

LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EDITION

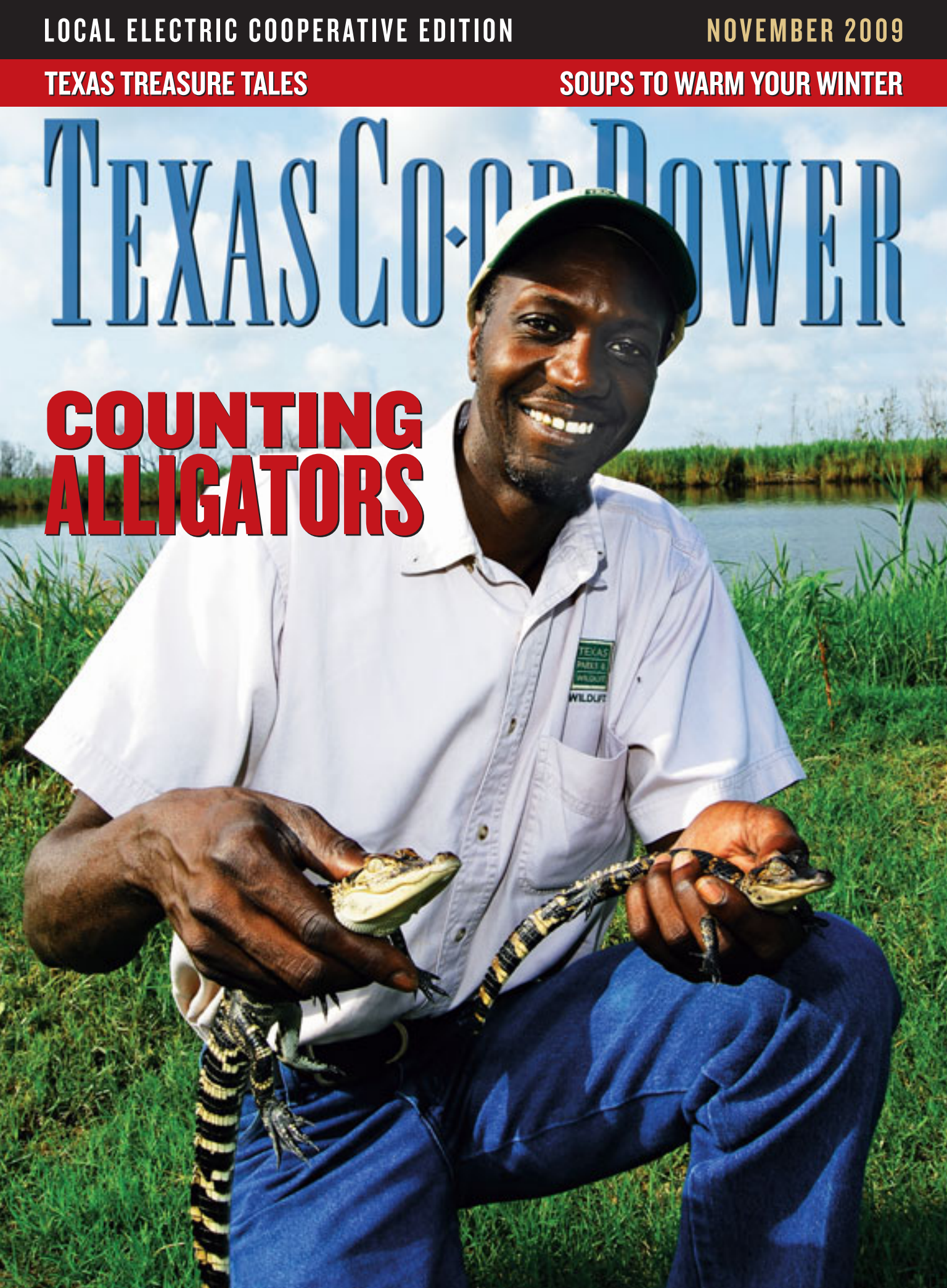
NOVEMBER 2009

TEXAS TREASURE TALES

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

COUNTING ALLIGATORS



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8 Counting Alligators

By Camille Wheeler

Photos by Stephan Myers

Hurricane Ike dealt a violent blow to Texas' alligators—but with a little help, they'll be back. Travel along on a night count, where multiple pairs of alligator eyes burn like orange embers in the dark.

18 Texas Treasure Tales

By Paul Cline Jr.

If you believe the tales, the Lone Star State is a land of lost mines, buried treasure and hidden outlaw loot. There's untold—and unfound—wealth in almost all of its 254 counties.

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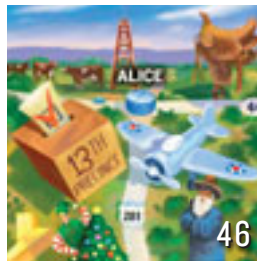
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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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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POWER TALK



ETEC BUILDING BIOMASS PLANT

Continuing its search for renewable sources of energy, East Texas Electric Cooperative (ETEC) has finalized a contract with the North American Procurement Company to build a wood-fueled biomass plant next to NAPCO's operations in Woodville. The plant, the first of its kind for the area, will produce 50 megawatts of power as it converts excess, or scrap, wood materials into renewable, carbon-neutral energy for ETEC's 10 electric distribution co-op members. When used for energy, biomass such as wood scraps is considered clean, or carbon neutral, because a plant releases no more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than it absorbed during its lifetime.

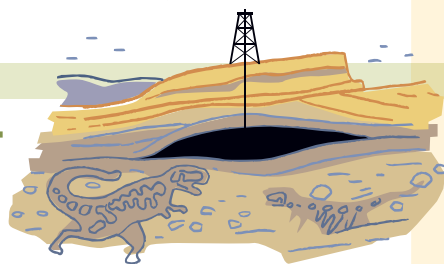
Ryan Thomas, ETEC's chief financial officer, thanked NAPCO for its efforts on the innovative project and said the co-op "is delighted to invest money in our local economy while providing renewable energy for our members."

Kyle Kuntz, general manager/CEO of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, one of ETEC's members, said: "In addition to bringing reliable, renewable power generation to our cooperative members, this new facility will improve the availability of power following major outages such as those caused in recent years by Hurricanes Rita and Ike."

GLOSSARY

FOSSIL FUEL

Hydrocarbons such as coal, oil or natural gas found within the top layer of the earth's crust that are used to produce heat or power. Also called conventional fuels, these materials were formed millions of years ago from plant and animal remains.



letters

PHANTOMS RAID YOUR ELECTRICITY

I noticed in your article "2 Good 2 Be True = False" (Power Connections, July 2009 issue) that you mentioned saving on electricity by unplugging devices that are not being used. I have heard this and wondered how true it is. Can you explain why and how it works and how much of your electricity bill you can expect to save? It seems that if your switches on your device work properly, unplugging the device should not be necessary.

GENE SHULL

Wood County Electric Cooperative

Editor's note: The usual suspect is "phantom" or "stand-by" power such as that used by televisions, computers and microwaves. They continue to consume small amounts of electricity when they are turned off. This is the power that allows a TV to come on instantly without warming up. Some estimates are that phantom electricity accounts for up to 10 percent of a household's electricity budget.

SWEETWATER SCOUTS MET FOOTBALL GREAT

I remember meeting Sammy Baugh much the way Joe Holley did ("Slingin' Sammy Baugh," September 2009 issue), only it was my scoutmaster, not my father, who presented Mr. Baugh to me and my fellow Sweetwater Boy Scouts. We had gone out to Baugh's ranch to climb some of those rocky hills that dot that area of Texas. Just as Mr. Holley, I had no idea who Baugh was. I do remember him as being very tall and slender and "old." I now realize he was only in his 40s at the time and was probably coaching at

Hardin-Simmons University. Of course, since that time I have read of his gridiron exploits at Texas Christian University and with the Washington Redskins. But until I read the article in Texas Co-op Power, I did not know that he began his athletic career in my hometown. Had my family not moved from Sweetwater to Irving the summer before I started junior high, I am sure I would have seen his name in the trophy case at Sweetwater High.

STANLEY STATSER

Wood County Electric Cooperative

SAMMY WAS SLINGIN'

You outdid yourself with the article on Sammy Baugh by Joe Holley. I got to accompany my uncle out to the Baugh ranch one day, and when we arrived, there was Slingin' Sammy Baugh throwing a football through a swinging tire. I was impressed and have been to this day on the accomplishments of a great football star.

CARL BAILEY

Comanche Electric Cooperative

FAMILY SURVIVES PANDEMIC

I read with much interest the article "The Forgotten Pandemic" (Footnotes in Texas History, August 2009). I know it was indeed the flu that took three of my mother's siblings and her father in the space of one month from May to June 1918. My mother was born two months later. Left pregnant with four remaining children, my grandmother, Anna Horn Johnson, had her faith as a devout Christian tested. She, like countless others, "survived" this tragedy and raised her family well.

CATHERINE HALL-WOMACK

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

We want to hear from our readers. Send letters to: Editor, Texas Co-op Power, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, e-mail us at letters@texas-ec.org, or submit online at www.texascoopower.com. Please include the name of your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and are printed as space allows. Read additional letters at www.texascoopower.com.



HAPPENINGS

Take a spin around the globe without leaving Texas at the **BRAZOS VALLEY WORLD FEST**, scheduled for November 14 in College Station.

The festival celebrates the international diversity and heritage of the Brazos Valley, a seven-county area rich with the influence of many cultures, including Native American, African-American, Chinese, Czech, German, Hispanic and Italian.

As part of the festival's biggest draw, people stroll from one display booth to the next, getting their souvenir passports stamped with something representative of a particular culture or their names written in another language.

The festival also serves up international cuisine, children's activities and numerous cultural performances, which this year feature Japanese drumming from a Kaminari Taiko (thunder drum) group and Native American dancing and drumming.

Festival hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater. Admission is free. For more information, call (979) 862-6700 or go to www.brazosvalleyworldfest.org.

WHO KNEW?

Bury yourself in a macabre collection of industry paraphernalia at the National Museum of Funeral History in Houston. Save this trek for a gloomy day and learn about 20th- and 21st-century funerary rituals and customs. Here, grave-minded visitors can peruse a number of fascinating areas, from an exhibit detailing funeral and burial rituals for popes to ancient and present-day embalming methods. Check out a huge selection of hearses—horse-drawn to motorized—and coffins. And if you're looking for that perfect gift, try the black coffee cup inscribed with the museum's motto: "Any day above ground is a good one." Or how about a piece of coffin-shaped chocolate embedded with a white skeleton? To get particulars, call (281) 876-3063 or go to www.nmfh.org.

THE MAGNIFICENT BALD CYPRESS

"Especially in areas where water levels fluctuate, they tend to form knobby protuberances, called knees. These outgrowths from the lateral roots sometimes reach 12 feet in height, but their precise function—whether support, food storage, or aeration—is unknown."

—Matt Warnock Turner, *Remarkable Plants of Texas: Uncommon Accounts of Our Common Natives*, University of Texas Press, 2009



BED & BUFFALO

On the flat prairie northwest of Denton, grazing bison provide an unusual backdrop to the Buffalo Valley Event Center on the Meritt Bois D'Arc Buffalo Ranch. The modern facility, created by Jackie and Bob Meritt, includes 19 hotel rooms and 10 RV sites with full hook-up capabilities. Bob spent most of his career building high-rises, and his background is reflected in the massive, open-air atrium with a floating patio at the center of the hotel. His Native American roots inspired him to acquire the buffalo herd.

This is a good, no-frills location for weddings, business retreats and family reunions.

But guests feel as coddled as if they were surrounded by chintz and porcelain. For more information, call (940) 482-3409 or go to www.buffalovalleyeventcenter.com.



CHECK IT OUT

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Load up Your Washer for Energy Savings

Energy Star appliances save money in the long run

By Brian Sloboda

Hardly anyone enjoys doing the laundry, but today the task is much easier than it was a few decades ago. A job that once required a washboard and considerable elbow grease now requires little more than the push of a button. These days, the hard part is picking the right washing machine to buy.

Anyone who goes to an appliance store to look at washing machines encounters what seem to be unlimited choices. A few years ago, the choices were simple: Do you want white or off-white? Today, consumers must decide

among top-loading, front-loading, high-efficiency, water-saving, steaming and wrinkle-remover models, just to name only a few. Of course, as the number of options increases, so does the price.

One option that no one should overlook is an energy-efficient washing machine, which can be identified most easily by the Energy Star label. Energy Star-rated washing machines do cost slightly more than their less efficient counterparts, running from \$400 to \$1,500, depending upon what features the consumer desires. Obviously, the more bells and whistles added, the greater the cost. Those bells and whistles do not always mean more savings, however. For this reason, pay careful attention to the yellow energy guide on a washing machine when making a purchase.

An energy-efficient washing machine can save the typical homeowner around \$50 a year, or \$540 to \$600 over the life of the appliance. Efficient washing machines also could save more than 5,000 gallons of water a year. Careful shopping could mean that the resulting savings will pay for the washing machine over its lifetime.

Energy Star qualification is usually restricted to front-loading and newer top-loading models. These clothes washers use the latest technology to reduce energy and water consumption substantially,

compared to nonqualified models.

Front-loading clothes washers use a horizontal or tumble-axis basket to lift and drop clothing into the water, instead of rubbing clothes around a central agitator in a full tub. These units use less energy than conventional clothes washers by reducing the amount of hot water needed to clean clothes. A clothes washer consumes the most energy when it heats the water. Front-loading models also squeeze more water out of clothes by using spin speeds that are two to three times faster than conventional washers, thereby reducing both drying time and energy use.

Energy Star-qualified top-loading models typically use spray valves to rinse clothes, rather than a new tub of water. The spray-rinse cycle consists of repeated high-pressure rinses to remove soap residue. This method not only reduces the energy required for water heating, but typically saves an average of 15 gallons of water per wash, compared with conventional clothes washers.

Qualified top-loading models also feature sensors that monitor incoming water temperature, which is then adjusted to maintain an optimal setting. This temperature keeps the water hot enough to dissolve the detergent and provide high-performance cleaning, but cool enough to save energy and minimize hot water damage to fabrics. This technology results in less hot water consumption and therefore less energy consumption. One limitation of efficient top-loading washers is that many models do not offer a high-temperature standard wash option.

Hardly anyone decides to retire a working clothes washer. Consumers typically start looking for a replacement only after their current one fails. Price and features generally are the two criteria considered for the new purchase. If you remember to look for the Energy Star logo and shop at a store with knowledgeable staff, you should be able to leave the store knowing that, over time, your new energy-efficient washing machine will pay for itself.

Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



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DON'T COUNT 'EM OUT

Hurricane Ike dealt a violent blow to Texas' alligators—but with a little help, they'll be back

BY CAMILLE WHEELER



Alligators are good swimmers, and many rode Hurricane Ike's storm waves inland where they sought fresh water. For months after the storm, people found them in ditches, swimming pools and on golf courses. But sadly, many gators, such as this one found dead on a beach, drowned or died from saltwater exposure.

EARL NOTTINGHAM, TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT



Alligators, members of the ancient crocodilian family, are survivors—it takes more than a hurricane to knock them out.

I stank of mosquito repellent and fear. The hot summer night creaked like an old rocking chair, soothing me with the sweet music of crickets rising from Salt Bayou.

Stars shimmered in a moonless sky the color of dark-blue denim.

The airboat slid off the trailer into the brown-green water. Reality sank in. In just a few minutes, I'd be boarding the boat, skimming through the swampy unknown south of Port Arthur on the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area.

JUNE 17, 2009

Night of the dark moon. Night of alligators.

And I was here to help count them. I stared down at my jeans stuffed into my black, rubber wading boots. I wore them on the orders of Amos Cooper, head of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) alligator program and assistant area manager for Murphree.

"We might have to get out of the boat," he said. "You never know. Just be prepared."

I shuddered at the thought of actually needing my boots to wade through the marshy bayou—or worse yet, kicking them off if I had to swim—if we somehow fell off the narrow boat or flipped or got stuck in the mud or alligators sprang from the darkness to attack us en masse. But I bit my tongue and silently watched Cooper and Monique Slaughter, his partner in the alligator program and a fellow biologist, hook two spotlights to the airboat's battery.

The more gators we see tonight, the better. Hurricane Ike brutalized the upper Texas Gulf Coast in 2008, killing or relocating hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of alligators with its storm surge. Alligator biologists such as the 52-year-old Cooper are calling it the worst displacement of gators they've seen in their lifetimes.

Cooper started the airboat, its single-propeller airplane engine sputtering to life. "You want to see something?" he yelled. "Get on the boat right here."

"Look," Cooper said excitedly, shining the spotlight over the water. "See all those eyes?"

I gasped. Multiple pairs of alligator eyes burned like orange embers in the blackness. I made an unintelligible sound, like that of a scared animal. "Oh, Amos, I don't know about this."

He laughed. "They can't hurt us. How are they going to get up here?"

I could think of a thousand ways, but I kept my mouth shut. Cooper climbed into the 6-foot-high driver's seat.

Slaughter pushed us off and sat beside me. "At some point," she said, casually, "we're going to jump a levee, so you'll want to hold on."

"Uh, OK ..." I replied, confused, checking that my brown life vest was securely buckled and pulling my plastic eye goggles and hearing-protection earmuffs into place.

Suddenly, Slaughter was yelling "HANG ON!" I desperately clawed at the two-person bench seat. "I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE ABOUT TO DOOOOOOO ..." I screamed as the airboat, its engine whirring like a giant blender, hit the levee, lurching side to side like a writhing earthworm in a blur of grass and sky. "WE'RE JUMPING A LEVEE! WE'RE JUMPING A LEVEE!" I blathered like a mad woman into my tape recorder.

This was a rollercoaster ride without the hydraulic safety harness, an airboat with no seatbelts. But this was no joy ride: We're countin' gators.

'IT WAS SINK OR SWIM'

September 13, 2008. Hurricane Ike slams into the Texas coast. Alligators are flushed out of their dens. Some swim. Some drown. Some are washed out to sea. Some are washed inland. Frogs, turtles, river otters, skunks, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons, possums, salamanders, snakes, spiders and lizards are swept away.

And when the winds depart, the saltwater stays—for days, for weeks, for months, contaminating the soil, crippling an



entire ecosystem and jeopardizing an already threatened coastal prairie.

In the eerie aftermath of the storm, when all is silent and not a single frog sings, the depth of the damage becomes clear.

"We have to assume that everything that walks, crawls or slithers drowned because it couldn't tolerate saltwater or it got washed inland," said Jim Sutherlin, the Upper Coast Wetlands Ecosystem Project leader for TPWD and area manager for Murphree. "It was sink or swim—if you can imagine how deep the floodwater was, you can imagine a lot of sinkers."

It was easy to imagine at the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, a member of the Texas Chenier Plain Refuges Complex that boasted thousands of alligators before Ike hit.

Seven months after the storm, the refuge, in many ways, resembled a cemetery. Some trees, brown and stooped, looked dead. I saw no turtles, no snakes, heard no frogs. The interior marshes, their soil still clogged with salt, lay dry in the throes of a drought. And I spotted one alligator—a scrawny 6-footer dozing on the bank of a canal.

Viewing Anahuac as a microcosm for wildlife displacement along the coast, I had one main question: Where did all the alligators go?

"They went anywhere the water took them," Cooper said. "As long as it was a freshwater pond, you found alligators."

But in their natural habitats, they were virtually

nowhere to be seen. In early July, TPWD conducted its annual nest survey, flying north to south over transect lines in Chambers, Jefferson and Orange counties—the primary habitat for Texas alligators—by helicopter to determine the state's official population. The results were significantly lower than expected: an estimated 24 nests, compared with 128 last year and 278 in 2007.

At first glance—based on TPWD's complex population estimate model that includes 35 eggs per clutch, life expectancy, size and average population trends—it appeared that Texas' alligator numbers within their primary habitat had taken almost a 90 percent nose dive, from an estimated quarter million last year to about 32,000.

But, Cooper cautioned, "It doesn't mean they're not there, it just means they're not nesting." Gators, he explained, are stressed from overexposure to saltwater. Dehydrated and weak, many gators didn't breed in the spring and the females didn't build nests.

The alligator population, Cooper said, is "going to bounce back, but we don't know when or to what extent."

CATCHING A GATOR

Out in Salt Bayou, we're winding through canals, one so narrow that the tall grass on its banks brushes the boat. We slow down, speed up, slow down, speed up, the soft *kuh-kuh-kuh* of the engine harmonizing with the crickets

Cooper, who has swapped places with Slaughter so he can record notes on the clipboard in his lap, maintains a running commentary: "He's about 6 feet ... that's an 8-footer there ... Now that's a horse!" And with that said, the biggest gator of the night, a 10-to-11-footer, silently glides away.



STEPHAN MYERS



STEPHAN WEERS

© PHILIP GOULD/CORBIS

An alligator freezes in the spotlight during a TPWD night count.

Hello, world! A baby alligator breaks its shell.

AMERICAN ALLIGATOR

(*Alligator mississippiensis*)

Texas range: 120 counties from the Red River to the Rio Grande

U.S. range: 10 southeastern states, from Texas east to Florida and up to North Carolina

Status: Listed as endangered in 1967; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pronounced a complete recovery in 1987.

Diet: Young eat spiders, insects, snails, crayfish, shrimp, minnows and crabs. Adults feed on fish, turtles, frogs, snakes, birds, muskrats, nutria, otters, raccoons and even deer. And, yes, they'll eat each other.

Size: Up to 14 feet long and 700 pounds for adult males and up to 10 feet and 400 pounds for females

Lifespan: 45 years in the wild, 60 in captivity

Salt tolerance: The American crocodile excretes excess salt from its body through glands on its tongue. Alligators have no such mechanism and typically can only tolerate saltwater within narrow limits.

Take a deep breath: Large adults can stay underwater for up to 45 minutes.

Gator holes: Alligators dig dens, or gator holes, in banks. During droughts, these holes may be the only water source for them and other wildlife.

Breeding season: April through May

Nests: Females typically build nests in mid-June. The nests, which resemble small tepees (about 3 feet tall and 4 feet

wide), consist primarily of marsh hay cordgrass.

Baby gators: Eggs hatch from mid-August to early September. Babies, or hatchlings, are 6 to 8 inches long.

Swimming goggles: A third, translucent eyelid called a nictitating membrane covers the eye for a better view underwater.

Evolution: The American alligator species dates back roughly 2 million years. Animals more closely related to alligators than caimans (Central and South American crocodilians that are similar to alligators) date back about 80 million.

Texas alligator hunting seasons: April 1-June 30; September 10-30

For more information: Call the TPWD's alligator program at (409) 736-2551 or go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Do ...

- Treat alligators with respect.

- Observe alligators from a safe distance of at least 30 feet on land. Gators can sprint at speeds of up to 30 mph over short distances.
- Discourage others from feeding them.

Don't ...

- Feed alligators—they'll overcome their natural shyness and start associating humans with food.
- Throw fish scraps into water or leave them onshore where alligators are known to live.
- Throw a stick for a dog to fetch in water where alligators are known to live.
- Let your pets near them.
- Remove an alligator from its natural habitat or accept one as a pet. That's a violation of state law.
- Approach an alligator's nest.
- Swim or wade near alligators.

Night Counts

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) conducts at least 33 alligator night counts every year—done during a dark moon so spotlights shining from airboats will better illuminate gators—to help determine population trends and to set harvest, or hunting, rates. The counts are held on public and private land in 14 counties. TPWD also trains and certifies private landowners to conduct their own night counts.



2008 © WEEZER. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCKPHOTO.COM

This little gator is more than 2 feet shorter than the one that Amos Cooper plucked from Salt Bayou. But with a little luck and cooperation from Mother Nature, he'll grow up big and strong, living a long life in the wild just as his ancestors have done for millions of years.



STEPHAN MEYER

whenever we come to a complete stop.

Eyes in the water ahead shine like orange headlights on an alligator highway. The eyes glow, then go, as most of the gators sink beneath the surface as we approach. But some, curious, stay up, swimming beside or in front of the boat as Cooper, who has swapped places with Slaughter so he can record notes on the clipboard in his lap, maintains a running commentary: "He's about 6 feet ... that's an 8-footer there ... Now that's a horse!"

And with that said, the biggest gator of the night, a 10-to-11-footer, silently glides away.

Then one of my nightmares comes true: We get stuck on top of a levee. Cooper, clenching his pencil between his teeth, jumps off, running back and forth in front of the boat, pushing it on one side and then the other, trying to spin it into the water. Convinced that gators are about to board the boat at any second, I'm screaming like an idiot: "WHAT ARE WE DOING?"

The boat goes spinning into the canal from whence we came, and I make a horrid discovery: Cooper is not sitting beside me. He's standing on top of the levee. Alone. In the dark. We go roaring back up the levee, slow down, and Cooper jumps on. He's not breathing hard. I am. "Were you afraid an alligator was going to get you?"

"No," he says, laughing easily. "They're not aggressive like crocodiles."

The night crescendos in a quiet canal. We stop, and Cooper stands. "Amos, what are you doing?" I ask, alarmed. He ignores me. Again clenching the pencil between his teeth, he drops to his hands and knees, then his belly, wiggling to the front of the boat. He reaches his gloved hands over the edge and, without warning, yanks a 3-foot-long gator out of the water.

Slaughter jumps down from the driver's seat. "There'll be tape in the first-aid kit," she matter-of-factly says. They wrap white tape around the gator's snout, slip him inside a blue nylon bag like a pair of shoes and zip it shut.

After the count—which yielded a surprisingly high 49 gators in Compartment 12, the section of the wildlife management area that we canvassed—Cooper says he's taking the gator to Port Arthur's First Baptist Church on Saturday for a live demonstration. The kids will love it. Then, he'll return the gator to the bayou.

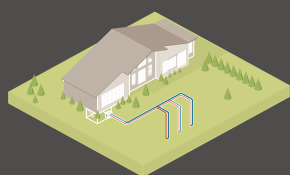
I chicken out on holding the little gator. But with Slaughter clutching him, I stroke his surprisingly soft and slippery belly and touch one of his dangling feet.

I have high hopes for this little guy. Years from now, I see him swimming and hunting in the lush-green grass and fresh water of the bayou. I see him growing big and strong. Big enough to weather any storm.

Camille Wheeler is staff writer for Texas Co-op Power.

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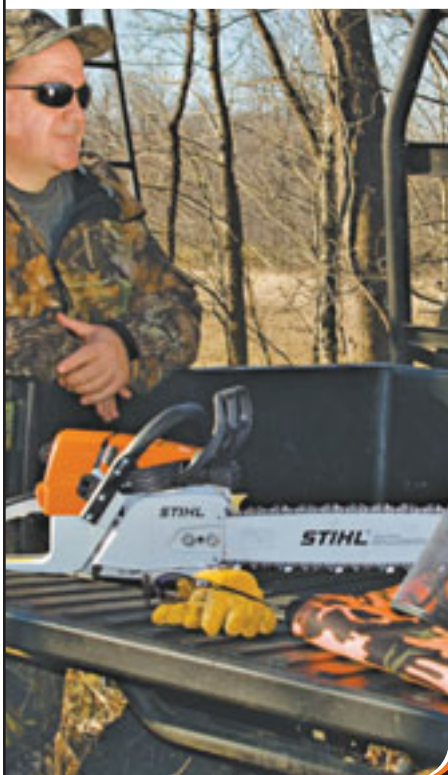
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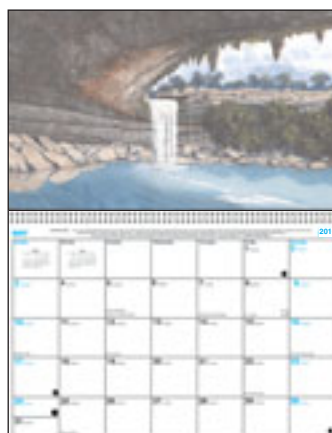
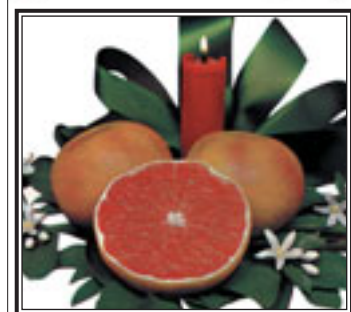
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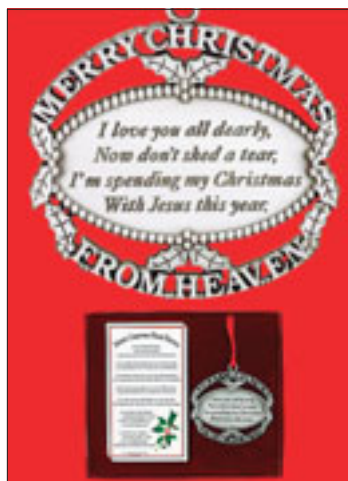


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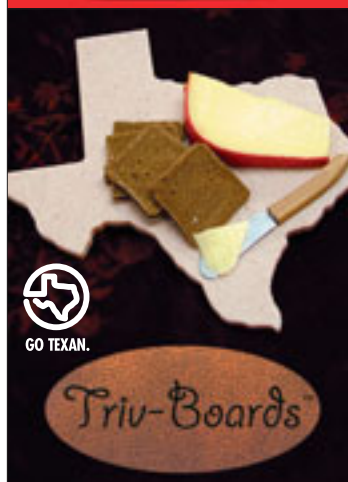
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TEXAS TREASURES TALES

BURIED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

BY PAUL CLINE JR. ★ ILLUSTRATION BY KURT ASPLAND

If you believe the tales, the Lone Star State is a land of lost mines, buried treasure and hidden outlaw loot. There's untold—and unfound—wealth in almost all of its 254 counties.

Although these tales may inspire treasure seekers of all ages to try to strike it rich, pull back on the reins a bit: The vast majority of lands in the state are privately owned, and access to them requires a property owner's permission. In state and national parks, the collecting of artifacts, minerals and natural objects is strictly prohibited. With that in mind, grab an imaginary pick and shovel, metal detector and dowsing rod and mine the fabulous fortunes of your own fantasies.

THE LOST SAN SABA MINE

The Lost San Saba Mine, believed to be located somewhere within the Menard-San Saba-Llano triangle of the Hill Country, has been the Holy Grail of Texas treasure tales for more than 250 years.

In 1756, a dispatch reached Madrid from the region of New Spain known as Texas. The report was from Bernardo de Miranda y Flores, an agent of the crown who had been prospecting for mineral wealth in what is now called the Hill Country, 5,000 miles from Spain. Detailing the discovery of a massive, rich vein of silver ore, the document reportedly read, in part: "The mines which are in the Cerro del Almagre (a hill of red ocher) are so numerous that I guarantee to give to every settler of the province of Texas a full claim."

The Spanish established a mission on the western San Saba River near what is now Menard, and a presidio was established a few miles away. The mining reportedly was very profitable until 1758, when several allied Indian tribes attacked and destroyed the mission, wiping out all but a few who escaped to the presidio. The mission was never re-established, and the presidio was abandoned a decade or so later.

The lure of the silver continued, though, and many searched for the mine, or mines, or hidden caches of silver ingots believed left behind by the Spaniards. The most famous seeker of the treasure was Jim Bowie, who would later find glory in a crumbling mission called the Alamo. He, his brother Rezin and nine other men left San Antonio in 1831 to retrieve the silver. According to some stories, Jim Bowie wanted to use the windfall to help fund the Texas Revolution.

While meandering toward their goal, the adventurers were attacked by more than 100 Indians at Calf Creek in McCulloch County in a skirmish reported to be about 30 miles east of the old mission and presidio.





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K. L. L. L.

The greatly outnumbered troops took cover, and in the ensuing battle the Texans lost one man, while 50 or so Indians were killed. The Bowie party made its way back to San Antonio, but subsequent historical events prevented a return attempt to seek the fortune.

Short-story writer William Sydney Porter, better known as O. Henry, worked in the Texas General Land Office in Austin in the late 1800s. Information he gleaned there led him to search for the Lost San Saba Mine and to write the short story "Buried Treasure."

Fact or Fiction? *Early maps of Texas in the 1820s and '30s, including at least one compiled by Stephen F. Austin, are clearly marked in the general area of the San Saba-Llano-Colorado river areas with the words "Silver Mines" on them. But The Handbook of Texas, an authoritative source on Texas history, calls the story of the Lost San Saba Mine a legend.*

THE ROCK PENS

On his deathbed in Austin in 1873, Daniel Dunham revealed an incredible tale of buried treasure in the South Texas brush country. He and a band of outlaws had looted a silver mine and a church in Mexico and were returning to Texas across the Rio Grande when Indians and/or Mexican pursuers set upon them.

The outlaws hastily made low-walled rock pens, buried the loot in one enclosure and repeatedly ran their mules over the site to cover the signs of digging. In the ensuing battle, only one of the bandits, Dunham, escaped alive. He claimed that buried inside the treasure pen were 31 mule loads of silver bullion and other valuables. His rough directions—six or seven miles below the Laredo Crossing south of the Nueces River—are so vague, relative to the vast ranch land of that part of Texas, that the pens have never been pinpointed. Most treasure seekers believe that they are in La Salle, Live Oak or McMullen counties.

Fact or Fiction? *Folklorist J. Frank Dobie was a big believer in this treasure, having passed along the tale in several of his writings. He also implied that during his research, he saw the deathbed letter written by Dunham that vaguely alluded to the location of the loot.*

THE LOST GOLD OF THE GUADALUPES

In the mid-1800s, Ben Sublett was considered a crazy prospector in the far reaches of West Texas. A widower, he would often disappear into the badlands along the Texas-New Mexico border for weeks on end, leaving his children to fend for themselves in Odessa. But when he reportedly started returning to town with pouches of gleaming yellow nuggets, the locals took notice.

When the latest pouch of gold ran out, most of it spent in frontier saloons, he would head back west, and many tried to follow him to the source—all unsuccessfully. Sublett once took his young son to the mine, somewhere in or near the Guadalupe Mountains—at that time one of the last great Apache strongholds—but after his father's death in 1892, the son could never return to the exact location.

Many believe the mine is somewhere near McKittrick Canyon in what is now Guadalupe Mountains National Park, but others put its location in the Rustler Hills at the base of the range.

Fact or Fiction? *According to The Handbook of Texas, "Rumors of fabulously wealthy gold mines in the Guadalupe seem to be mere wishful thinking."*

STEINHEIMER'S MILLIONS

Karl Steinheimer, a German-born adventurer, was a well-known and feared smuggler and privateer based in Galveston before 1820. In the late 1820s, he moved south to pursue riches in Mexico mines.

His destiny changed in 1838, in the early days of the Republic of Texas. Deciding to rekindle an old romance in St. Louis, he cashed in his mining interests, which were said to amount to 10 mule loads of gold and silver, and for protection he hired several men to accompany the caravan to St. Louis.

Tensions between Mexicans and Texans were still high after the Texas Revolution ended in 1836, and Steinheimer and his group came upon trouble after joining up with a Mexican military contingent on the San Antonio road. When it became clear that there was a skirmish looming between the Mexicans and Texans in the area, Steinheimer's caravan separated from

the military contingent and turned off the road, heading across the wilds of the Hill Country.

Realizing their dire circumstances, Steinheimer decided to bury his cargo, driving a brass spike into a nearby oak tree as a marker. A few miles farther on, Indians attacked the small band. All of his escorts were killed, but Steinheimer, badly injured and on foot, somehow managed to draw a rough map to the treasure and write a letter to his sweetheart, telling her that if he didn't appear within a certain time, she should assume that he was dead and should retrieve the treasure. According to legend, he was not heard from again.

Awaiting a more settled Texas, his sweetheart eventually sent a contingent to seek the fortune, but the brass spike could not be found and the treasure remains undiscovered. According to some accounts, it is in Bell County near where the Lampasas and Leon rivers meet to form the Little River.

Fact or Fiction? *The tradition of Steinheimer's treasure is deeply rooted in Central Texas, and scores of articles and stories about it have been printed and passed down since the early 20th century and even before. The treasure is not mentioned in The Handbook of Texas.*

All or any of these treasure tales may or may not be true. Remember Shakespeare's famous admonition: All that glitters is not gold.

Paul Cline Jr., a native Texan, started his journalism career in 1980. A freelance writer/editor living in Fort Worth, he is always hoping to strike it rich.

MORE TEXAS TREASURE

There are plenty of other Texas treasure tales to fire the imagination, including:

- ★ The lost Seminole mine of the Big Bend
- ★ The buried treasure in Palo Duro Canyon
- ★ The lost copper and lead mines of the upper Brazos River
- ★ Jean Laffite's pirate treasure along the Texas coast
- ★ Maximilian's treasure at Castle Gap
- ★ The buried outlaw treasure of El Muerto Springs in Jeff Davis County
- ★ The missing loot of outlaw Sam Bass from Denton County to Round Rock
- ★ Santa Anna's lost payroll chest on the Nueces River

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 - Space heaters should have an automatic shut-off in the event they tip over.
 - Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from flammable materials such as curtains, draperies, loose paper and upholstery. Never use heaters as drying racks.
 - Keep space heaters out of reach of small children and pets.
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 - Check to see if electric blankets are in good repair and certified by an independent testing lab like UL. Do not tuck your electric blanket under the mattress and don't put anything on top of the blanket. Do not allow pets to sleep on electric blankets.
 - Check cold-weather tools, like leaf blowers, to ensure power cords are in good repair. Extension cords need to be approved for outdoor use.
 - Use only weatherproof electrical appliances for outdoor activities.
- Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International*

DON'T FALL FOR COLLECTION SCAMS

Electric cooperatives across the country are reporting that scam artists are targeting members with phone calls in which the caller purports to be from the co-op, demanding payments, account numbers, Social Security numbers or credit card numbers. Don't fall for it. Your electric cooperative will NEVER call seeking such information. In fact, you should NEVER give such information out over the telephone to ANYONE who calls.



Electric Co-op Today, a national newsletter published by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), reported recently about another scam, in which callers allude to the federal stimulus program for energy efficiency and encourage people to give their information to "apply" for a grant. Those calls are most likely just another attempt to steal personal information.

NRECA Senior Corporate Counsel Tracey Steiner, who tracks consumer protection legal issues, told Electric Co-op Today, "In today's economy, it's not surprising that we are seeing an uptick in identity theft and other fraud schemes."

If you receive a call from someone claiming to represent your electric cooperative, ask for the individual's name and callback number. Contact your co-op and report any such calls. You should also report scam attempts to local authorities.

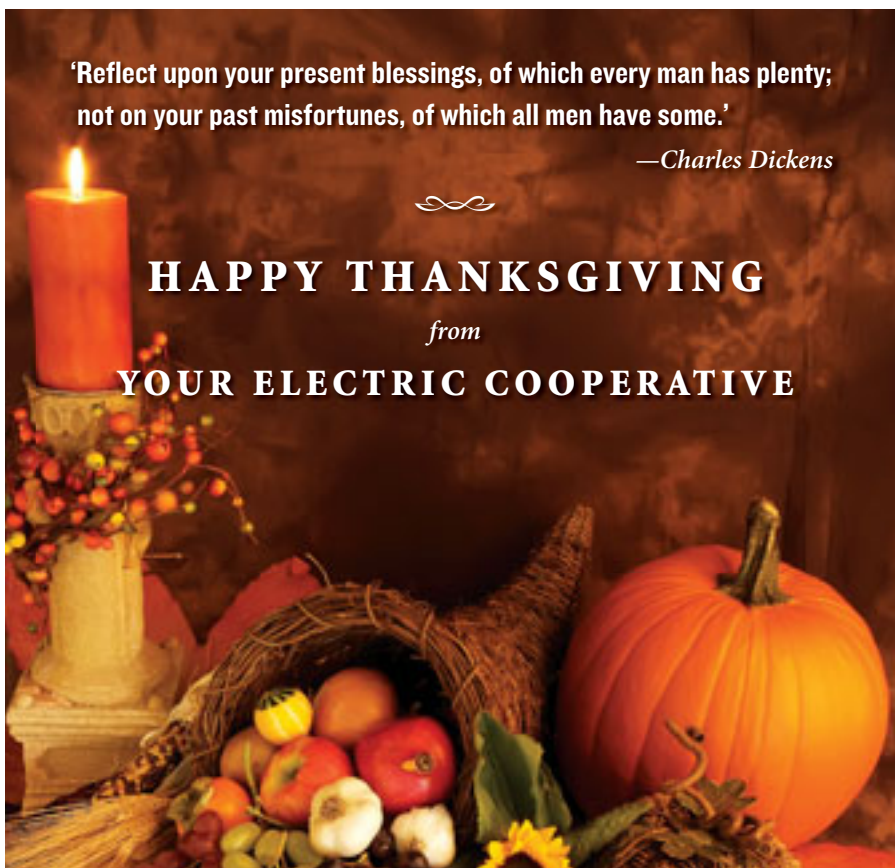
Once scammers have your personal information, they can use it to set up fake accounts in your name or sell it to someone who could use it to defraud you. Don't be a victim.

ILLUSTRATION BY EDD PATTON

'Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty;
not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.'

—Charles Dickens

HAPPY THANKSGIVING
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IT'S TIME TO FALL BACK

Sunday, November 1, marks the start of standard time in the United States. Remember to “fall back” by setting your clocks back one hour before going to bed. And take the opportunity to change the battery in your smoke detector.



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- If someone is injured as a result of contact with electric current, do not try to assist him or her. You could be injured or killed. Call 911.
- If a power line falls across your vehicle while you are in it, stay inside until help arrives.
- Call 911 immediately to report a downed power line. Then call your local co-op.

CLEBURNE

What's Shakin'

*North Texans,
scientists are trying
to get to the bottom
of earthquakes*

By Tom Dodge



In Cleburne, folks like to call each other and say, “What are y’all doing?” They’ve been doing this since the Pleistocene Epoch—well at least since the beginning of the Telephone Epoch. But in the tremulous summer of ’09, they were more likely to say: “Did you feel anything?”

In most cases, this question stems from the at least eight earthquakes that have occurred since June 2 in or near Cleburne, a city of about 30,000 that lies 25 miles south of Fort Worth. Experts are mystified by these quakes and by a series of other small ones that rattled the Dallas-Fort Worth area in 2008—on Halloween and November 1—and on May 16 of this year, preceding the ones in Cleburne.

City officials say that as far as they know, Cleburne never experienced an earthquake before exploration companies started drilling within the Barnett Shale. There are now approximately 200 natural gas wells within city limits. Some here believe the events are related. But other Cleburnites, such as those receiving gas royalties, think the quakes are just coincidental.

There may be a natural explanation for the quakes. So Cleburne and area leaders are working with Southern Methodist University scientists who have set up seismographs near the recent activity to get to the bottom of all this, so to speak.

No damage or visible evidence occurred during any of the quakes, just some minor blips on the Richter scale and a flurry of 911 calls reporting that the ground “shook,” “rumbled,” went “boom,” rattled windows or even whole houses. One woman told the operator, “The couch dropped and the hair rose on my arms.”

Patty Russell, who lives west of town near Pat Cleburne Lake, felt them all. She enumerates them in rapid order: “The first one, 2.8, the second, 2.6, third, 2.3, fourth 2.1, fifth, 2.4, and sixth, 2.2.” She’s also precise in her description: “They were like the dynamiting maneuvers at Fort Bragg that you could hear and feel at your house.” (Her husband, Robert, trained at the North Carolina base with the 82nd Airborne Division before the 1991 Gulf War.) Their daughter Kara Grisham lives nearby and also felt all of them. She said her cat acted weird and its fur stood up.

But folks not living in the shaky sections missed the excitement and the spotlight when all the news media swarmed through town, aiming cameras only at those with horripilating tales to tell. Chaf-In, a popular diner on West Henderson Street since the 1940s, was in the “epicenter,” says owner Dan Roberts. He said he and his waitstaff were interviewed by The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Dallas Morning News, ABC, CBS, NBC and a lot of smaller outlets. During the excitement he had a sign that said, “Six hours and no new quakes. Just a few old quacks.”

Despite youth’s obvious importance and modern society’s emphasis on it, in nature it is age that brings the most bounty. The 350-million-year-old, 5,000-square-mile layer of gas-filled shale a mile below the North Texas surface now provides, according to some in the industry, up to 7 percent of the country’s gas needs.

Some experts say it could hold as much as 30 trillion cubic feet of gas resources. So far, it is estimated it has added about \$500 million in revenues to the Texas treasury and about \$230 million to those of local governments. Experts predict it could generate close to 110,000 jobs by 2015.

In recent years, new technology has helped free the gas from the dense rock. In a relatively new technique called hydraulic fracturing, or “fracing,” water and sand are pumped at high pressure into the shale, creating cracks in its formation. The sand holds the cracks, or fissures, open so the gas can escape and be extracted.

Such information is becoming part of the conversations around town these days, such as at the Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society, a block from the Johnson County courthouse. Here, I met Roberts, who was palavering with agent Louis Homesley and Louis’ daughter Kendall, 25, who teaches in the nearby Grandview Independent School District and coaches basketball.

The venerable Woodmen building is almost a century old. I’m thankful that the forces of change, including earthquakes, have spared it. My uncle, Wayne Conner, took me up its long flight of stairs when I was 6 years old and bought me a life insurance policy, which is still in effect. Louis is venerable, too, graduating five years ahead of me at Cleburne High School. His Uncle L.C. Homesley and my Uncle Wayne fought in World War II. My uncle came home; his didn’t. I was in the National Guard with his brother, Pete. In the lives of old fissures like us there are many tributaries.

While the drilling’s role in the earthquakes is uncertain, there’s no doubt that it has elevated Cleburne economically. The town’s \$30 million in royalties since 2002, although not included in its annual operating budget, has helped beautify the downtown area and, along with the “mailbox money” going out in royalties to local landowners, has greatly stimulated business.

Until recently, at least. The drop in gas prices last year reduced the mailbox munificence by half. I learned this when I stopped at Cleburne’s Layland Museum. Julie Baker, the director, also told me she noticed little predictors before the reduction registered in the town’s consciousness. The number of leasing scouts coming into the museum to search the land titles for heirs began to dwindle. Also, the clerk at the food trailer where she stops told her that burrito sales had dropped off. I myself noted the decline in the number of gas company water trucks on U.S. Highway 67.

Another indicator of the diminished gas flow was the increased activity at the Eastside Pawn Shop on East Henderson Street. Melissa Hasty, who has worked there 10 years, said, “When the gas price was up they bought lots of new stuff. When it went down, the stuff ended up with us.”

Not all felt the quakes, but the economy touches everybody.

To see more works from Tom Dodge, a Midlothian-based writer, go to www.tomdodgebooks.com.



My Wandering Horse

Wrangler, ordered to mend his fences, was put on probation.

BY JOHN BIRD

Wrangler was my companion before I met my wife. Not having been in South Texas long, I didn't know many people; all of my family lived in North Texas, and I wasn't very social anyway. So when I wasn't teaching agriculture and science at Lytle Middle School in Lytle, southwest of San Antonio, I was spending time with Wrangler.

I bought the little gelding when he was 3. Day after day, Wrangler and I traveled the rights-of-way along irrigation canals. Medina County had black, flood-irrigated farmland. Small canals that ran across the back of each field were fed from the main canal that went for miles to Medina Lake, north of Castroville. When a farmer needed to irrigate, he or she ordered water from the local water district. The water was directed to the farmer's canal by other canals, and the water flow was controlled by a series of dams. When the water arrived, the farmer opened the stops on his canal, and the property was flooded.

The canal rights-of-way made an open path to roam and explore. We went through miles of corn, grain sorghum and warm-season vegetables in the summer. During the winter there were cabbage, carrots and wheat. Along the canals there was always something new to see. Wrangler had a long, smooth running walk; we could cover a lot of ground.

When I was at work, Wrangler was turned out with the Barbados sheep. Sometimes he pinned his ears and tried to herd them; sometimes the lambs followed Wrangler when they couldn't find their mother. Mr. Salinas, my landlord, didn't mind the horse being with his sheep—he made a fine guard dog.

But being the young horse that he was, Wrangler had a mischievous side. When we left his pasture to start out on a ride, I'd drop the reins when I opened the gate. He would follow me with his nose right at my shoulder. Where I turned, he turned. Once through, Wrangler would stand facing me until I latched the gate, took the reins and swung onto his back; I thought I was a regular horse whisperer.

One day we went through our normal gate routine. Wrangler stood facing me with a sleepy and innocent look as I turned to latch the gate. But this time, as soon as I took my eyes off of him, he bolted out of the yard and down the road—saddle, reins and all. When he had a half mile or so between us, he stopped, turned and waited until I got to him, as if he were showing me that he could get away when he wanted to.

Another time, it had been a long day at work when I drove down the lane to

home. Wrangler wasn't in his normal place. I looked in the back pasture, and then in the barn, but no horse. The fences were up and the gates were closed; he must have been stolen, I thought.

A Medina County sheriff's deputy asked me to describe my horse. "He's a little sorrel gelding," I said, "with a freeze brand of a rising sun on his left hip."

"Your horse is here in Hondo," the deputy said. "You can pick him up at the stockyards along with his citation."

With trailer in tow, I made the 30-mile trip to the stockyards where my horse was in custody. It seemed that he had jumped the fence, traveled a mile down the road and run my neighbor's yearlings through the one-line electric fence that was holding them in. When a sheriff's deputy found him, he was herding the calves down the highway toward LaCoste. The deputy wasn't pleased with either of us. I accepted my scolding and headed for home with a ticket and a troublemaking horse.

I'm not the type to appeal a ticket, but this one said that my offense was "allowing live-stock to roam on (the) highway." There wasn't any doubt that the horse was on the highway—I wasn't contesting that, but he certainly wasn't allowed to be there.

My court date arrived; I appeared in Hondo before the proper authorities and pled my case as they listened patiently. It was my luck that the district attorney had horses of his own. He said he knew that when "a horse had a mind to go somewhere, he would go." Wrangler got off with 90 days probation, but the fee would be doubled if he were found roaming the highway again during that time. I assured the authorities that he would stay put.

The days of testing passed, and my little friend stayed out of trouble. After that, the only time he ran off was when I decided that he didn't need a bridle and tried to ride him with just a halter and lead rope, or when someone else rode him and ignored my warning to keep him at a walk.

After a year or two, it was time for me to go back to college for more schooling. Knowing that I couldn't afford to take care of Wrangler and pay tuition, I sold him to a junior barrel racer from Castroville. It was rumored that he became a good rodeo horse. I never saw him again, but I'll always remember my little troublemaking gelding.



John Bird lives with his wife and three children in Eastland, where he works for the USDA Farm Service Agency.

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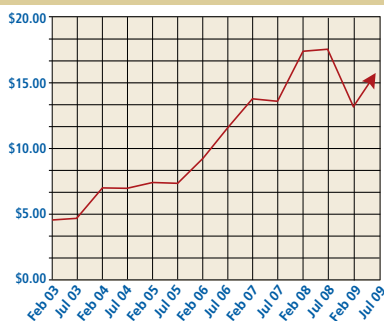
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The Lodge That Almost Wasn't

BY KAYE NORTHCOTT

If Indian Lodge—inside Davis Mountains State Park north of Big Bend National Park—seems remote today, imagine what it was like in 1933 when Franklin Delano Roosevelt dispatched two companies of Depression-era youths to carve a park and retreat out of donated acreage, including land in Keesey and Limpia canyons.

Skilled labor and materials shortages were endemic. What's more, bad planning soon earned Indian Lodge, just outside Fort Davis, a reputation as the white elephant of all the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) projects across the United States. Seventy-six years later, however, Indian Lodge is considered the crown jewel of the Texas parks system. It just goes to show that some great projects take a long time to prove themselves.

Indian Lodge, originally called Indian Village, is a romanticized adaptation of a pueblo village with Arts and Crafts architectural detailing by architects J.B. Roberts, Arthur Fehr and William Calhoun Caldwell. It has rounded, whitewashed adobe walls, flat roofs, myriad stair-stepped levels turning this way and that and small, shaded, semi-private terraces. The rooms are by no means luxurious, but Indian Lodge has the feel of a lost world in a valley at 5,200 feet elevation surrounded by foothills and desert flora and fauna.

The lodge was officially completed in 1935, not counting such major oversights as the lack of hot water and electricity and 17 leaking roofs that required closures and additional construction. These sobering details come from historian Lonn Taylor of Fort Davis, who delved into National Park Service (NPS) papers and issues of the Alpine Avalanche for details. A letter from NPS Inspector George Nason to his superior on March 23, 1935, confessed, "I am writing this letter so that you will know that this white elephant is practically ready for burial."

Nonetheless, Davis Mountains State Park and Indian Lodge were dedicated on July 4, 1935, with state legislators and other dignitaries in attendance. The less-than-reverential Alpine Avalanche quoted local resident Al Kensey as saying, "You sure ought to see that Indian Village just as quick as you can. It's liable to fall down if you wait too long."

The 400 minimally paid CCC workers (ages 17 to 25), who each earned \$30 a month, were largely country boys with little construction experience. The primary purpose of the project was to stimulate the economy and put people to work. The workers lived in tents as they built fireplaces and picnic tables and strenuously carved out a 5-mile scenic loop that parkgoers still relish today.

The youths no doubt had the muscle to supply hewn pine



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timbers and roof supports for the lodge, but the finer points of building were not their strong suit. As for the lack of a hot water system, the architects must be blamed. They simply had not designed one. According to a paper Taylor delivered to the Texas State Historical Association, "The first manager tried to explain the defect away by telling visitors that Indians did not take hot baths." Visitors did not find the answer satisfactory, so hot water pipes were installed in 1936.

Part of the problem was that the federal grant for the Indian Lodge project (which eventually swelled to more than \$50,000 because of cost overruns) was one of the first CCC grants, and the money arrived before a decent governing structure could be set up. It didn't help any that Miriam Amanda "Ma" Ferguson was governor (serving after her husband, James "Pa" Ferguson, was impeached for misapplication of public funds). The Fergusons were known more for political favoritism than for bureaucratic finesse.

Some of the more successful concepts of the Indian Lodge still grace the buildings today, such as the wooden doors and distinctive furniture made at a mill established by the CCC at Bastrop State Park in Central Texas. After a first round of early American-style furniture was rejected, architect Caldwell personally designed a second set with a Spanish Colonial Revival theme and hand-carved designs that may have been derived from Navajo rugs. Almost 200 pieces of the original furniture can be found in the 15 original rooms and the lobby area, both of which are now supplemented by 24 newer rooms, a swimming pool, a restaurant and a large assembly room.

For more information about Indian Lodge, call (432) 426-3254 or go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.

The Peanut Sun-Times



November 2009 News from the Texas Peanut Producers Board



November is Peanut Butter Lovers Month!

Peanut butter has become a staple in Texas households and across America. Did you know it even had its own month?

November was named "National Peanut Butter Lovers' Month" to celebrate each year the great taste and nutritional benefits of peanut butter. More peanuts are used to make peanut butter than any other peanut product.

To promote this tasty month, the Texas Peanut Producers Board will be sending peanut butter product baskets to TV weathermen across the state of Texas to encourage them to mention Peanut Butter Lovers' Month on the air.

So, whether you eat peanut butter on a cracker, with bread and jelly, or by the spoon, be sure to enjoy America's favorite snack during the month of November!

Peanut butter and autumn: The perfect combination

This fall season remember to use peanuts and peanut butter in all your autumn treats!

Peanuts and peanut butter make a great tasting and healthy addition to any fall snack. Peanut butter cookies, peanut caramel apples and peanut popcorn balls all make great tasting snacks for fall parties and holiday gatherings,

In this issue of the Peanut Sun-Times, we are sharing a couple of our favorite tasty fall treats with you in hopes that you will make peanuts a part of your autumn get-togethers.

While you're enjoying America's favorite snack this fall, peanut farmers in Texas will be completing the 2009 peanut harvest. Last year, Texas farmers produced over 860 million pounds of peanuts, making it the largest peanut crop in the state's history!

To learn more about how peanuts are grown and how the Texas Peanut Producers Board is helping farmers produce great tasting peanuts, go to TexasPeanutBoard.com or follow the TPPB blog at TexasPeanutBoard.blogspot.com.



Recipe

Classic Peanut Butter Cookies

Ingredients: 1 cup unsalted butter, 1 cup crunchy peanut butter, 1 cup white sugar, 1 cup packed brown sugar, 2 eggs, 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, 1 teaspoon baking powder, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda

Directions: Cream together butter, peanut butter and sugars. Beat in eggs. In a separate bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Stir into batter. Put batter in refrigerator for one hour. Roll into one inch balls and put on baking sheets. Flatten each ball with a fork, making a criss-cross pattern. Bake in a preheated 375 degrees F oven for about 10 minutes or until cookies begin to brown. Do not over-bake.



Recipe

Peanut Caramel Apples

Ingredients: 1 cup butter, softened, 2 cups packed brown sugar, 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk, 1 cup light corn syrup, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, 1/2 cup chopped roasted peanuts, 10 Gala apples - peeled, cored and sliced, 1/2 cup butter, 3/4 cup packed brown sugar, 1/4 cup white sugar, 2 tablespoons flour, 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg, 1/4 cup chopped peanuts

Directions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Lightly grease a 9x13 inch baking dish. Place 1 cup butter, 2 cups brown sugar, condensed milk, corn syrup, and vanilla extract in a pan over medium-high heat. Stirring constantly, bring mixture to a boil. Lower heat to medium, and continue to stir while mixture simmers for about 12 minutes. Remove from heat, and stir in 1/2 cup peanuts. Place apples in a mixing bowl. Pour in the caramel sauce, and toss gently to coat apples. Pour into the prepared pan. To make the crumb topping, use a pastry blender or two forks to mix 1/2 cup butter with 3/4 cup brown sugar, white sugar, flour, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a mixing bowl until crumbly. Stir in 1/4 cup peanuts. Sprinkle over the top of the apples. Place baking dish on a cookie sheet to prevent spills while baking. Bake in preheated oven until top is crisped and apples can be pierced with a fork, about 45 minutes.



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A Little This, a Little That

BY KEVIN HARGIS There's not a whole lot I like about winter—too cold and too gray for my sunny disposition. But there is at least one bright, warm spot in the season, and I can find it in my kitchen, specifically in a 2-gallon soup pot.

There's not much simpler or more satisfying than a warm broth on a cold evening. And with so many possibilities—different combinations of ingredi-

Try serving a winter stew in a bread bowl for a change of pace on a chilly, rainy day.



ents, spices and flavors—you could make a different soup every day until spring has sprung.

When I'm in a mood for a good winter soup, I often start with a peek in the refrigerator/freezer.

I'm what you might call a this 'n' that kind of cook. When I find an ingredient that I want to build a dish around, I'll toss it in the pot with a bit of this, then add a bit of that, and before you know it, dinner's ready. The biggest drawback to that kind of cooking, besides the occasional barely edible misfires, is that if I make something truly delicious, I sometimes have problems re-creating it. Thus, I've started taking notes when I'm cooking.

The this 'n' that method is how I concocted this stew, which pairs lamb—a meat that often gets overlooked—with root vegetables and fresh herbs.

LAMB AND ROOT VEGETABLE STEW

- 2 pounds lamb shoulder or roast, cut into 1-inch pieces
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium sweet yellow onions, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white wine
- 2 cups water or chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh oregano (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 6 medium carrots, chopped
- 1 pound "A"-size red potatoes, quartered
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper
- 1 teaspoon sea salt

Put lamb in large storage bag with flour and black pepper and shake to coat thoroughly. Heat olive oil in large soup pot on medium heat and cook lamb until pieces are lightly browned. Add onion and garlic and cook until translucent, about 5 minutes. Deglaze with wine. Transfer to slow cooker, add remaining ingredients and stir thoroughly. Cook on slow for 4-5 hours, or until carrots and potatoes are soft. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 527 calories, 34.2 g protein, 25.4 g fat, 34.8 g carbohydrates, 4.2 g fiber, 564 mg sodium, 102 mg cholesterol



MARY BRUCK ALLEN *Pedernales Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: **Tomatillo Cilantro Chicken Soup**

Spicy, creamy and cheesy and full of chicken—that's the way we like our winter soups. A wide variety of recipes were submitted for this month's contest, featuring everything from mushroom and pumpkin cream soups to hearty beef and vegetable stews.

But it was the chicken-based soups that won the battle for the judges' taste buds, including the crème de la crème, a tortilla soup-like creation made zippy with the twang of tomatillos.

TOMATILLO CILANTRO CHICKEN SOUP

- 1½ pounds tomatillos, husks removed
- 1 onion, chopped
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter
- ¼ cup minced garlic
- Salt to taste
- 2 cans (15 1/2 ounces each) chicken broth
- 3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) cream-style corn
- 1 tablespoon black pepper

Quarter tomatillos. Sauté onion in butter and add garlic and tomatillos. Cook until soft, then salt. Add broth, chicken breasts and cilantro and simmer 30 minutes. Remove chicken to plate to cool and continue to simmer soup for another 30 minutes. Chop chicken and add back to soup with creamed corn and pepper.

Serve with shredded cheese and tortilla chips, if desired.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 345 calories, 26.3 g protein, 13.3 g fat, 31.5 g carbohydrates, 3.7 g fiber, 100 mg sodium, 81 mg cholesterol

GREEN CHILE CHICKEN SOUP

- ½ stick butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups chopped yellow onions
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic
- 6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ½ cup mild salsa
- 2 cans (4½ ounces each) chopped green chilies
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups chopped fresh tomatoes
- 2 cans (8 ounces each) whole kernel corn (drained)

- 4 cups (about 2 pounds) diced or shredded cooked chicken
- 4 cups heavy whipping cream
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded American or Cheddar cheese

Combine butter and olive oil in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onions, carrots, celery and garlic and sauté 4 minutes. Stir often. Add flour and stir well 1 minute. Add salsa, green chilies, cumin and red pepper. Stir until a thick paste forms. Add chicken broth, tomatoes and corn. Stir well, scraping sides and bottom of pan to loosen all the flour. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and add chicken. Cook 8 minutes, stirring occasionally. Warm cream in microwave or on stovetop, then add to soup along with cilantro. Bring back to a simmer. Add cheese, remove pan from heat and stir until cheese is melted. Serve immediately.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 589 calories, 23.5 g protein, 43.4 g fat, 24.3 g carbohydrates, 3.2 g fiber, 830 mg sodium, 177 mg cholesterol

B.J. WILLIS

Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative

COCONUT-GINGER CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

- 2 chicken breasts
- 2 teaspoons coarse ground sea salt
- 1 2-inch piece ginger root, peeled
- 5 medium carrots, diced
- ¼ cup onion, thinly sliced
- 1 can coconut milk
- 1 cup frozen green peas
- 1 tablespoon sweet basil
- 8 ounces fettuccini (use brown rice pasta for gluten-free soup)

Place first five ingredients in Crock-Pot along with two quarts water and cook overnight on low setting.

In the morning, remove ginger root and discard. Remove chicken breasts

and cut into small pieces and return to pot, then add coconut milk, frozen peas and sweet basil. Taste for seasoning and add more salt, if needed. After one to two more hours, break fettuccini into 1-inch pieces and add to soup. Cook until noodles are done.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 367 calories, 26.2 g protein, 9 g fat, 43.6 g carbohydrates, 4.4 g fiber, 899 mg sodium, 45 mg cholesterol

CYNTHIA HAWKINS

Farmers Electric Cooperative

SLOW COOKER POZOLE

- 1 medium chile negra, rehydrated
- 2 cans (15½ ounces each) chicken broth
- ¾ pound pork tenderloin
- ¾ pound skinless, boneless chicken breast
- 2 cups onion, chopped
- 1 medium bay leaf
- ¾ tablespoon Mexican oregano
- ¾ tablespoon ground cumin
- 1½ teaspoons crushed garlic
- 1 can (4½ ounces) green chiles
- 1 can (14½ ounces) beef broth
- 1 can (15 ounces) white hominy (pozole)
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) yellow hominy
- Salt and pepper to taste.

Puree rehydrated chile with about half of chicken broth. Scrape into 5-quart Crock-Pot and add remaining ingredients. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours or on high for 4-5 hours.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 165 calories, 22.8 g protein, 2.6 g fat, 11.7 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 573 mg sodium, 52 mg cholesterol

DANA B. NORMAN

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

Go Low and Slow If you have time in the morning before you head to work, why not slow-cook a soup or stew in a Crock-Pot? Stewing at the low setting on a slow cooker for several hours is safer and more energy efficient than leaving a soup to simmer on the stove.

If you don't want your soup to cook for eight hours, you can invest in a slow cooker with a delay timer or an auto-off setting.

SEMOLINA BREAD BOWLS

- 1 cup semolina flour
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 1/4 teaspoons (one packet) instant or fast-acting yeast
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt

Combine dry ingredients in bowl and add 1 1/2 cups warm water (about 110 degrees). Using the bread hook attachment of a mixer or your hands, knead dough until all bits of dry ingredients are incorporated and mixture becomes soft, smooth and elastic. Cover dough in bowl with dish towel and put in warm place to rise, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours, or until dough has about doubled in size.

Divide dough in three pieces and shape into round loaves, but don't flatten. Place on a baking sheet that's been lightly greased or lined with parchment paper at least 4 inches apart (dough will spread). Cover with a light cloth and allow to rise another hour and a half or until dough balls have doubled in size.

Uncover balls and expose to air for about 10 to 15 minutes so outer crust will toughen. With about 5 minutes left in this process, preheat oven to 425 degrees. When oven is hot, heavily mist loaves with water. Bake for about 20 minutes or until loaves turn golden brown. Turn oven off and crack door open for about 15 minutes before removing to rack to finish cooling.

When ready to serve soup, cut a round out of the top of the bowl, remove

some of the soft bread inside and freeze in a plastic bag to use later when a recipe calls for breadcrumbs.

COOK'S TIP To measure water temperature to 110 degrees without a thermometer, test with your wrist. It should feel just warm to the touch, but not hot.

Past recipes are available in the Recipes Archive at www.texascooppower.com.

RECIPE CONTEST

March's recipe contest topic is **Green Cooking**. Slow cookers and toaster ovens are great ways to reduce energy use in the kitchen. So is choosing foods that require less preparation or cooking time. Send your recipes and tips for cooking green. The deadline is November 10.

Send recipes to Home Cooking, 1122 Colorado, 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You may also fax them to (512) 763-3408, e-mail them to recipes@texas-ec.org, or submit online at www.texascooppower.com. Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. The top winner will receive a copy of 60 Years of Home Cooking and a Texas-shaped trivet. Runners-up will also receive a prize.



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DAREDEVILS

CAUTION: These photos are not for the faint of heart! Plenty of you out there delight in all kinds of different thrills ... and a few spills! Thanks for sharing your heart-stopping adventures with us. —ASHLEY CLARY

◀ Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative member **Jessika Haworth** sent us this photo of her son **Elliott Sunshine** at the Pioneer Days Festival in New Boston. “No matter how big or small you are, there’s always room for daring fun in Texas,” she says.



▲ This is what **Dalton Wharton** (jumping) and his friends **Ben Patty** (lying down) and **Preston Wenger** (holding sign) decided was the best cure for boredom at a garage sale in Buda. Dalton’s parents, **Becky** and **Bert Wharton**, are members of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.



Kara Kleimann sent us this shot of family friend **Cody Valenta** ▲ executing a daring back flip from a rock cliff into the Medina River. The Kleimann and Valenta families are both members of San Bernard Electric Cooperative.



▲ South Plains Electric Cooperative member **Don Carpenter** sent us this photo he took of **Chase Butler**, a competitor giving it his all at Rip Tide’s annual wakeboard competition at Buffalo Springs Lake in Lubbock.

► The aptly named **Skye**, a West Highland terrier owned by Central Texas Electric Cooperative members **Ray** and **Mary Ellen Walls**, is a daredevil when it comes to chasing squirrels up trees. “A fence had to be erected around this live oak when she fell about 15 feet to the ground,” says Mary Ellen.

Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Jan	Snow Daze	Nov 10
Feb	Firsts	Dec 10
Mar	Backyard Gardens	Jan 10
Apr	Barney Babies	Feb 10
May	Farmers Bounty	Mar 10
June	Only in Texas	Apr 10

SNOW DAZE is the topic for our **JANUARY 2010** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, day-time phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Snow Daze, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St. 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, before **NOVEMBER 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, or submit them on our website at www.texascooppower.com.



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Veterans Parade & Celebration, (830) 598-6971

UVALDE

Hunter's Roundup, (830) 278-3361, www.uvalde.org

INDEPENDENCE [6-8]

Festival of Roses, (979) 836-5548, www.weareroses.com

07

BLOOMBURG

Cullen Baker Country Fair, (903) 728-5597, www.cullenbakercountryfair.com

DRIPPING SPRINGS

Community Art Festival, (512) 858-9758

NEEDVILLE

Prairie Heritage Day, (281) 346-0099, www.coastalprairie.org

UTOPIA

Fall Fair, (830) 966-4224, www.utopiatexas.net

07

ANGLETON [7-8]

Austin Town, (979) 864-1208, www.bchm.org

BERGHEIM [7-8]

Arts & Crafts Holiday Open House, (830) 229-5573, www.olgameredit.com

WINNSBORO [7-8]

Fine Art Market, (903) 342-3438, www.winnsboroart.com

PLANTERSVILLE [7-8,

14-15, 21-22, 28-29] Texas Renaissance Festival, 1-800-458-3435, www.texrenfest.com

14

DEER PARK

St. Hyacinth Arts & Crafts Show, (281) 479-4065

GOLIAD

Market Days, (361) 645-3563, www.goliadcc.org

HONDO

Wild Game Dinner, (830) 426-3037, www.hondochamber.com

14

PIPE CREEK

Harvest Festival, (830) 510-6131, www.pipecreekchristianschool.org

WINNSBORO

Christmas in the Park, (903) 342-5446

BROWNWOOD [14-15]

Rotary Club Arts & Crafts Festival, (325) 646-9535, www.brownwoodchamber.org



7

PLANTERSVILLE
Texas Renaissance Festival

Texas Renaissance Festival

Saturdays, Sundays and Thanksgiving Friday

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www.texasrenfest.com

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DECEMBER



17

GOLIAD

Missions Tour de Goliad Bike Ride

17

ABILENE

Festival of Trees, (325) 676-6211

GOLIAD

Missions Tour de Goliad Bike Ride, (361) 645-3563, www.goliadcc.org

18

ATHENS [18-20]

Cutting Horse Futurity Work, (903) 677-6354

20

MILAM [20-21]

Settlers Day, (409) 625-4876

20

MOUNT PLEASANT [20-21]

Deck the Halls, (903) 572-8567, www.mtpleasanttx.com

21

ANDICE

Arts & Crafts Show, (254) 793-2565

ANSON

3rd Saturday Musical, (325) 823-2013

KERRVILLE

Holiday Lighted Parade, (830) 792-8395, www.kerrville.org

BRENNHAM [21-22]

Poinsettia Celebration, (979) 836-6011, www.ellisonsgreenhouses.com

27

LEDBETTER [27-28]

VFD Christmas Lane of Lights, (979) 249-5227

ELM MOTT [27-29]

Homestead Craft Fair, (254) 754-9681, www.homesteadcraftfair.com



28

LEXINGTON Christmas Bazaar

27

FREDERICKSBURG [27-29]

Peddler Show, (830) 997-6523

28

ANDERSON

Holiday in Historic Anderson, (936) 825-6600

LEXINGTON

Christmas Bazaar, (979) 773-4620

MASON

Tannenbaum Arts & Crafts Show, (325) 347-5151

NACOGDOCHES

Wassail Festival, 1-888-653-3788, www.nineflagsfestival.com

01

ABILENE

City Sidewalks, (325) 676-6211

03

JACKSONVILLE

Christmas Parade, (903) 586-2217

04

LOCKHART

Lighted Christmas Parade, (512) 398-2818, www.lockhartchamber.com

To view our complete list of events, please go to www.texascoopower.com.

Event information can be mailed to **Around Texas**, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, faxed to (512) 763-3407, e-mailed to aroundtx@texas-ec.org, or submitted on our website at www.texascoopower.com. Please submit events for January by November 10.



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www.dentonholidaylighting.com



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Alice and Edinburg, county seats about 100 miles apart on U.S. Highway 281, contrast the changes that can reshape South Texas towns over the span of 100 years. The almost arrow-straight highway between the cities takes you south from Alice and the slightly rolling terrain of Jim Wells County in brush country, to Hidalgo County and the flat-as-a-tortilla semitropics of the Rio Grande Valley, lush with citrus and palms.

ALICE

In 1888, Alice became known as the world's busiest cattle shipping point, thanks to its position astride a major railroad junction. For almost a decade, lines of cattle stretched into the distance waiting to be loaded onto rail cars in the town named after cattleman Richard King's daughter, according to Joyce Dunn of the **SOUTH TEXAS MUSEUM**. The museum, a handsome limestone building that once served as headquarters for a ranch, displays prized saddles and the longhorns of lead steers on cattle drives, as well as wonderful oddities such as antique hair curling irons and horse collars woven of corn shucks. Nearby, the oil strikes that revitalized Alice in the 1930s are commemorated with a 1926 oil derrick relocated to the middle of town.

A block from the museum sits the former **TEXAS STATE BANK** building where the notorious stuffed ballot box from Precinct 13 was discovered in 1948, giving Lyndon B. Johnson his U.S. Senate seat by a narrow margin. You won't find a marker, but older residents readily gossip about the incident. Next, check out the recently expanded **THIRD COAST SQUADRON MUSEUM**. All the museum's aircraft and equipment displays relate to Coastal Bend veterans. The museum offers great maps, photos, flying gear and a flight trainer in which visitors may sit.

Alice Chamber of Commerce, (361) 664-3454, www.alicetx.org

FALFURRIAS

From Alice, head south on U.S. Highway 281 about 36 miles to reach Falfurrias, the Brooks County seat once famous for its dairy herds and butter.

ALICE to EDINBURG

From rich, spicy history—and food—to wildlife viewing, this trip serves up a little of everything.

BY EILEEN MATTEI



Just north of town, turn east on FM 1418. Here, a simple shrine to **DON PEDRITO JARAMILLO**, a noted faith healer, or curandero, who died in 1907, still draws applicants.

Also just north of town is **THE CHRISTMAS HOUSE**, where the three Minten sisters keep the spirit of Christmas ringing out in their decked-out home that's open for tours from late September through the end of March by reservation only. The adjoining **SANTA'S TEXAS WORKSHOP** stocks some of the fabulous decorations. It is open year-round by appointment for shopping.

Cruise on south past old ranches. At

Linn/San Manuel, about 47 miles south of Falfurrias, turn southeast off U.S. Highway 281 and go four miles on Texas Highway 186 to the amazing **LA SAL DE REY** tract of the **LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**. From the kiosk, an easy one-mile walk brings you to the glittering white salt lake, La Sal de Rey. Long a salt source for Native Americans and ranchers, this shallow lake attracts javelina, deer and a wide variety of birds.

Falfurrias Chamber of Commerce, (361) 325-3333

The Christmas House, 1-800-276-4339

EDINBURG

About 18 miles south of Falfurrias is Edinburg, home of the **UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-PAN AMERICAN**. The city bustles with cafés, exhibitions of art, dance and theater and 17,000 college students. Nearby McAllen's population has overflowed into Edinburg, making it a boomtown. **THE MUSEUM OF SOUTH TEXAS HISTORY**, which features Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, immerses visitors in the borderlands heritage, including from the Mexican colonial and riverboat eras. Exhibits cover the prehistoric through the 20th century. The addition of old cowboy ballads to the Cattle Kingdom exhibit emphasizes ranch life's solitude and makes one feel a bit lonesome.

Forget about being lonesome across town at the **EDINBURG SCENIC WETLANDS AND WORLD BIRDING CENTER**. Waterside trees are dotted with migrating and semitropical birds, including herons, while many species of ducks paddle the two ponds and dragonflies zip through the wetlands. The native plant gardens are covered by a froth of hundreds of butterflies. Two miles of walking trails yield lots of watchable wildlife.

On Saturday nights, there's barrel racing and horse speed events, such as pole bending, at the **SHERIFF'S POSSE ARENA**, a free facility.

Edinburg Chamber of Commerce, 1-800-800-7214, www.edinburg.com

Eileen Mattei wrote about the Brownsville Gladys Porter Zoo in the July 2009 issue of Texas Co-op Power.



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