attendance fee for the picnic. Dinner tickets are \$6.50 for adults, \$3 for children. From Houston, take IH-10 west to Schulenburg and exit Highway 77 south. Travel about 5 miles to FM 1383. Ammansville is halfway between Schulenburg and La Grange off FM 1383. From Austin, take Highway 71 south toward Columbus. Exit on Highway 77 south, which takes you through La Grange. Go about 6 miles and turn left on FM 1383.