

TEXAS CO-OP POWER



HUMMINGBIRDS:

*Those Magnificent
Flying Machines*



PLUS

Extreme Birding

Luby's

Hit the Road:
Granbury to Cleburne

SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

Flooding

Don't mess with floods. Flooding is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in Texas. The simple decisions you make can mean the difference between life and death.


Flood Safety Rules:

- Never drive through water on a road. It can be deeper than it appears. Floodwaters can damage roadways, creating invisible sinkholes or washed out bridges.
- Quickly leave your car if it stalls in water. Water displaces 1,500 pounds of weight for every foot it rises. It takes only 2 feet of water to push a 3,000-pound car downstream.
- Don't attempt to walk through rapidly running water. As little as 6 inches can knock adults off their feet.
- Keep an emergency kit in your car, including a flashlight with extra batteries, drinking water and a battery-operated radio.
- If you have a cell phone, program the number for police or fire department rescue.

Take the high road when it comes to flood safety. Your life depends on it.



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By Kaye Northcott

Photos by Ave Bonar

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Ride along on a five-day competition covering 2,450 miles of Texas as birding teams race to identify the most species.

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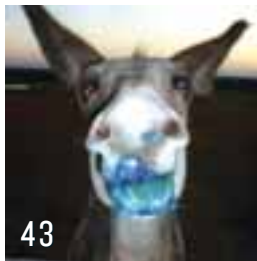
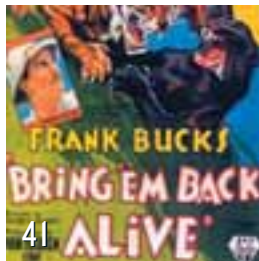
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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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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letters

KEEP STARS BRIGHT

I enjoyed your January 2007 article about the "The stars at night, are big and bright ..."! I'd like to challenge electric cooperatives to consider making it a policy to offer members ONLY outdoor lighting that is shaded to protect our dark skies. Some co-ops may already do this. Let's work to keep alive and well the heritage vocalized in this song.

KAREN HUBER

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

RESPONSE PREDICTABLE

After the great display of the "Big Bucks" in the November 2006 issue, we all knew that you'd be getting letters opposing hunting. I, for one, like your article and sport hunting. Print that!

RICHARD PETERS

Fayette Electric Cooperative

TECHNOLOGY EXPERT?

You write in "The Future(Gen) Is Here" that carbon dioxide waste from coal generation will be captured and used to produce more oil from existing wells. I used to design CO₂ and nitrogen pumps used for oil-well maintenance and fracture jobs.

I can assure you that there is more than enough CO₂ for that purpose and any other.

The article also states that CO₂ would be safely stored underground, but it is thought that CO₂ may cause damage, resulting in a sudden massive leak.

The only realistic alternative is conservation and alternative energy.

THOMAS W. CRANSTON

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative

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. Read additional letters at www.texascoopower.com.

POWER TALK



HOORAY: THE (SPANISH-AMERICAN) WAR IS OVER

There's good news for 2006 taxpayers who were billed for long-distance telephone service between February 2003 and August 2006: You are eligible for a one-time refund.

Anyone who has paid a long-distance telephone bill during the past century or so has been forking over money to the government in the form of a federal excise tax that was enacted in 1898 to help pay for the Spanish-American War. The war's costs were satisfied long ago, but the tax, levied at a rate based on the distance a call traveled, remained.

The Internal Revenue Service lost several court cases challenging the tax and told phone companies to stop charging it as of Aug. 1, 2006. A refund of the charges incurred from March 1, 2003, to July 31, 2006, was ordered.

Whether they itemize or not, taxpayers wanting the standard refund of the excise tax (\$30-\$60 based on the number of dependents claimed) need merely file form 1040EZ-T with their tax return, the IRS says. Or, if records of phone bills for those 41 months are available, the actual rate can be claimed. Businesses and tax-exempt organizations can use a formula for calculating their refund based on two months' worth of bills.

The IRS offers forms and help with tax questions at its website, www.irs.gov, or toll-free at 1-800-829-1040.



SAFELIVING

Counterfeiting Poses Hazards

Trademark counterfeiting has reached the electrical sector. Counterfeiters have targeted well-known brands as well as registered certification marks. Counterfeit electrical products can pose significant safety hazards.

The electrical products targeted by counterfeiters apply to those used by both consumers and industries. The list includes lamps, smoke detectors, fuses, circuit breakers, electrical receptacles, ground-fault circuit interrupters, power strips and more.

Tips to avoid counterfeit electrical products:

- Look for the CSA, UL or ETL-SEMKO certification marks.
- Buyers should beware of bargains that seem too good to be true.
- Buy from established vendors.
- The warning label should be free of grammatical errors and not conflict with information elsewhere on the package.
- Look for the manufacturer's name and contact information.

Source: ESFI, www.esfi.org

H A P P E N I N G S

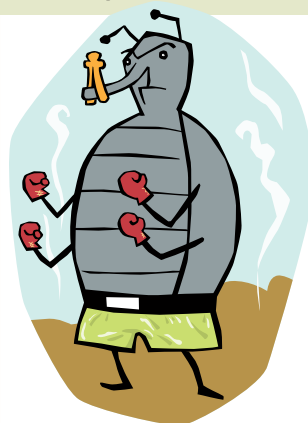
Master sand sculptors will descend March 30-April 1 on Port Aransas for the 11th annual **TEXAS SAND SCULPTURE FESTIVAL**. It's fun to watch these talented men and women compete for hefty prizes. To check out photos of some of last year's winners, go to www.texassandfest.com and see what they can create. First place last year in the Masters Division of the SandFest, as it is known, went to Thomas Koels of The Netherlands and Florida for "Only Six Months Till Octoberfest." Second place was Karen Fralich of Toronto's "Dinotopia" (left)—a little girl reading about dinosaurs as they come to life beside her.



The centerpiece of SandFest is a 250-ton sand creation sculpted by a collaboration of 25 artists.

The weekend event also includes booths, live music, a photo contest and kids' activities. Call the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce/CVB, 1-800-45COAST (452-6278) for more information.

WHO KNEW?

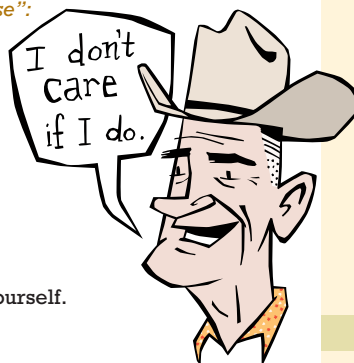


BUG TUSSE The name Bug Tussle, a virtual ghost town in Fannin County, has something to do with bugs, but exactly what depends on which anecdote you believe. One version has an invasion of bugs spoiling a church ice cream social. Another suggests that a picnic area offered so little in entertainment that visitors would watch tumblebugs (aka dung beetles) "tussle." Certainly, the verb "tussle," which is akin to scuffle, has much to do with the name's appeal.

TEXAS LEXICON

In her book *Denim and Diamonds*, Emma Lee Turney, founder of the Round Top Antiques Fair, offered the following translations to help her out-of-state clients understand "Texanese":

- "I don't care if I do," means "I accept."
- "You gotta own up," means to admit the truth.
- Breakfast is breakfast but lunch is dinner and dinner is supper.
- "Evening" is the shank of the afternoon.
- Don't think when they say "Come back now, you hear?" they mean right this instant. It's simply a way to end an encounter.
- "Born days," means whole life or "all my life"—"I've never seen such a thing in all my born days."
- "Fix your own plate" doesn't mean get out the glue. It means serve yourself.
- "Oh, get out!" means "I don't believe you."



CO-OP CONCERN FOR EDUCATION

POWER SAVERS

When Wylie ISD on the outskirts of Abilene asked Taylor Electric Cooperative (TEC) for help teaching students energy conservation, the Merkel-based co-op was happy to oblige. General Manager/CEO Darryl Schriver and his staff came up with a "Kilowatt Power Savers" campaign for elementary school students. The program, patterned after TV's "Power Rangers," has a buffed up Willie Wiredhand, the cooperative mascot, urging children to be on the lookout for energy waste.

Each classroom receives a full-color poster and several small certificates that fit above a light switch, explained



Rebecca Sharp, TEC director of communications. Each week, a youngster serving as the "Classroom Power Saver" turns off the lights after other students leave. He or she receives a certificate to take home.

The program is in its second year in Wylie ISD and has expanded to all four school districts in the Taylor service area. The co-op is now working on an energy-conservation coloring book for preschool and early elementary students. The illustrations are originals by Dale Hammond, a former lineman whose drawings have been anthologized.


Wylie Elementary pupils colored their own Power Savers posters.

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Hummingbirds

THOSE MAGNIFICENT FLYING MACHINES

By Kaye Northcott • Photos by Ave Bonar • Illustration by Aletha St. Romain

Before 7 on a September morning, a crowd has already gathered in a Rockport suburban driveway to watch Bob and Martha Sargent of Clay, Alabama, band ruby-throated hummingbirds. Tens of thousands of the miniscule birds stop for a few days along the Texas Gulf Coast to stoke up on nectar and protein before making their journey to Mexico for the winter. In fact, this annual staging has been called “one of Texas’ most amazing avian spectacles.”

The visit of the ruby-throats is one of the most popular events in the Rockport-Fulton area, which is north of Corpus Christi. Last year marked the 18th year of the Hummer/Bird Celebration. Thousands of hummingbird enthusiasts, as well as experts and the merely curious, were on hand for three days of yard tours, lectures and a trade show with feeders, bird memorabilia and nectar plants.

Nothing is more popular than the banding demonstrations, where you can see the tiny marvels up close and perhaps hold one in your hand. The birds, with their characteristic ruby throats and iridescent green caps, are captured at a backyard feeder and placed in string bags. Volunteers in brightly colored T-shirts bring the little bags to the Sargents’ table. Some birds flutter energetically inside the nets, and others take the opportunity to rest.

Bob selects one of the tiny birds, which average 3.5 grams (roughly the weight of two pennies), in his huge fist and ever so delicately attaches an aluminum alloy band to one leg. The band is about the size of Franklin D. Roosevelt's ear on a dime. He weighs the bird, which lies passively in his hand, and tells Martha how many grams to record. With a tiny straw, he blows apart the feathers on the bird's belly to detect how much fat he or she has accumulated. Some experts say the birds can burn as much as 2 grams of fat a day flying across the Gulf of Mexico. They are usually ready to continue their journey when they weigh in at 4 to 4.5 grams. Some swell up to little flying basketballs at 6 or even 6.5 grams.

Once the Sargents have noted the sex of the bird (the females have more subdued colors in addition to different wing and tail structures), measured wingspan and tail in millimeters, and noted striations in a bird's bill (young ones have the most striations), Bob places the bird in the palm of a bystander's hand to hold until it flits away. One can feel the little heart pumping away at 600 beats or more per minute.

Banding research indicates ruby-throated hummingbirds travel from the north and the east, where they mate during the warm season. The birds spend their summers as far north as Canada or as far south as Texas. Like most hummingbirds, the rubys usually have two nests a season. The male impregnates a female and abandons her, sometimes to impregnate another soon-to-be single mother. The females valiantly raise two to three clutches of eggs a season.

Argumentative and territorial, most hummingbirds are loners even during migration. They don't congregate in the same area for companionship but because they are attracted to the same habitat. Ruby-throats gather along the Gulf Coast near Rockport to feed voraciously. Other birds stop farther south in the Brownsville area. From there, the ruby-throats may cross the Gulf to central or southern Mexico or Panama. Most of the birds will circumnavigate

the Gulf in the fall because of strong headwinds. However, in the spring, ruby-throats have been observed crossing up to 600 miles of open water with the help of prevailing winds.

Migration, mating habits and habitat are just three of the topics on which banders and other birders are trying to shed light. The Hummer/Bird Study Group founded by the Sargents has reports of banded birds in Georgia, North Carolina and Connecticut, just to name a few states. The organization has banding stations in Alabama, Mississippi, Texas and West Virginia.

The Sargents and other members of the Hummer/Bird Study Group make a point of attending the Rockport event. Texas, after all, is at the mouth of a funnel the hummingbirds traverse to get to Mexico for the winter. And the state is one of the hot spots of research on hummingbirds, thanks to the Texas Hummingbird Roundup, a citizen-science survey sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Since 1994, TPWD has kept a database and tracked trends using information from hummingbird sightings. The most recent push has been to find volunteers to participate in the roundup in the hummingbird-rich Trans-Pecos Region of West Texas and the Upper Rio Grande Valley. Texas is known to host 18 species of hummingbirds—more than any other state. Any resident should be able to sight at least two species in his or her home territory.

About 10 hummingbird species have been identified around Rockport-Fulton. The adjacent towns are situated on a peninsula covered with picturesque live oaks turned inland away from the salt spray. Two jewel-like bays, Aransas to the southeast and Copano to the northwest, are sheltered from the Gulf by San José Island, just north of Padre Island National Seashore. The habitat attracts ruby-throats like Tahiti attracts tourists. And townfolk have made it easy and fun to observe the huge congregations of birds and birdwatchers.

After watching the banding and seeing the diminutive birds up close, it is

Continued on page 10



Hummer Facts

In 2005, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department experts put together *Hummingbirds of Texas*, a handsome and comprehensive survey of 21 species of hummingbirds and where they have been sighted in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The book, published by Texas A&M University Press, includes great photos and illustrations.

Here are a few facts from the book:

- There are 18 known species of hummingbirds in Texas and more than 300 in the Americas.
- During flight, a hummingbird's heart can beat more than 1,200 beats per minute.
- For short bursts, hummingbirds can attain speeds of more than 55 mph, but their normal speed is closer to 25 mph.
- Hummingbirds lay the smallest eggs of any bird in the world. A clutch is usually two eggs. One egg can easily rest inside the circumference of a penny.
- Hummingbirds flap their wings in a somewhat circular motion that takes the shape of a figure eight. This gives them the ability to fly backward, which is unique among birds.
- If hummingbirds survive their first year, they can live three to eight years.
- Many hummingbirds go dormant in foul weather to save energy.

Below are eight hummingbirds found in Texas, along with favorite nectar plants for easy identification.



H U M M I N G B I R D S

FIG. 1: BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (Female) FIG. 2: HUMMINGBIRD NEST & EGGS FIG. 3: ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD (Male)
FIG. 4: CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD (Male) FIG. 5: ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (Female) FIG. 6: TURK'S CAP FIG. 7: HORSEMINT FIG. 8: TRUMPET CREEPER

To order a 16"x20" poster, visit www.texascooppower.com, or mail \$15 (check or money order) along



FIG. 9

FIG. 10



FIG. 12



FIG. 11



FIG. 13



FIG. 14



FIG. 15

Aletha J. Romain

of TEXAS 2007

FIG. 9: BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (Male) FIG. 10: BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD (Male) FIG. 11: RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (Male)
 FIG. 12: RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD (Male) FIG. 13: SALVIA FIG. 14: THISTLE FIG. 15: SHRIMP PLANT

with your name and address to Texas Co-op Power, Hummingbird Poster, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704.

time to go yard to yard and see how area residents design their hummingbird gardens. Last year, 23 locations were on the Rockport-Fulton Hummer Homes map. Bus tours were available for \$10 a person, or visitors could pick up a map at the Rockport-Fulton High School auditorium and strike out on their own.

The best times for viewing are just after sunrise or just before sunset when the birds are breaking their fast or preparing for the night's deep slumber. Sometimes the birds drink so much before bed, the throat area starts to swell.

At various stops, a photographer and I met people from as far away as Michigan and Georgia as well as members of the Houston Innerloop Photo

Club and of a Good Sam's RV club. We gathered quietly by chain-link fences, tiptoed into backyards, lounged in lawn chairs and generally took full advantage of Rockport-Fulton hospitality. Occasionally word would spread that someone had spotted a rufous hummingbird or maybe even a buff-bellied hummingbird across town, and there would be an exodus to the site.

The ruby-throats begin arriving in late July or August. A couple weeks before the festival, hummingbirders bring out massive numbers of feeders and refill them several times a day to attract the largest possible number of migrants. The birds flit about, squabbling, feeding and putting on a great show. Their incessant activity is enough to jangle one's nerves.

Or not. There's no predicting which

yards the hummingbirds are going to prefer at a particular time of day. In addition to homes in town, the Fennessey Ranch between Refugio and Sinton makes a 9-mile hummingbird habitat tour available for visitors during the celebration. (TPWD encourages ranches to open their gates to wildlife viewing.)

All of the residences on the hummingbird tour cultivate natural habitat for providing shelter, water and nectar (see sidebar). Except for providing for the birds' basic needs, the homes on the tour vary from immaculately groomed estates with pools backing up to a golf course to a TPWD-certified wildscape such as Birdsong. At the latter you can sit on the porch with Beth Hester and Petra Villegas and look through scrap-

Continued on page 14

Cultivate Nectar Plants

Hummingbirds love red and orange nectar plants, especially those with a trumpet-shaped flower, a deep throat and wide mouth. It's best to consult experts about which plants produce nectar. Some of the most spectacular do not. A dedicated Texas gardener can select plants to bloom year round, including winter.



Scarlet Sage



Red Columbine



Turk's Cap



Acanthus



Cenizo



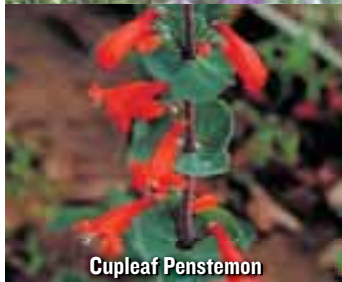
Coral Honeysuckle



Heart-Leaf Hibiscus



Lantana



Cupleaf Penstemon



Snapdragon Vine



Trumpet Creeper



Tulip Tree

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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Shelter, Water and Food

Exploding from the oak tree with a stream of chatter, a ruby-throated hummingbird streaked toward his rival now perilously close to the treasured feeder. The two hummingbirds had clashed many times this morning, and neither was about to give up the precious resource without a fight. Swooping across the garden, the two birds chattered, chirped and whistled before separating and returning to their perches.

This scene is repeated several times each hour at feeders all across the United States, while in the yard right next door there might be a hummingbird feeder that is woefully ignored by the quarreling birds. What makes one feeder attractive while the other is ignored? Habitat, say the experts at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. That means shelter, water and food.

The typical suburban lawn with its carefully tended carpet of grass, suitable for playing croquet, won't hack it. Birds need small trees or bushes for shelter, observation and nesting. Frequently, the scrub vegetation cleared for new homes is prime hummingbird real estate. Of course, all rules are made to be

broken. According to TPWD, hummingbirds have made themselves at home on overhead wires, antenna arms, feeder hooks and clotheslines, but given a choice, the hummers will usually perch in a tree or a bush. If at all possible, it's good to have some shade-loving nectar plants such as columbine or Turk's cap beneath the shelter.

A shallow source of clean water is the next necessity. A regular birdbath can be modified with rocks to provide the quarter-inch of water a hummingbird needs. The little creatures adore running, misting or dripping water. It is great fun to watch them burst out of the trees to dip their iridescent wings in a water feature made to fit their needs.

Hummingbirds will feed on small insects and bugs, but mainly they are attracted to red-hued nectar plants (see plant list). Flowering shrubs and plants that bear nectar give the bonus of being attractive, but the most basic plastic hummingbird feeder works fine. Make sure it has a perch so the little fellows don't have to consume precious energy hovering while they eat. The feeder should have red highlights, but adding red coloration

to the nectar mixture is unnecessary and may be dangerous. Don't fall for the fancy, exotic feeders. Keep it simple, many speakers at the Hummer/Bird Celebration emphasized.

The usual feeding mixture is 4 parts boiled water to 1 part sugar. Feeders should be emptied, cleaned and refilled regularly—every two to four days in warm weather and every four to six days in cool weather.

Once you've established a desirable hummingbird habitat, there may be a problem with males challenging one another at the feeder. The answer is to place more than one feeder in your yard, providing distance between them.

Caution: Don't place brightly colored artificial flowers in your garden because hummingbirds will waste precious energy futilely trying to feed at them. Cemeteries are a hazard for the birds because of the artificial arrangements. A hummingbird can use up a day's stored energy searching a cemetery in vain. Sometimes a creature will perish before it finds a genuine source of nourishment.

—Mark Klym, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Kaye Northcott

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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several acres with boardwalks that can take you from grazing land through dense scrub oak past a commodious two-story house then over indigenous grasses to a high overlook of Copano Bay. A much less elaborate compound of the Norcross Home has a chain-link fenced front yard of St. Augustine grass dotted with a couple of palm trees and multitudinous feeders shaped like strawberries. It was so simple yet whimsical we dubbed it "Strawberry Fields."

The 2007 Hummer/Bird Celebration will be held September 13-16. For information, call the Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-826-6441.

For more information about the Texas Hummingbird Roundup visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us or write Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Attn: Texas Hummingbird Roundup, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, TX 78744.

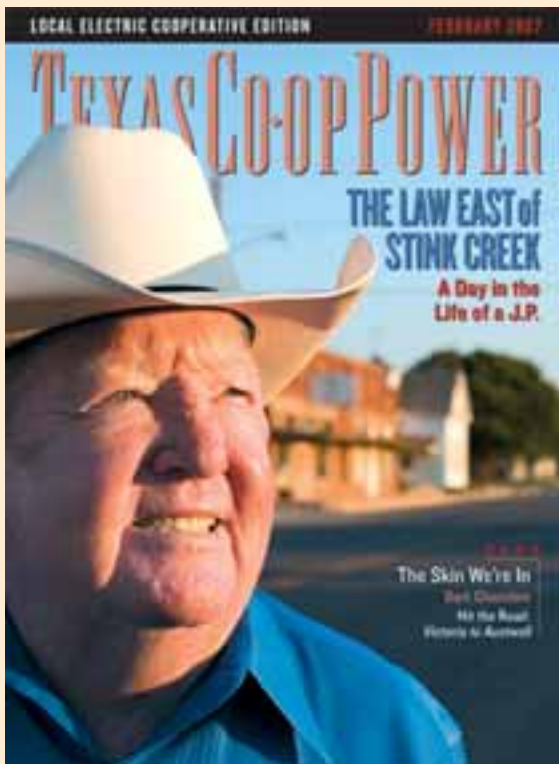
Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.

Ave Bonar is a Texas photographer best known for her documentary work.

books showing how many years it has taken for their modest lot revert to a wilderness. The women are somewhat bemused by the fact that Birdsong is now a Rockport-Fulton landmark, considering they had to fight city hall to get permission for their property to grow

wild. Visitors appreciatively grab bottled water from a chest on the porch and then walk the narrow trails through dense stands of sunflowers and other natural attractions.

I particularly admire the Krenek Home, a heavily wooded homesite of



TEXAS CO-OP POWER

EACH MONTH, WE BRING YOU THE VERY BEST TEXAS HAS TO OFFER!

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.

SEVERE WEATHER? TUNE IN!

NOAA Weather Radio

Do you have a battery-operated NOAA weather radio at your home or workplace?

If the NOAA broadcasts reach your area, the radios can be invaluable. Here's why:

- NOAA provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information directly from the National Weather Service offices. When severe weather threatens your area, the broadcast activates an alarm and turns on the radio so you can hear critical, potentially life-saving messages.
- NOAA weather radios can take advantage of an even greater tool: the "all hazards" radio network. These broadcasts provide warning and post-event information for a host of other threats including natural and technological hazards.
- NOAA weather radios can also receive broadcasted AMBER alerts for missing children.
- The NOAA weather radio network is expanding in coverage and capability, making it an invaluable tool. For as little as \$20, anyone can have access to potentially life-saving emergency messages.

We think your family's safety is worth the investment. Call your local electric cooperative or visit www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/index.html for more weather radio information.



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EXTREME BIRDING!

5 Days ... 340 Species ... 2,450 miles

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY JODY HORTON



BILL BAKER BRINGS THE VAN TO A stop in the middle of the road, kills the engine and lights. A “shhh,” from Cecilia Riley in the front seat. Rain is drumming the roof. Tom Roberts and I crack the back windows and try to listen through it: the faint whisper of wind through pine needles, a low rumble of far-off thunder, the occasional sickening whine of mosquito wings in your ear. Sheet lightning opens the sky, silhouetting tall, spindly pines that surround us. We wait like statues, ears cocked. Minutes pass, but nothing. Soon, the rain has turned to a roar.

We are on a minor logging road somewhere deep in the Angelina National Forest, outside Jasper in the Piney Woods of East Texas. It's 5:28 a.m. What would bring a person to this place at this hour? Not fame, nor the promise of money. Not the love of a man or woman, or the hope of spiritual enlightenment. Not anything but the pure and simple pleasure of seeing (and/or hearing) a bird. And bragging rights.

It is April 26, 2006, day two of what may be the most extreme birding competitions on earth—The Great Texas Birding Classic. The weeklong event, now in its 11th year, pits three- and four-member teams in a five-day test of endurance and birding skill. From the Piney Woods to the shores of South Padre Island, teams zigzag along the 600-mile Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail by car and boat and on foot. They brave cold, heat and rain, deep woods, remote wetlands, biting deerflies, and clouds of mosquitoes so thick you have to breathe through your teeth. They sleep scant hours in campgrounds and cheap hotels, subsist on trail mix, gas station coffee and Whataburger to-go. All in pursuit of a simple, singular goal: identify the most birds (and win).

For a glimpse of what people who would put themselves through this are like, I have joined the Reliant Energy Environmental Partners team for one leg of its journey. With two native Texans, Baker of League City and Riley of Lake Jackson (plus Roberts of Johnstown, Pa.), the trio is the home team. As winners of the 2005 competition, they are also a favorite for 2006. Their most-feared rivals are the Nikon Wildbirders—an all non-Texan team that has dominated the competi-



Tom directs **Cecilia** to train her binoculars on a sighting. Binoculars are a birder's most valuable tool. The rule of thumb is, “the more expensive, the better.” High-quality glass not only improves light-gathering ability, extending viewing time from pre-dawn through dusk, it also more precisely captures details of color and other identifying marks.

tion in several previous years. The middle-aged Environmental Partners are ever-conscious of the relative youth of the Wildbirders, who are in their late 20s.

“They have a lot of energy,” Bill says. He suspects they sleep less and knows they move more quickly. But because each team sets its own routes and tallies are not submitted until the final day, competitors are left to wonder and worry over their standing all week long. Besides the ghosts of their rivals, their constant enemy is time. It bears down on them always. You don't walk back from a bathroom break, you jog—or run.

4:32 a.m.

Best Western, Jasper

For Bill, the day begins with a cola, a cup of orange juice with a tear-off aluminum lid and a sad warmed-over breakfast-in-a-bun—a tiny sausage wrapped in dough—from the hotel's continental breakfast offerings. He is the first team member to reach the lobby and is surprisingly alert, enthusiastic and friendly for this hour. Bill, the team's logistician and driver, has been scouting and planning the route for the past year, intensively for the past month. His meticulous planning was crucial in its 2005 victory and has made the team the first in competition history to spy both the elusive whooping crane and the Atwater's prairie

chicken. In their first 24 hours, the trio already has logged an impressive 173 species and covered 400 road miles.

“I'm just the driver,” Bill says modestly. He tells me that Tom and Cecilia are the real birding experts, calling them both “ringers.”

4:55 a.m.

Outside of Jasper

It will be another hour before sunrise. The team is loaded in the van and moving toward the Angelina National Forest—its first predetermined location. We are in pursuit of a red-cockaded woodpecker and hope to pick up an owl and a few other nocturnal species. Tom is beside me in the back seat. His enthusiasm is tangible. “It's tough to go to sleep,” he says. “You're too excited thinking strategy: Did I mark every bird? Where are the gaps, and what are we hoping for the next day?”

As we turn down a forest road he describes the Texas coast as a converging point for migratory species, a geographic bottleneck that brings a stunning variety and abundance of birds every spring. This is why Tom has made his own pilgrimage to compete

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- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
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- Three-day supply of nonperishable food
- Three gallons of bottled water per person
- Coolers for food and ice storage
- Fire extinguisher
- Blankets, sleeping bags and extra clothing
- Prescription medications, written copies of prescriptions, hearing aids and other special medical items
- Eyeglasses and sunglasses
- Extra keys
- Toilet paper, clean-up supplies, duct tape, tarp, rope
- Can opener, knife, tools
- Booster cables, road maps

(Information from the Division of Emergency Management, Texas Department of Public Safety)



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for the past six seasons. "It's incredible to see birds and know that they are 600 miles into their journey," he says.

6:02 a.m.

Angelina National Forest

The rain has slowed to a drizzle, and we see the first faint hints of daybreak. The team gets out of the van to stand side by side in the middle of the road, eyes trained on a cluster of thin dead pines. I can just make out their outline in the growing light. A few more moments, and I can see them plainly. The team scans the cluster with their binoculars.

"There," says Tom, pointing. "Screech owl. Do you see it? Top right limb of the center tree."

"Yes, yes, yes" Cecilia says.

"Got it!" Bill says.

"Do you see it?" Tom asks me. I lean over to follow his point and can see the small figure of an owl on one of the high branches. A thin hollow "hoo" emanates from the cluster. I feel a chill of excitement. Tom hands me his binoculars and I find the owl again. It "hoos" once more then takes to the air and flaps out of sight. My heart is beating more rapidly as I hand the binoculars back.

"Cool," I say lamely. Tom seems pleased. He can see that already I am beginning to understand what has brought them here

In a few minutes, we see the red-cockaded woodpecker. It emerges from a hole in the trunk of one of the trees just as Bill said it would. Over the next half hour, the team also catalogs a kestrel, a Chuck-will's-widow and a pine warbler.

"All targets are here," announces Bill. The team is all smiles as we head for the van.

"I'm so relieved," Cecilia says. "I'll be even more relieved when we get a brown-headed nuthatch."

View from the Finish Line

The team would add another 64 species before the end of the day. (I have been asked not to reveal where we went or how we got there.) By the tournament's close, they had reached their pre-race goal of 340 birds—enough to repeat their championship. The Wildbirders finished second with 325 species.

As grand prize, the Environmental Partners were awarded the honor of pre-



Top: If team members sight a bird not on the master list, they can submit a "write-in," which requires a field drawing and description.

Middle: Deep Woods Off with DEET is the insect repellent of choice for serious birders. They wouldn't leave home without it. **Bottom:** Tom checks the day's sightings at a coastal birding trailhead.



A high-five all around for team members **Tom Roberts, Cecilia Riley** and **Bill Baker** for a drive-by sighting. While enroute to their next destination, the team spots a master-list bird perched on the eaves of a small-town variety store. This team beat four others from across the United States to win the 11th annual Classic.

senting a \$20,000 grant in their name, earmarked for a habitat restoration project near Corpus Christi. They logged 2,450 miles in the van—about average for most teams, according to Bill.

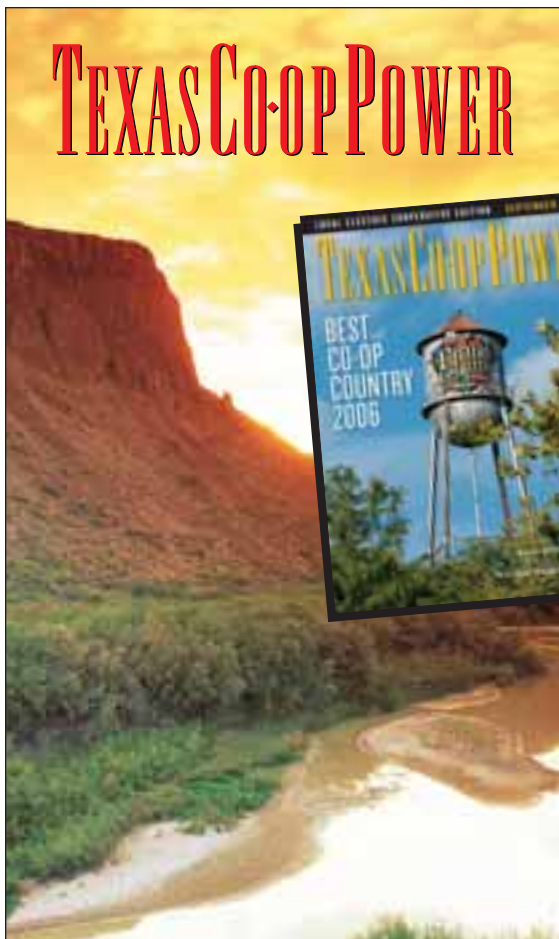
The trio is already looking forward to 2007. "Planning began just after the awards brunch," Bill says. "We always talk about what we did well and what we can do better next year."

The Classic, 2007

Co-sponsored by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the 11th annual Great Texas Birding Classic will be held April 15-22. In addition to the week-long tournament, the Classic offers a variety of day tournaments organized by age group (from children to seniors) and special areas of interest. For the armchair birder, there is even "The Big Sit," an all-age, 24-hour competition where, basically, team members let the birds come to them. Events are held along the entire coast with competition headquarters in Lake Jackson, Port Aransas and McAllen. For additional information go to: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/birding/gtbc/> or contact Tournament Coordinator Carol Jones at (979) 480-0999.

The areas in this story are served by Cherokee County, Deep East Texas and Jasper-Newton electric cooperatives.

Jody Horton, an Austin-based writer and photographer, wrote "Green by Design" in the June 2006 issue.



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ONLY CRACKPOTS TAKE SHOTS

Transformers

It doesn't take a crack shot to hit an electric insulator or transformer, just a crackpot. During hunting season, careless shooters taking pot shots at electric equipment can cause major problems for your electric company.

Here's why:

- You are inconveniencing your fellow member-customers whose electricity has been disrupted.
- It could even be a matter of life and death to someone on a life-support system or to someone who is hit by a stray shot.
- Damage to electrical equipment is very expensive to repair. Lines may be cut or weakened from a shot, and they may sag or break, becoming a severe hazard for anyone who comes in contact with the line.
- Broken insulators can cause power outages that are hard—and expensive—to find. An insulator cracked by a bullet can remain on line for a long time before it finally fails.

Enjoy your sport, but be a responsible hunter. Teach your children to respect power lines, electrical equipment and guns so that they, too, will be responsible hunters.



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Getting the Best Insulation From Your Home Flooring

DEAR JAMES: I am removing wall-to-wall carpeting because of allergies. I want to replace it with either hardwood or cork flooring. Will these materials insulate as well as the carpet, and what types of hardwood and cork flooring are best? —*Bill N.*

DEAR BILL: Both hardwood and cork are beautiful flooring materials, and they are natural, renewable resources. Even though wood and cork are reasonable insulators, they will not provide as much insulation as carpeting over a thick pad. With the millions of tiny air pockets though, wood and cork flooring feels warm to your feet, and their natural rich appearance creates a comfy ambiance.



Cork is a good choice for replacing carpet.

The insulation of the flooring material is less important than properly insulating the floor. If your home is built over a crawl space, the underside of the floor structure or the entire crawl space should be insulated. For a house on a slab, the slab perimeter should be insulated.

By removing the carpeting, you will realize a savings by not having to run room air cleaners and a vacuum cleaner as frequently to remove allergens that thrive in carpeting. Few people are allergic to the finishes on hardwood or cork flooring. Both can be cleaned with a damp mop to

remove allergens and grit.

Hardwood and cork have somewhat similar properties and are durable and attractive. Hardwood is more commonly used and more types and styles are available. Cork, although it feels hard to the touch, is more comfortable to stand on for long periods of time. If you drop a glass on a cork floor, it generally will not break. This is one reason it is often used in kitchens.

Hardwood floors are attractive and offer durability. There are two characteristics that constitute durability: hardness of the wood surface and stability. A harder wood holds up better to foot traffic and resists dents from dropped items. A hardwood that is stable will not change shape and size much with changes in humidity and temperature.

The hardest woods, such as hard maple, hickory, red oak, etc., may not always be the most stable. Always check on the specific wood species, not just a general name such as cherry. Brazilian cherry is twice as hard as black cherry, but black cherry is more stable.

An environmental alternative to solid flooring is engineered hardwood. A veneer of real hardwood is bonded to several plies of other less expensive woods so fewer hardwood trees are consumed. This makes it more stable under varying indoor conditions than most solid hardwoods.

Another option for environmentally conscious homeowners is cork. The bark of cork oak trees is peeled off every nine years, and the trees heal themselves and grow stronger.

The natural colors of cork can range from almost white to deep, dark browns. Other colors, such as reds, greens and blues, are also available with varying grain definitions. These colorful cork tiles are usually made using a stained cork veneer layer over a natural-colored cork base.

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CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY BY GOING GREEN

From clovers to leprechauns, green is the color of spring. Get your house in on the trend: Celebrate St. Patrick's Day by turning it "green" with energy-saving practices.

A few major overhauls can make your house greener, or more energy efficient. Some examples: Install energy-efficient doors and windows, buy Energy Star-qualified appliances, and invest in solar panels.



Small changes also can save energy on a daily basis and improve the environment. Here are a few to try:

- Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent ones, which save energy and last longer. Upgrade light fixtures and lamps that won't accept compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Save gas and postage stamps by banking and bill-paying online. Deliver other documents by e-mail rather than regular mail to save time and gas.
- Make it a habit to turn off lights and computers at night or when you're finished using them.
- Lower the heat or air conditioning before you leave the house.
- Before turning on the air conditioning, try opening a window to cool the house. Install shades or blinds to keep the sun's heat from getting into your rooms.
- Reduce waste by reusing plastic water bottles and by donating unwanted clothes rather than throwing them out.
- Recycle. Most communities offer recycling options for a variety of materials including paper, plastics and aluminum.
- Plant a tree or two—or 10. They can provide shade, create a wind barrier and are great for the environment.

Look Up for Energy Savings

Searching for an energy-saver that really stands out? Invest in a ceiling fan.

The ceiling fans of old were bland and rarely matched a home's décor. Good news: Manufacturers have given their ceiling fans a makeover. Today's ceiling fans feature stylish, oil-rubbed bronze finishes and exotic woods.

Add a light kit and the fan becomes any room's main source of light.



Ceiling fans help reduce air-conditioning and heating use.

In the summer, a ceiling fan can make a room feel eight degrees cooler, so your air conditioner doesn't have to work as hard.

And if your fan has a "reverse" mode, you can run it in the winter to draw warm air down into your room.

For efficient airflow, mount your fan in the middle of the room 8–9 feet above the floor and 3–5 inches from the ceiling. Extended mounts are available for tall ceilings to keep the fan at the right height. For shorter ceilings, flush mounts are made to hold the fan directly against the ceiling, though they don't operate as efficiently without the extra breathing space.

Don't skimp when selecting a fan. Higher-quality models have quieter and more powerful motors and a heavier motor housing for less vibration. Always buy an Energy Star-approved model, which uses 50 percent less energy to operate than other models.

Don't neglect your covered patio when installing ceiling fans. A fan with a "wet" rating has sealed motors and weather-resistant blades for use outdoors.

One final tip: Operate the fan only when someone is in the room. Fans make people feel cooler, but they won't actually cool the room, so there's no sense in using any electricity to run one in an empty room.

DON'T DISCOVER ELECTRICITY WITH YOUR KITE

Flying kites is one of the few spring pastimes that has survived in the video-game era and can still captivate children. But when electric lines and telephone poles dot the skyline, kids need to take special care when flying their kites.



Parents should supervise kite-flying children. Fly kites only in a clear, open and level field, well away from any overhead power lines. If a kite gets caught in a utility line, don't try to untangle it. Instead, call your electric cooperative to report the tangled kite, and leave it to the experts to get it away from the power line.

For safe kite flying, follow these rules:

- Remember Ben Franklin? He discovered that lightning was made of electricity when his kite was struck during a storm. He wasn't hurt; you might be. Never fly a kite in stormy weather, as wet kites and string can conduct electricity.
- Use a strong, dry cord for string, and do not buy or make kites using metal or wire parts or cotton-wrapped wire string. Metal parts will conduct electricity if they touch an electrical wire.
- Keep your eyes on the ground when running with a kite to avoid tripping over rocks and holes.
- Choose an area away from highways or streets when flying.
- Do not fly kites on rooftops.

LIGHTEN THE LAUNDRY LOAD

- Wash only full loads of clothes and be sure to set the water level appropriately.
- Use hot water only for very dirty loads and always use cold water for the rinse cycle.
- Clean the lint screen on the dryer every time you use the machine.

A clogged lint screen can make your dryer use up to 30 percent more energy—and it can be a fire hazard.

- Remove clothes from the dryer while they're still damp and hang them up. This will save energy, prevent static, and reduce wrinkles and shrinkage.
- Dry one load of clothes immediately after another. This will minimize heat loss, reducing warm up and drying times.



PALESTINE

History Set in Stone

It doesn't take me long to realize East Hill accommodates some interesting residents.

by Ramona Reeves



I am not a bumper sticker person, but if I were, mine might read, “I dig cemeteries.” Not to be irreverent, I explore old graveyards to unearth facts not easily found in travel brochures. I don’t have a macabre personality, but rather, a keen interest in history and the people who lived it. I seek out old cemeteries because they resurrect clues about a town’s roots, if I take the time to stop and explore them.

I set out to explore East Hill Cemetery in Palestine, about 100 miles southeast of Dallas in the Piney Woods region. East Hill is actually a conglomeration of resting places comprising the original East Hill, Old City, New Addition, New Addition Annex and Middle Cemeteries. Nearby is Old Town, an area of downtown businesses housed in older structures—some wood, others brick and several with rusted, streaked tin roofs.

I begin my cemetery exploration early to avoid the heat and to capture the best light for pictures. I wear long pants and closed-toe shoes, not knowing the condition of the grounds. As it turns out, oaks, skyward crape myrtles, dogwoods (a local favorite) and cedars canopy roughly half of East Hill. Grasses cover the ground, along with patches of weeds and the occasional renegade vine. Even the Old City section, while flat and less coiffed, is minimally maintained.

I walk east to west. In most cemeteries, headstones face east, harking back to the earliest New England settlers, buried so that they might rise on the “new day”—facing the sun—at the time of Christ’s return. Throughout my walk, I carefully dodge old gravesites because the ground may be soft. Although portions of East Hill Cemetery are still in use, burials in the Old City section date back to the 1850s. I take nothing except pictures and notes, and leave nothing behind, save footprints. From years of cemetery traipsing, I have learned that “rubbing” headstones erodes inscriptions, which to me equates to erasing history.

As I walk, I note an increase in burials in the late 19th century, leading me to believe that the town experienced a boom around this time. Sure enough, when I investigate this hunch later on, I learn that a railroad came to Palestine in the 1870s and a new depot and more development followed in the 1890s.

But more happened than a population increase, as evidenced by the extraordinary number of Woodmen of the World (W.O.W.) and Masonic emblems etched into East Hill headstones. Palestine became a community. Although Woodmen of the World is known for selling life insurance, it began as a fraternal organization that helped widows; plus, it encouraged members to participate in other charitable efforts. In W.O.W.’s early years, it provided stone markers free—usually shaped like a tree stump with a wedge and an ax. Sometime before 1920, it offered a \$100 insurance rider for a marker’s cost, but ultimately, did away with the rider altogether.

The Masons also figured prominently in settling Palestine and Texas. On the way to East Hill, I had passed Palestine’s historic Masonic Lodge No. 31. In fact,



the Masons occupied 80 percent of political offices during the Republic of Texas era, while representing roughly 1.5 percent of the population. Their prominence may have stemmed from the fact that Masons, such as Stephen F. Austin, were among the first to migrate to Texas in the 1820s.

It doesn't take me long to realize that East Hill accommodates some interesting residents.

John H. Reagan (d. 1906) served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1857 to 1861. During the Civil War, he assumed the office of Confederate Postmaster General and later served as a U.S. senator from Texas.

Then there's Alexander White Gregg (d. 1919), U.S. representative from Texas from 1903 to 1919. Most notable is the memorial of Texas Gov. Thomas Mitchell Campbell (d. 1923), who served from 1907 to 1911. An impressive, towering obelisk marks the resting place of only the second Texas native to occupy the governor's office.

I encountered the markers for veterans of the Civil War, Spanish American War, WWI, WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. In East Hill and the Palestine area, tablet-shaped Civil War markers, inscribed "CSA" (Confederate States of America) provide clear evidence that this region of Texas had deep ties to its Southern neighbors in the mid to late 1800s.

As I survey this cemetery, I recall how the original Texas immigrants came here from all over. Headstones note the roots of residents born in Scotland, Sweden, India, Mexico, Germany and England. On the back of one headstone, I find an inscription in what looks like Arabic.

In the Old City section, prominent families erected iron fencing, shipped from Detroit and Cincinnati, according to branding on the metalwork. Was W.A. Underwood—whose signature appears on one stone—the craftsman commissioned to carve intricate pastoral scenes onto the many children's tombstones? Many infant and child markers appear in East Hill before the 1930s, likely due to the lack of prenatal care and vaccinations for common childhood diseases.

Most tombstones record a name, a birth date and a date of death. But a few hold clues about the deceased's life for future generations to discover.

In East Hill, there's "Pap" (d. 1900), said to be "Everyone's Friend." The headstone of Eleanor Beatrice Caldwell (d. 1893) proclaims, "Being dead she yet speaketh." Esther Equi Hearne's headstone (d. 2004) urges, "Let the good times roll." Good advice from a woman who lived to be 102.

As East Hill disappears in my rear view mirror, I savor Esther's advice. I know more about her and Palestine than when I started, but new questions about its past lives linger.

Ramona Reeves is a freelance and fiction writer who lives in Austin.

Walking with Grandfather

My grandfather understood English but spoke only Spanish. I understood Spanish but spoke only English. We walked together and never spoke a word. It was my first experience with a comfortable silence.

BY WINTER PROSAPIO

M

My grandfather and I walked in silence together down the road, the only sounds coming from our feet. The earth was cracked and curling like a three-day-old sunburn that peels back across your nose and shoulders to reveal a fresh and tender layer of self.

My stained and thin tennies broke off the tips of each curl. His heavy farm boots turned the waves of dry earth into a fine powder. Our feet ate the earth, leaving a trail of crumbs in our wake.

Sometimes I'd stop and pick up a thin curl from the road as we walked, trying to save its gentle sweep from the ravages of our feet, the wind, the passing car. But my hands were too hungry, too impatient with what the sun and earth had worked in delicate harmony to shape into a shallow, curving clay bowl. Bit by bit, it would crumble apart in a dusty rain.

He'd wait for me, silently, as I gathered another curl to carry down the road, leaving behind a single, flat square of hard-packed earth. On his left were the thin trees he had planted in neat rows, their nursery tags waving in the dry, hot wind. On his right were the ankle-high cotton plants that on other farmers' fields he as a young man would have picked. Now he did the hiring—huge tractors would come in a few months to pull the soft cotton free of the long rows of scratchy plants.

My grandfather understood English but spoke only Spanish. I understood Spanish but spoke only English. During our walks we were both free of the chatter of the house, the laughter, the intense energy of our family. We walked together and never spoke a word. It was my first experience with a comfortable silence. Every other silence I'd known as a child was uneasy and off-balance, usually filled quickly with a question, an apology or laughter.

I'd hurry out to meet him on the road, always running a step behind at first, having lingered over a book or toy. He always greeted me with a smile, and we began our walk. Dusk would be slipping rosy fingers over the rows of growing cotton; the first bright stars would pierce the darkening sky.

Our walks were what I remembered when I held his hand 12 years later, when the trees on his farm had grown into an orchard, his nicotine-stained fingers still looked as if he had spent the day fixing something—though he'd been ill for years. He smiled through the tube that rested on his upper lip like a bridle, the hiss of oxygen mixing with the clinking of knitting needles and constant murmurs of the



family. I had no words in that white room, no words at the funeral when my grandmother held onto his coffin, pleading with him not to leave her. I still have no words for the pain that lingers like a dusty Texas sunset.

But I remember that road so clearly that I think if I shut my eyes, I could close this notebook and get there just in time.

In the mornings, after a night's steady downpour, the road between the orchard and cotton field would become a thick, muddy ribbon, slick as bacon grease. All the curls would be completely gone, every sweep smoothed down as if the earth had changed clothes while we were sleeping.

And then we would walk, my grandfather and I, in the comfortable silence of twilight and each other, the earth shifting and sliding under our feet. We'd need no words.

Winter Prosapio is a Hill Country writer and humor columnist. She is served by the Pedernales Electric Cooperative and enjoys long walks with her two daughters and husband.



Where Texans Go To Eat

BY SHANNON OELRICH If you grew up in a mid- to large-sized Texas town, chances are your family ate at a Luby's Cafeteria from time to time, if not weekly. I grew up in San Antonio and have fond memories of going through the line, picking what I liked, and sitting in the crowded, comfortable dining room to enjoy my choices. Today, I take my 2-year-old daughter to Luby's and delight in watching her do the same thing. Like myself at her age, no meal is complete without macaroni and cheese and Jell-O (I preferred orange; she likes red).

In celebration of its 60th anniversary, Luby's has published a cookbook, *Luby's: Recipes and Memories* (2006). Although Harry Luby opened his first cafeteria, the New England Dairy Lunch in Springfield, Missouri, in 1911, Luby's Inc. counts its 60-year history from 1947, when Bob Luby (Harry's son) and cousin Charles Johnston opened the first Luby's Cafeteria in downtown San Antonio. The anniversary cookbook is beautifully photographed, with mouth-watering photos of your favorite dishes as well as exuberant portraits of real Luby's customers. Diners' memories are sprinkled throughout the book, adding to the warm, familiar feel.

The cookbook includes a synopsis of Luby's history, but another new book delves into the whole Luby's story. *House of Plenty: The Rise, Fall, and Revival of Luby's Cafeterias* (University of Texas Press, 2006) is a surprisingly intriguing story of death, betrayal and the American dream. No ordinary corporate history, this book was written by Carol Dawson, an Austin writer, and Carol Johnston, the only child of Luby's co-founder Charles Johnston. With Dawson's ability to turn a phrase and Johnston's insider knowledge, they've crafted a thoroughly engaging tale about Luby's and the families who created it.

One thing both these books make clear is that Luby's commitment to its customers, employees and local communities is a big part of its success, but what keeps people coming back again and again is the consistently delicious home-style food. Here are some of my favorite Luby's recipes.

MIXED MELON WITH POPPY SEED DRESSING

POPPY SEED DRESSING

- 2 cups pineapple juice
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 6 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ cup water
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 3 drops yellow food coloring
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds

Place pineapple juice and granulated sugar into a saucepan over medium heat and bring to a low boil. In a separate bowl, dissolve cornstarch in water. When pineapple juice and sugar begin to boil, slowly whisk in cornstarch mixture. Return to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer about 5 minutes until thickened. Remove dressing from stove. When cooled to room temperature, whisk in white vinegar, food coloring and poppy seeds. Cool completely in refrigerator.

MIXED MELON

- 1 whole cantaloupe, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 whole honeydew melon, peeled, seeded and diced
- 8 cups watermelon, peeled, seeded and diced

Place melons into a large salad bowl and gently mix with cooled Poppy Seed Dressing. Refrigerate. Serve well-chilled. Serves 8.

Tip: For added variety, try using other types of fruits in season and garnish with fresh berries and mint.

Editor's note: Rather than dicing the melon, use a melon baller to achieve the look in the photo.

BAKED FISH ALMONDINE

- 1 cup coarsely ground bread crumbs
- ¼ cup toasted sliced almonds
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 2 skinless haddock, cod or other fish fillets (6–8 ounces each)
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup mayonnaise

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a small bowl, combine crumbs, almonds, salt and butter. Mix well. If necessary, add additional butter, blending well, until crumb mixture begins to hold together. In a sep-

RECIPE ROUNDUP



**MIXED MELON WITH
POPPY SEED DRESSING**



BAKED FISH ALMONDINE



MACARONI AND CHEESE



CHOCOLATE ICE BOX PIE



arate shallow bowl, place flour and coat fish, shaking off excess. Place fillets in a lightly greased medium baking pan. Spread mayonnaise evenly over top surface of fillets and sprinkle with crumb mixture, lightly pressing into each fillet. Carefully pour water around fillets to $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch depth. Bake 20 minutes or until fish flakes when tested with a fork. Serves 2.

Tip: Pour the thinnest possible layer of water around the fish so you don't wash away or wet the topping. This helps to ensure that the fish cooks moist and tender.

MACARONI AND CHEESE

- 2 cups (8 ounces) dry elbow macaroni
- 4 tablespoons nonfat dry milk
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine, melted
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cups boiling water
- 3 cups (12 ounces) shredded American cheese (found at deli counter)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook macaroni 1 to 2 minutes longer than package directions so pasta is soft but not mushy.

Drain. In a large mixing bowl, combine dry milk, flour and butter. Whisking constantly, gradually add in boiling water. Add 1 cup of cheese and continue whisking until smooth and creamy, about 2 to 3 minutes. Fold in macaroni, 1 more cup of cheese, and salt. Transfer to a lightly greased 11x7-inch casserole dish and cover with foil. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until sauce in center of casserole is thick and creamy. Remove foil and sprinkle remaining 1 cup of shredded cheese evenly over top. Return to oven until cheese melts. Serves 6.

CHOCOLATE ICE BOX PIE

- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk
- $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 7 tablespoons cornstarch

- 3 extra large egg yolks
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- 1 baked 9-inch pie shell
- Sweetened whipped cream, as needed
- Chocolate curls or shavings, as needed

In a medium saucepan, combine 2 cups of milk, sugar, cocoa and butter. Bring just to a boil over medium heat. In a medium bowl, mix together cornstarch and remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk until cornstarch is completely dissolved. Then whisk in egg yolks and vanilla extract until well-blended. Whisking constantly, gradually add egg and milk mixture to saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly, about 2 minutes or until mixture is thickened and smooth. Remove from heat. Stir in marshmallows until melted. Pour into pie shell. Press plastic wrap directly onto filling and refrigerate at least 4 hours. To serve, remove plastic wrap, top pie with whipped cream and garnish with chocolate curls.

Tips: Pressing plastic wrap directly onto the top of the hot pie filling prevents the formation of a tough, dry "skin" while the filling cools. To make decorative chocolate curls or shavings from a chocolate candy bar, use a vegetable peeler.

SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

Lightning

Lightning strikes kill more Americans than tornadoes or hurricanes. Don't take chances with this deadly force of nature.


Lightning Safety Rules:

- Move to low ground.
- Avoid open fields.
- Do not seek shelter under a tree. Trees are easy targets for lightning.
- At the beach, or in a swimming pool, get out of the water immediately.
- Go inside a building and stay away from windows and doors.
- Stay away from metal objects.
- Avoid electric appliances and metal plumbing.
- Get off the phone.
- Do not touch metal objects, such as golf clubs or bicycles.
- Inside a car is relatively safe, but don't touch interior metal.
- If your hair stands on end, you may be a target. Crouch low on the balls of your feet and try not to touch the ground with your knees or hands.

Stay aware and play it safe during thunderstorms. Don't be a lightning rod.



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**DON'T GO
OUT ON
A LIMB!**

Your safety is a top priority at your electric co-op. And it's even more important when it comes to our kids. They don't always know—or remember—what can be dangerous, so it's up to all of us to watch out for their safety.


Safety Rules for Trees:

- Don't plant trees or install tall playground equipment under or near power lines.
- Don't build tree houses in trees near electric lines.
- Don't allow children to climb trees growing near electric lines.
- Teach your children always to look up to check for power lines before climbing trees or any tall objects.
- Keep children away from ladders, poles or work equipment that may be near power lines.
- Set a good example by following these rules yourself.

And the Number One safety rule for everyone to remember is this: Don't touch a power line or anything that's touching the power line. No one can tell simply by looking at a line whether it is energized or not, and contact with a power line can be deadly. Remember, electricity always seeks the easiest path to reach the ground, and, unfortunately, human beings are good conductors of electricity. Look up and live!



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Frank Buck: 'Still a Small-Town Texas Boy'

BY GENE FOWLER

Bring 'em back alive." That was the golden rule of wildlife adventurer Frank Buck. The native Texan practiced what he preached in Borneo, Malaya, Sumatra and other exotic locales, capturing hundreds of thousands of animals for zoos, circuses and private collectors. Buck, whose exploits were recounted in books, movies and radio programs, became as renowned in his day as Charles Lindbergh, Admiral Richard E. Byrd or Babe Ruth.

Born in 1884 in a Gainesville wagon yard and raised in Dallas, Buck grew up fascinated by the birds, snakes and other wild critters that inhabited his homeland. Too restless for learning indoors, Frank quit school after the seventh grade. Sometime around the turn of the century, he signed up for a modern cattle drive, "punching" cows on a train from San Angelo to Chicago.

Buck's Windy City adventures included a marriage, at age 17, to a 41-year-old drama critic for the Chicago Daily News. A steady course of barroom brawling likely toughened his constitution for the tight jungle scrapes he later encountered. In 1911, Buck took \$4,500 in poker winnings to South America, bought a load of tropical birds and sold them at a nice profit in New York. Within a few years, he was trekking exotic wilds from a base in the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, and by the 1920s, Frank Buck from Gainesville was the man to see if you needed a tiger or an elephant or a honey bear. From pythons to orangutans, king cobras and kinkajous, in 1922, Buck provided 500 specimens for the Dallas Zoo.

After some business ups and downs during the Roaring Twenties (including a typhoon that wiped out one load of animal cargo in 1928) and a second marriage, Buck's profile as a cultural hero grew with the 1930 publication of his first book, *Bring 'Em Back Alive*, and it grew even more with the film version two years later. Seven more books followed. Ruggedly handsome in his signature pith helmet, Buck even played himself in films including *Wild Cargo* and *Fang and Claw*. No matter how far-flung his travels or how great his fame, however, Buck at times proved that you can't take Texas out of the boy, using a Lone Star lasso to capture his first python.

Millions toured Buck's "jungle camps" at world's fairs in Chicago and New York. Legions more saw him riding elephants in the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Buck's adventures provided an escape during the Depression, but the mystique continued after his death in 1950.

Steven Lehrer, a professor of oncology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, first read a Buck book at age 10. In 2000, the doctor compiled a new edition of selected tales, *Bring 'Em Back Alive: The Best of Frank Buck*. (Texas Tech University

Press has just released a paperback edition.)

Lehrer believes Buck, a pioneer wildlife conservationist, was ahead of his time in the treatment of animals. The care he provided often put him at risk, such as the time a 600-pound tapir, a normally docile species, turned on him as he saved the animal's back.

Still, reaching for his pistol remained a last resort, and the book only relates

one such instance, when Buck had to shoot a python that was about to devour a hand and squeeze the life out of his arm. "I am proud of the fact that in my whole career of dealing with wild creatures I have never willfully or unnecessarily harmed or injured a single one," wrote Buck. "I have made it my business to bring them back alive, for I have only feelings of kindness for every creature that breathes on this Earth."

Those feelings show in the stories, as Buck describes the animals as individuals with distinct personalities. An orangutan named Gladys, for instance, enjoyed "washing" fabrics, mimicking the actions of laundry workers she'd observed. An affectionate creature, Gladys liked to embrace Buck, and she "got to be so much fun" that he often drove her around Singapore.

In 1948, two years before his death in Houston from lung cancer, Buck visited his birthplace for the dedication of Gainesville's Frank Buck Zoo and the Frank Buck Zoological Society. As he walked the streets of his early boyhood, the world-famous adventurer was likely reminded of these words from his 1941 autobiography, *All in a Lifetime*: "I was now Frank Buck, who had achieved fame in the jungles, in motion pictures, in literary circles, and in the show world. Yet in my heart I am still the small town Texas boy who loves birds better than anything else on earth."

The Frank Buck Zoo is at 1000 W. California St. (at I-35) in Gainesville. For more information, call (940) 668-4539.

The area around Gainesville is served by Cooke County Electric Cooperative.

Gene Fowler is co-author of Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Psychics, and Other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves, as well as of the production, "The Border Radio Show: The Big Jukebox in the Sky."



COURTESY THE FRANK BUCK ZOO

SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

Tornadoes

More tornadoes strike Texas than any other state. Sophisticated warning systems exist, but they're no substitute for preparedness and smart action.


Tornado Safety Rules:

- At home or in the office, go to the lowest floor. Stay away from windows.
- Go to a place in the center of the building, such as a closet, bathroom or interior hallway. Protect your head with a pillow.
- If you live in a mobile home, go outside. Lie down in a ditch or low spot. Cover your head with your arms.
- If you're in a car, get out. Never try to outrun a tornado. Take shelter in the nearest building, or lie face down in a ditch with your arms over your head.
- Know the difference between a "warning" and a "watch."
Tornado Watch: Conditions are right for a tornado. Watch the sky. **Tornado Warning:** A tornado has been spotted. Take cover immediately.

Tornadoes kill. Know what to do to avoid weather-related tragedy.



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SNAPSHOTS

As the term implies, “snapshots” capture an element of spontaneity, a slice-of-life moment free of pretense or guile. This month’s winners reminded us that you don’t have to be a professional to carry your camera like a friendly appendage, always available to snap the shot that instantly conjures a favorite story or treasured memory.

◀ **Cindie Seyler’s** pet donkey loves sweets, so she decided to share her birthday cake, a confection decorated with blue icing. When she saw the results, Cindie, a member of CoServ Electric Cooperative, ran to get her camera.



▲ **Theresa Phinney**, a member of Bryan Texas Utilities, couldn’t resist this shot of her sons in the midst of a backyard water fight. Who needs air conditioning?



▲ **Morgan Black** found a comfortable place to take a nap in the afternoon sunshine on the soft belly of his pig, Rose. Rose was Morgan’s Junior FFA project. Morgan’s dad, **Greg**, snapped this photo. Greg and his wife, **Brandy**, are members of Jasper Newton Electric Cooperative.

▶ **Tommy and Leann Goedrich** of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative couldn’t believe their eyes when they saw these longhorns strolling in the surf and munching on seaweed. Tommy snapped this photo while the couple was enjoying a day near Padre Balli Park.



▲ **Brenda Bunn** of Wise County Electric Cooperative sent this photo taken 60 years ago of her father, **Merl E. Grimes**, teaching his sister to ride a horse standing up. Brenda wrote, “Sixty years ago, kids found all kinds of ways to have fun.”

Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
May	Barbecues	Mar 10
June	Inventions	Apr 10
July	Brothers	May 10
August	Off to the Races	June 10
Sept	Birdhouses	July 10
Oct	Hats and Caps	Aug 10

BARBECUES is the topic for our **MAY 2007** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to **Barbecues, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704**, before **March 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. Please note that we cannot provide individual critiques of submitted photos. 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.)



AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

MARCH

01 FULTON [1-4] VFD
Oysterfest, (361) 463-9955

02 BLANCO St. Ferdinand
Catholic Church Fish Fry,
(830) 833-5227

03 BASTROP
International Women's
Day Celebrations,
(830) 839-4628

ROSENBERG Railroad
Festival, (281) 633-2846

WASHINGTON [3-4]
Texas Independence Day
Celebration, (936) 878-
2214, www.birthplaceof
texas.com

08 ABILENE ArtWalk,
(325) 677-8389

BUNA [8-10] Redbud
Festival, (409) 994-5586

08 COTULLA County Fair &
Wild Hog Cook-Off, (830)
879-2852, www.wildhog
cookoff.com

FREDERICKSBURG
[8-17] Auslander Spring
Music Festival,
(830) 997-7714,
www.theauslander.com

09 SWEETWATER [9-11]
Jaycees Rattlesnake
Roundup, (915) 235-
5488, www.rattlesnake
roundup.com

10 BRENHAM Home
& Garden Festival, (979)
836-3339, www.down
townbrenham.com

TAYLOR Jimmy Heap &
the Melody Masters
Reunion, (615) 855-3292

WEST [10-11] Ceramic
Show, (254) 755-0026

16 BROWNWOOD [16-18]
Rattlesnake Roundup,
(325) 643-9956

16 SALADO Golf
Tournament Benefit,
(254) 534-3324

TYLER [3/16-4/1] Azalea
& Spring Flower Trail,
1-800-235-5712

17 ANDICE Crafter's Fair,
(254) 793-9438

BANDERA Wild Hog
Explosion, (830) 796-4447,
www.wildhogexplosion.com

JASPER Azalea Festival,
(409) 384-2762,
www.jaspercoc.org

MARBLE FALLS
Country, Bluegrass &
Gospel Music, (830)
693-5646

NACOGDOCHES [17-31]
Azalea Trail, 1-888-653-
3788, www.nacogdoches
azaleas.org

NEW BRAUNFELS
Historic Home Tour,
(830) 629-2943,
www.nbconservation.org

17 SPRING [17-18]
SpringFest Wine,
Art & Food Festival,
1-800-653-8696

WAXAHACHIE
Master Gardener Lawn &
Garden Expo, (972) 825-
5175, www.ecmga.com

22 COLUMBUS [22-25]
Trailhead, (979) 732-8385,
www.columbus-texas.org

23 CLEVELAND Spring
Sweets Celebration &
Benefit, (281) 592-1174

CORPUS CHRISTI [23-25]
Shriners Fiddlers Festival
& Cook-Off, (361) 241-5353

ROUND TOP [23-24]
Herbal Forum,
(979) 249-3129,
www.festivalhill.org

VICTORIA [23-24] Quilt
Show, (361) 574-9869

24 BANDERA
Golf Tournament,
(830) 796-1827

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AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

- 24 BURTON** Half-Pint Rodeo, (979) 255-4870, www.halfpintrodeo.com
- GRANBURY** [24-25] General Granbury's Birthday & Bean Cook-Off, (817) 573-5548, www.hgma.com
- LAKEHILLS** Fish Fry & More, (830) 751-2404
- LOCKHART** Chili Championship Cook-Off, (512) 398-6795, www.centraltexaschili.com
- PALESTINE** [16-18, 24-25, 31] Texas Dogwood Trails Celebration, (903) 723-3014
- SINTON** Thunder in the Park Motorcycle Rally, (361) 364-2307, www.sintontexas.org
- SULPHUR SPRINGS** Lonestar Longhorn Show, (903) 885-8071

- 25 CORSICANA** Garden Tour, (903) 874-2015
- 26 HAMILTON** Spring Fling, (254) 372-4618
- 29 GALVESTON** [3/29-4/1] FeatherFest Nature Festival, (409) 392-0841, www.galvestonfeatherfest.com
- PALESTINE** [29-31] Dulcimer & Old Time Music Festival, (903) 723-1914
- PORTLAND** [3/29-4/1] Windfest, (361) 643-2475, www.windfest.org
- 30 MARBLE FALLS** [3/30-4/1] Bluebonnet Blues & Fine Arts Festival, (830) 798-1041, www.bluebonnetblues.com
- PORT ARANSAS** [3/30-4/1] Sand Sculpture Competition, (361) 949-9531, www.texassandfest.com

- 31 BONHAM** Garden, Lawn & Home Expo, (903) 583-7453, www.fannincountymastergardeners.org
- CANYON LAKE** Rio Guadalupe Music Fest, 1-877-746-7238, www.rioraft.com
- MARBLE FALLS** Lawn & Garden Show, (325) 388-8849, www.hillcountrylgshow.com
- RICHMOND** [3/31-4/1] Republic of Texas Festival, (281) 343-0218
- SULPHUR SPRINGS** Freestyle Bullfight, (903) 885-8071
- TOMBALL** [3/31-4/1] German Heritage Festival, (281) 379-6844, www.tomballsistercity.org

APRIL

- 07 ATHENS** Outdoor Fools Day, (903) 676-2277
- BURNET** Creative Arts & Crafts Benefit, (512) 756-0834
- MARBLE FALLS** [7-8, 14-15] Easter Pageant, (830) 693-7324

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. Please submit events for May by Mar 10. Events are listed according to space available; see the full listing at www.texascooppower.com. We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they cannot be returned.

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Had there been a grand design for the benefits that the trio of Hood, Somervell and Johnson counties would provide, it might well have been that of providing residents of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex an escapist's dream. Urban dwellers will enjoy exploring the towns of Granbury, Glen Rose and Cleburne.

The drive detailed here is about 40 miles, following Texas Highway 144

GRANBURY to CLEBURNE

Make (dinosaur) tracks for this region, which has artifacts aplenty.

BY JUNE NAYLOR

for a sensational chicken-fried steak and unforgettable, made-from-scratch blackberry cobbler.

Glen Rose Convention & Visitors Bureau, 1505 NE Big Bend Tr., Glen Rose; 1-888-DINO-CVB (346-6282), (254) 897-3081; www.glenrosetexas.net

Dinosaur Valley State Park, Park Road 59, Glen Rose; (254) 897-4588; www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Fossil Rim, 2155 CR 2008, Glen Rose; (254) 897-2960; www.fossilrim.com



from Granbury to Glen Rose, then U.S. Highway 67 from Glen Rose to Cleburne. You could rush through it in half a day, but what would be the fun in that? Stretch it out over two days to reap the most from the route's holiday-worthy benefits.

GRANBURY

The restored Hood County Courthouse square served as a model for many other town revivals across the state. At the center, the three-story courthouse—done in the Lone Star version of a French Second Empire design—dates from 1891. Facing it, the **GRANBURY OPERA HOUSE**, circa 1886, brings in crowds for Broadway-style productions, while **GRANBURY LIVE**, another theater on the square, tempts you with its foot-tapping, family-friendly musical revues. If you're not around for show time, however, you can tour the historic district via horse-drawn carriage on Fridays and Saturdays or browse in shops selling books, antiques and housewares any day of the week. When you're hungry, stop in the **MERRY HEART TEA ROOM** for a chicken salad plate or go

to **STRINGFELLOW'S** for grilled salmon; both restaurants are on the square.

Granbury Convention & Visitors Bureau, 116 W. Bridge St., Granbury; (817) 573-5548, 1-800-950-2212; www.granbury.org

GLEN ROSE

If you've been provided with a nice day, better head right to **DINOSAUR VALLEY STATE PARK**, 4 miles west of town via FM 205 and Park Road 59. You'll find dinosaur tracks in the limestone beds within the pretty, clear Paluxy River, along with terrific, shaded hiking paths. In warm weather, paddle a canoe at Tres Rios River Ranch, a mile outside of town via U.S. Highway 67 and CR 312, where the Paluxy and Brazos rivers join Squaw Creek. Any time of year is perfect for a spin through **FOSSIL RIM WILDLIFE CENTER**, an 1,800-acre spread of ranchland where you'll see 60 kinds of exotic creatures, including cheetah, wildebeest and white rhino. Feel like staying overnight? You can, at Fossil Rim's lovely lodge or in one of the luxury safari camp tents. Before heading down the road to Cleburne, stop at the **LOCO COYOTE GRILL**, just south of town via U.S. Highway 67 and CR 1004,

CLEBURNE

The Johnson County seat offers a superb example of what wonderful things can be done with an old Carnegie Library. You'll find this graceful, 1904 version has been turned into the **LAYLAND MUSEUM**, an exhibit space for myriad historic items that include fossils, relics from the Caddo who lived here, and early pioneer artifacts. There's information on the cattle drive era, as the Chisholm Trail passed right through this area. Set to reopen later this year, the old 50-room downtown landmark known as the **LIBERTY HOTEL** is getting a new life. You'll find retailers on the ground level of the boutique hotel, which is being restored by local business folk and the Clarion chain. Don't leave town without taking on a plate of fried green tomatoes, a smoked brisket sandwich or a prime rib feast at **CADDO STREET GRILL**, also found downtown.

Cleburne Convention & Visitors Bureau, 1511 W. Henderson, Cleburne; (817) 645-2488

The seventh edition of June Naylor's book, Texas: Off the Beaten Path, is now in stores.