

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER



## WATER for ALL?

**Wake Up, Texas:  
Our Water Crisis  
Demands Action.  
NOW.**



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**FEATURES**

**Water for All?** State officials and conservationists sound the alarm: We don't have enough water, and shortages could happen anywhere in the state. Just ask West Texans, such as Robert Lee Mayor John Jacobs, above. What can we do? Plenty. But we have to start now.

By Andrew Sansom, Joe Nick Patoski, Camille Wheeler and Carol Moczygemba • Photos by Woody Welch

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**COVER PHOTO** *Mary Beth Renick* by Woody Welch, photo manipulation by Andy Doughty

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WATERMELON PHOTO © VIKTOR MALYSHCHYTS. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.



# Enjoy A Bath Again... Safely and Affordably

*The Jacuzzi® Walk-In tub is luxurious,  
feature-packed and affordable*

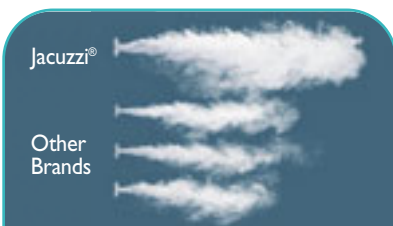
There is nothing like the simple pleasure of taking a warm bath. The cares of the day seem to fade away, along with the aches and pains of everyday life. Unfortunately for many aging Americans with mobility issues, slipping into a bath can result in slipping onto the floor. The fear of falling has made the simple act of bathing and its therapeutic benefits a thing of the past... until now. *firstSTREET*, the leader in products *Designed for Seniors®* has partnered with Jacuzzi®, the company that perfected hydrotherapy. Together, they've created a walk-in tub that offers more than just safe bathing, peace-of-mind and independence, it can actually help you feel better.

Unlike traditional bathtubs, our Jacuzzi® Walk-In Tub features a leakproof door that allows you to simply step into the tub rather than stepping precariously over the side. It features a state-of-the-art acrylic surface, a raised seat, and

the controls are within easy reach. No other Walk-In Tub features the patented Jacuzzi® PointPro™ jet system. These high-volume, low-pressure pumps feature a perfectly balanced water to air ratio to massage thoroughly yet gently. Some swirl, some spiral, some deliver large volumes of water and others target specific pressure points. They are all arranged in precise locations designed to deliver a therapeutic massage, yet they are fully adjustable so that your bathing experience can be completely unique.

Why spend another day wishing you could enjoy the luxury and pain-relieving benefits of a safe, comfortable bath.

Call now and you'll get an unsurpassed limited lifetime warranty. Knowledgeable product experts are standing by to help you learn more about this product. Call Today!



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- Low Threshold Step
- Jacuzzi® PointPro™ Jet System



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- ➔ **Comfort** - Insist on ergonomic design, easy-to-reach controls.
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## Making All the Right Moves

Thank you so much for your cover story, "The Kings and Queens of Brownsville," in the June issue. We have been sponsoring and mentoring chess players in our public and private school systems for four years (three tournaments completed) and in the Fredericksburg branch of the Boys & Girls Club of the Texas Hill Country. This started out as a pursuit of our Noon Rotary Club and has grown to be a real success. Our emphasis is "use the computer in your head," and sportsmanship. Thank you for calling this wonderful game to everyone's attention.

DICK DORER | FREDERICKSBURG



## Saluting Hard Work

On May 30, we were without electricity for eight hours due to a fallen tree on a power line. We live on CR 4225 on a line that supplies electricity for nine residences. A tree had fallen across the road near our house, and we only have one way out. There were four trucks from Lamar Electric Cooperative; the men went beyond their call of duty and cleared the road with chainsaws before they continued their own work. We salute these men for the hard work they do on a daily basis.

JAY AND LORI SMITH | LAMAR EC



## Food To Last the Year

I loved the February article about keyhole gardening! I grow a garden every year, and last year the drought made it somewhat impossible to grow anything. I used the keyhole garden idea and used railroad cross ties filled with compostable materials and my own mixture of soils and, of course, cow manure. The hole in the center is for compost and water. I lined only the sides with plastic to hold in the water and built a PVC pipe structure to cover it with a shade mesh. It is working very well. I believe I will have a great crop this year. For fall and winter, I can cover it with plastic and have produce all year.

DONNA WRIGHT | BIG COUNTRY EC

## A Snakebitten Legacy

Thank you for the article "A Snakebitten Legacy" by Clay Coppedge in the June issue. That's very interesting history concerning Texas and Polish Catholic immigrants. I was born and raised in Detroit in the 1960s, and my immediate family migrated to Arlington in 1972. We are all still in the Metroplex carrying on the Polish Catholic traditions learned from my parents and grandparents. Compared to being from "somewhere out in East Texas," I can say I'm a fourth-generation Polish Catholic settler to the great state of Texas.

CHRIS PIKULINSKI | COSERV ELECTRIC

## Notice anything different?

This month, we introduce a fresh look to the familiar design of Texas Co-op Power. You'll still find your favorites, including Recipes, Texas History, Focus on Texas and Hit the Road. They're just sporting a new style with a little more open space and some lively graphics. Our new Currents section features reader letters and a variety of interesting tidbits: Texas Trivia, Co-op People, Energy News, Happenings and whatever else we discover that's worth sharing. We hope you enjoy our new look. As always, we welcome your comments.

CAROL MOCZYGEMBA | EXECUTIVE EDITOR

## Follow the Pickups

While reading the "Magical History Tour" articles [May and June issues] and reading of Carol Moczygemba's dining experiences, my tactic came to mind. When looking for a place to eat in an unfamiliar town, I always look for a place with pickups in the parking lot. The farmers and ranchers are good indicators of the best places to eat. They'll never steer you wrong.

GAYLON W. STAMPS | PANHANDLE

## Park Hosts: the Next Chapter

What a blessing volunteers are in this time of financial crunch in our state parks—thank you for the reminder of their importance! I write a series of children's books called Annie the Texas Ranch Dog that feature Texas state parks as locations where pit-bull-mix Annie solves mysteries with her Texas park ranger owner. I want young readers to convince their families to take advantage of the unique resources of our state parks. Your article about

volunteers ["Campground Comrades," February] reminded me to add a park host to the characters in the book I am writing.

PATTY SHAFER | GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

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Find more letters online in the Table of Contents. Sign up for our E-Newsletter for monthly updates, prize drawings and more!



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**MAIL:** Editor, Texas Co-op Power, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701

Please include your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

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## ENERGY NEWS

# The Windup ...

And the pitch: The state has too much wind to waste. So Texans are doing something about it.

More and more wind power is being routed into Texas' electric grid. The prevalence of wind sweeping the state's plains, mountains and coastline, combined with public policy and planning, has made the state a leader in wind energy generation.

With wind farm projects in about 30 counties, Texas has the capacity to generate almost 11,000 megawatts of electricity—more than any other state in the U.S. and about a quarter of the nation's entire wind generation capacity, according to the American Wind Energy Association.

And on June 19, wind farms in the service territory of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, whose power grid covers three-quarters of Texas, generated a record 8,368 MW, or 17.6 percent of ERCOT's total power demand at the time.

Despite setting records, the state's installed wind power capacity is just a frac-

tion of its potential. Based on wind on land and in the Gulf of Mexico, where offshore projects are proposed, Texas ranks No. 1 in the nation. If enough wind generation capacity could be installed to capture the abundance of wind, its power could generate 19 times Texas' current electricity needs, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

But before Texas can fully take advantage of its resources by adding more wind power generation facilities, transmission lines need to be built from wind-rich, remote areas—mainly, the Panhandle and West Texas—to major population centers.

The situation is creating a “chicken and egg” condition, said Terry Hadley, spokesman for the Public Utility Commission of Texas. Some wind power developers are hesitant to build wind farms without transmission lines, he said, and transmission service

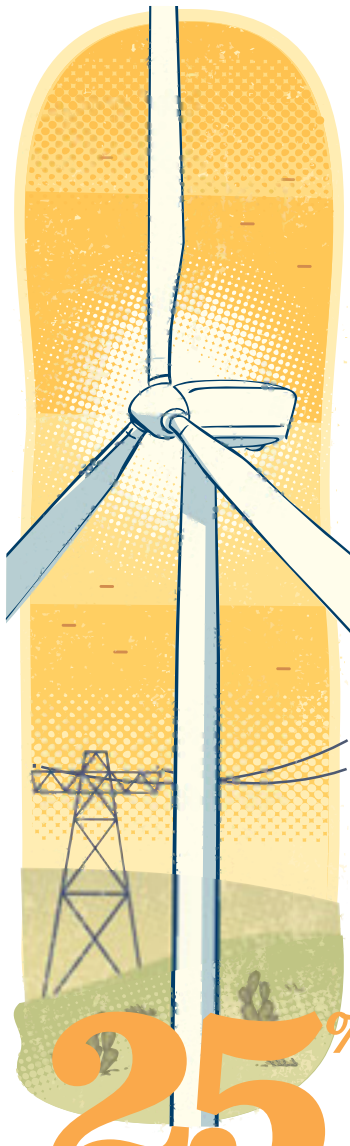
providers are hesitant to build transmission lines without wind farms.

To help solve the transmission issue, ERCOT has identified areas in the Panhandle and North, West and Central Texas with wind energy potential, and the PUC is overseeing construction of transmission lines to these areas, called Competitive Renewable Energy Zones, or CREZs. This way, the state can be prepared to use wind resources after they're installed.

With the CREZ projects' expected completion around the end of 2014, Texas is poised to capture even more wind power. The PUC estimates that the maximum wind power transmitted on the CREZs could increase Texas' current wind power capacity to about 18,500 MW.

SUZANNE HABERMAN | STAFF WRITER

On [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com)  
See how wind stats stack up.



25%  
OF U.S. WIND ENERGY CAN BE GENERATED IN TEXAS.

## 2012 INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF COOPERATIVES

As rapid population growth worldwide increases pressure on public water utilities, a Bolivian cooperative is leading the way in providing clean water and safe sewer systems. **SAGUAPAC, the world's largest urban water cooperative**, serves about three-quarters of the 1.6 million people in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. All collected wastewater is treated before being released into local rivers, something not so common in Latin America. And the co-op provides water to remote locations that otherwise would have no service.



ILLUSTRATIONS CARL WIENS





**HAPPENINGS**

**Texas Ranger Day and A Big Star Texas Night**

Dust off your cowboy boots and go get your kicks on Main Street in Burton near Waco for Texas Ranger Day and A Big Star Texas Night on August 11. The whole family can experience what life was like in an 1880s Texas Ranger camp with two re-enactor groups sanctioned by the Former Texas Ranger Association and Foundation. There also will be plenty of arts and crafts, games, folk-life demonstrations and a live auction. A fajita and bean cook-off starts with team check-in at 3:30 p.m. For \$10, attendees can sample the popular Texas fare starting at 5:30 p.m.; the winners will be determined by people's choice. Hang around after you stop by the historic train depot, because the street dance kicks off around 7 p.m. with Neil and the Real Deal. Gary P. Nunn takes the stage at 9 p.m.

Find more happenings all across the state at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: (979) 353-0050 | [BURTONTXAS.ORG](http://BURTONTXAS.ORG)

**CO-OP PEOPLE**

**Have No Fear, Mr. Electricity Is Here**

*Comanche EC Youth Wins \$1,500 in Video Contest*

Ryan Paskewitz of Zephyr, son of Comanche Electric Cooperative members Curtis and Paula Paskewitz, is the grand prizewinner of the 2012 Co-op Teens Power Texas video contest.

Paskewitz's entry, "Mr. Electricity," features himself as a masked superhero saving a woman, played by Zephyr High School math teacher Dena Peters, in great distress over a high electricity bill. The school's technology director, Terrell Hess, also collaborated on the video.

"It started out with just me and my parents, and we were going to make a video of me playing the guitar and singing a song about the co-op," said Paskewitz, who is entering his junior year. "But then Mr. Hess suggested doing the superhero thing—one of the rules was to be creative and have youth appeal—and I thought it was a good idea, and my mother agreed. I'm not a superhero fan, but it was fun."

In the video, Mr. Electricity advises the audience to switch from incandescent lightbulbs and an old



water heater to their more energy-efficient counterparts.

It didn't take long for the good news to spread. One afternoon in math class, someone brought Paskewitz the phone. "It was my mom, and she was in an uproar. 'YOU WON, YOU WON,' she screamed," said Paskewitz. "I was like, 'Wow.' I didn't know what to think. I got the damsel in distress, and she was over the top. I told Mr. Hess. Thirty minutes later, the whole school knew. It was a ton of fun."

As the winner of the video contest, Paskewitz received \$1,500, which he plans on using for a trip to

Japan. As the sponsoring school, Zephyr High will receive \$1,000.

The contest, sponsored by Texas Co-op Power in conjunction with electric co-ops across Texas, asked students in grades six through 12 to create a 30- to 60-second commercial promoting their respective electric cooperative. To view Paskewitz's winning video along with other prize-winning videos, go to [youtube.com/user/TXCOOPPOWER](http://youtube.com/user/TXCOOPPOWER).

ASHLEY CLARY-CARPENTER | FIELD EDITOR

**Co-op People ideas?**  
Send Co-op People ideas to [editor@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:editor@TexasCoopPower.com).

**WHO KNEW**

**Where is the heart of Texas?**

Well, everywhere one looks, of course: From the Panhandle Plains to the Piney Woods, the Lone Star State brims with pride. But the real heart—geographically speaking, according to the Texas Almanac—lies about 15 miles northeast of Brady in northern McCulloch County, east of San Angelo.



PHOTO COURTESY RYAN PASKEWITZ

# Water Is Life

And as stewards, we must protect our freshwater:  
We can't build our way out of this predicament

**Editor's note:** *In this special issue, we explore our most precious resource—water. Starting with this introduction, we take close-up looks at the sobering realities facing Texas. It's no longer enough to simply be concerned about future water supplies, state officials and conservationists say. Drastic action is required now, starting with conservation, education and long-range plans. Is there hope? Yes. But it takes everybody working together. Every drop counts.*

**N**OT LONG AGO, I SPENT AN AFTERNOON WITH David Baker, who lives near the headwaters of Cypress Creek in Hays County at a lovely spring known as Jacob's Well. Baker, originally an artist, has spent most of his adult life fighting to protect “the well,” as he calls it, and to keep it flowing and nourishing the creek, one of Texas' most beautiful streams.

On the day we walked its banks, the creek was dry, and Jacob's Well had stopped flowing for only the second time in history. The first time was in 2000, and the trend is ominous. For Baker, the possibility that the next generation of Texans will not have the opportunity to experience this iconic spring and many others throughout the Texas Hill Country is unimaginable.

It could happen.

Though the recent drought has helped to focus the attention of Texans on our water problems, to knowledgeable observers, they have been developing for a long time. “You can go without cable TV. You can even go without air conditioning, but you can't go without water,” says Tom Mason, former general manager of the Lower Colorado River Authority, one of our state's largest water providers.

**The bottom line is that our population here in Texas is expected to almost double in the next 50 years or so, and we have already given permission for more water to be withdrawn from many of our rivers and lakes than is actually in them.**

Our vast system of reservoirs was built following the last big drought, the one we call “the drought of record” in the 1940s and 1950s. At that time, most Texans lived in small towns

supported largely by agriculture or on farms and ranches. Thus, the drought affected almost everyone directly. As a result, we got serious and embarked on a massive reservoir construction program and initiated a water planning strategy that we still rely on today.

The 2012 edition of the state water plan from the Texas Water Development Board was compiled by 16 regional planning groups across the state and has a price tag of \$53 billion for new water infrastructure. We clearly need to invest in providing water for our future. But even if we could come up with that kind of money, the reality of other noninfrastructure challenges suggests that we cannot simply build our way out of this predicament.

The stream along which Baker and I walked that day eventually flows into the Blanco River. The Blanco originates in Kendall County and winds its way to the Guadalupe River in Hays County. On the way, much of its flow goes right back into the ground from the riverbed. The water runs underground to Jacob's Well, where it comes back to the surface, forming Cypress Creek, which flows down through the villages of Woodcreek and Wimberley and back into the Blanco. The reality is that obtaining a permit from the state to remove water from the river today would likely be impossible—but if you wanted to drill a hole and take it out of the ground above Jacob's Well, you would have little or no restrictions to keep you from doing so.

Unfortunately, Texas law treats the same water differently depending on whether it is on the surface or underground. This practice is unsustainable and exacerbated by a recent Texas Supreme Court ruling, which declared that groundwater is the property of private landowners.

As stewards of more than 95 percent of the landscape in Texas, private landowners do have a huge role to play in our water future, and they are not getting much help. Texas loses rural and agricultural land faster than any other state, and this continued fragmentation of family lands is irrevocably impairing the function of our watersheds and aquifer recharge zones, as well as increasing non-point source pollution, which is runoff from agricultural fields, highways, parking lots and an increasingly paved-over countryside.



We waste too much water.

At home, we use as much as 70 percent of our household drinking water to irrigate our lawns, and much of that is wasted. Before the water even gets to our residences, many Texas cities and water utilities lose up to 25 or 30 percent of their water through leaking water mains or otherwise poorly maintained distribution systems. The cheapest way for us to provide more water for the future is to begin using it more efficiently.

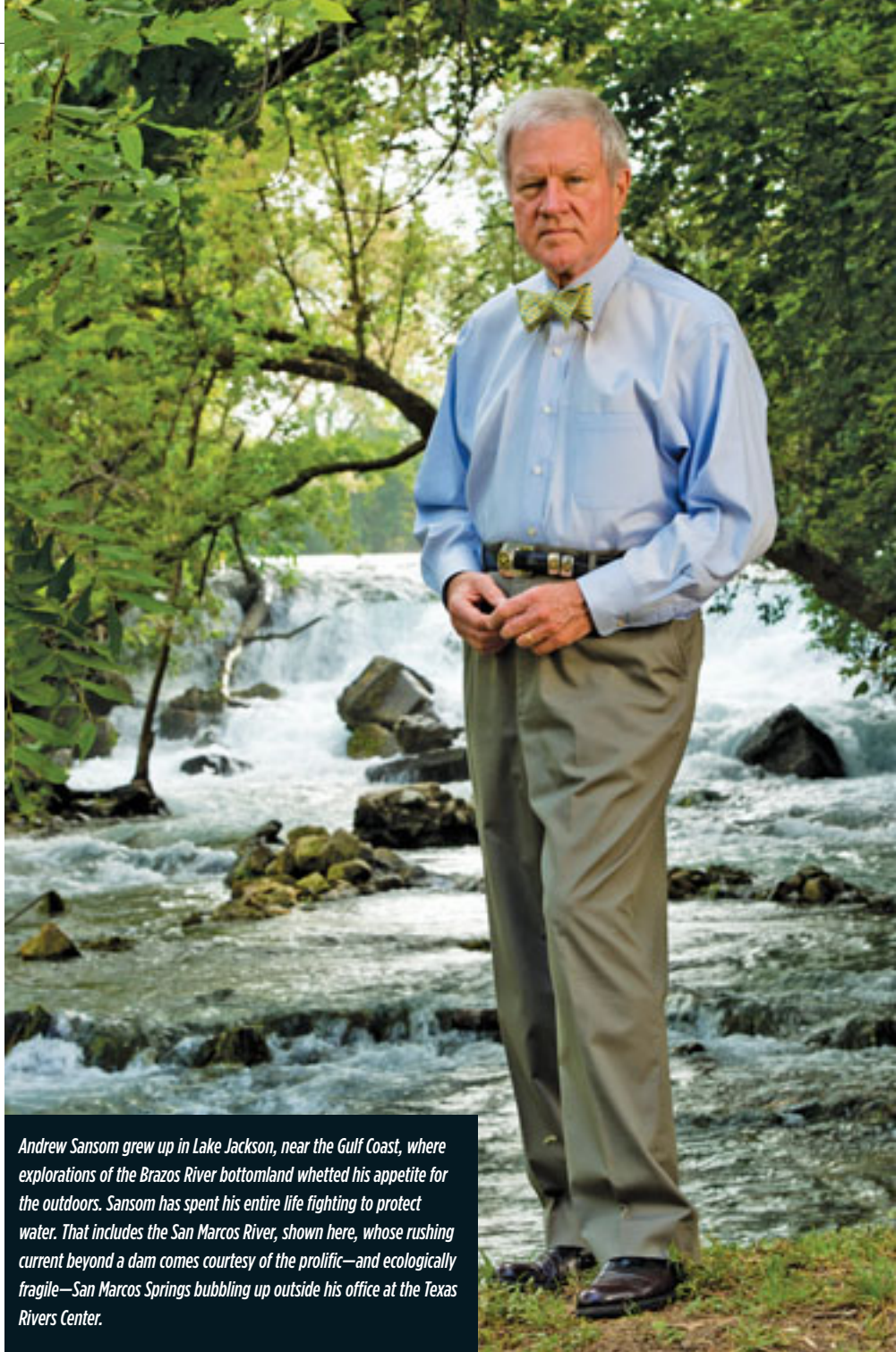
In this regard, most water rights in Texas are dedicated to agricultural use for irrigation, and much of this use remains antiquated and inefficient. The inefficiency magnifies a conundrum: While so much of our water is committed to agriculture, a sector of our economy that is basically flat, municipal growth is booming and thus producing the greatest future demands for water.

Finally, though the Legislature in 2007 established a process for protecting the aquatic ecosystems of our rivers, streams, bays and estuaries by requiring “environmental flow” standards for each, implementation of the law has been spotty at best. Without greater attention to the freshwater requirements of the environment itself, our inland aquatic ecosystems and extraordinary coastal resources are increasingly impaired.

Against this sobering backdrop, we can celebrate some real successes where water is concerned. Our rivers and streams are demonstrably cleaner than they were a generation ago, thanks to passage and implementation of the Clean Water Act. In the area of water conservation, the cities of San Antonio and El Paso have lowered their consumption of water per capita by a full 40 percent. On the landscape, the cities of Austin and San Antonio and Hays County and other local governments have approved hundreds of millions of dollars in bonds to create conservation easements on private lands in important watersheds and recharge areas.

The bond money is used to compensate landowners in exchange for their agreement to a legal covenant that limits development. The farmer or rancher retains ownership of the land, and a vital resource for the community is protected.

Back along Cypress Creek at this time of year, insects are hatching and swarming along the shore. If you are lucky, you can observe the native sunfish slipping up to the bank and battling vegetation with their tails, knocking their prey into the



*Andrew Sansom grew up in Lake Jackson, near the Gulf Coast, where explorations of the Brazos River bottomland whetted his appetite for the outdoors. Sansom has spent his entire life fighting to protect water. That includes the San Marcos River, shown here, whose rushing current beyond a dam comes courtesy of the prolific—and ecologically fragile—San Marcos Springs bubbling up outside his office at the Texas Rivers Center.*

water so they can feed. Such experiences can only leave one with a deep sense of respect for the living freshwater of Texas and the understanding that we are its stewards on behalf of both the economy and the environment of future generations.

Water is life.

**Andrew Sansom**, executive director of the River Systems Institute at Texas State University in San Marcos, is one of Texas' leading conservationists and author of *Water In Texas: An Introduction* (University of Texas Press, 2008). He is a former executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, executive director of the Texas Nature Conservancy and founder of The Parks and Wildlife Foundation of Texas.

# It's All the Same Water

Once deemed too 'secret, occult and concealed' to regulate, groundwater remains a vexing subject too deep to capture for today's lawmakers

WATER IS WATER, EXCEPT IN TEXAS.

All of Texas' freshwater comes from precipitation. Where it goes when it falls makes all the difference in the world.

Surface water, meaning creeks, rivers and lakes, is considered a public resource commonly owned by the people of Texas. Simple enough.

Groundwater, that is all water that you can't see below the surface of the Earth, is a whole other matter. That water, contained in aquifers and bolsons (Spanish for "bag," in this case meaning hollowed basins), found tens, hundreds and sometimes thousands of feet below the surface, is regarded like oil or other minerals—a resource owned by the owner of the land above it.

Got that?

In 1904, the Texas Supreme Court determined in the *Houston & T.C. Railway Co. v. East* case that property owners could pump as much groundwater as they pleased without regard to the effects on neighbors' wells. Groundwater, the court ruled, was too "secret, occult and concealed" to regulate. No one understood how groundwater worked, so the court applied rule of capture, a remnant of British common law, to the case.

In February 2012, the Texas Supreme Court's ruling in the *Day v. Edwards Aquifer Authority* case affirmed that the property owner of the ground also owned the water under that ground.

The problem with both decisions is that groundwater does not observe property lines. Some aquifers are so large they span several counties. Some, hydrologists have learned over the past century, are actually moving rivers. Plus, no matter

how groundwater moves, what's clear is more water is being pumped from underground than is being put back in through recharge.

That explains why other states in the American West have developed different laws and strategies regarding management of groundwater. Texas is the only Western state where rule of capture is law. That may work well for property owners wanting to sell their groundwater, or sell their mineral rights, but not so great for most of the rest of the population that relies on water as a life source.

Where water is abundant, rule of capture works fine, because whatever water is pumped out from underground is usually replenished. But in arid, water-short regions, such as all of the state west of the 98th parallel (roughly following U.S. Interstate 35), the devil's in the details. **Consider this: It's perfectly legal for a single landowner, taking advantage of his or her property rights, to drain so much groundwater that neighbors' wells go dry or the groundwater underneath their property disappears.**

The most notorious case illustrating that point is when Clayton Williams Sr. and other businessmen pumped groundwater below land they owned west of Fort Stockton to create a pecan orchard in the desert. Because of their actions, Comanche Springs, the largest springs in West Texas, went dry, forcing more than 200 truck farms east of town to go under. Williams' right was upheld by the Texas Supreme Court in 1954.

The Texas court has since reaffirmed property owners' right to underground water; in 1999, the court upheld the right of Ozarka to mine a spring in East Texas for commercial



purposes, even though it caused neighbors' wells to go dry.

The Texas Supreme Court's decision in early 2012 affirmed that Texas landowners own the groundwater "in place" beneath their property, and that they may have a valid claim for compensation from the government if regulations go too far in limiting their ability to capitalize on their groundwater.

Still, there are limits to unregulated pumping.

The withdrawal rate of pumping groundwater from the Ogallala Aquifer—one of the world's largest underground aquifer systems that covers most of the Great Plains, including the Texas Panhandle and South Plains—has exceeded recharge of the aquifer through rain and snowmelt over the past century. Parts of the water table in Texas have been drained, while less than half of the underground aquifer's original ground water supply remains. **Pumping costs have increased to the point where many Texas farmers have quit irrigated farming altogether, even if groundwater is available. In other words, pumping without regulation is unsustainable.**

In 1993, Federal District Judge Lucius D. Bunton III ordered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to set pumping limits in the Edwards Aquifer—which at the time supplied San Antonio with all its drinking water—to protect endangered species dependent on the Comal and San Marcos springs, the biggest spring systems in Texas.

"Without a fundamental change in the value the region places on freshwater, a major effort to conserve and reuse Aquifer water, and implemented plans to import supplemental supplies of water, the region's quality of life and economic future are imperiled," Bunton wrote in his decision.

Bunton's ruling led to the creation of the Edwards Aquifer Authority by the Texas Legislature. The authority regulates pumping from the Edwards Aquifer.

In 1997, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 1, establishing statewide water planning for the next 50 years. The bill and subsequent legislation have stated that the best means of local management of groundwater are the 101 groundwater districts

established across the state. The rub after the Texas Supreme Court's 2012 decision is, if a groundwater district or other government entity limits a landowner's desire to pump, the landowner can sue the district for a "taking" of private property.

"While the Texas Supreme Court's ruling in the Day case makes clear that landowners own the groundwater in place beneath their property, it is much less clear how far a groundwater district may limit pumping before it amounts to a taking of private property," says attorney Tom Mason, the former general manager of the Lower Colorado River Authority who now specializes in water law in Austin.

Which means groundwater districts, regional planning groups and state water authorities, in order to ensure sufficient water supplies 50 years from now, will have a hard time managing groundwater in a way that allows long-term, sustainable use by a variety of landowners/pumpers.

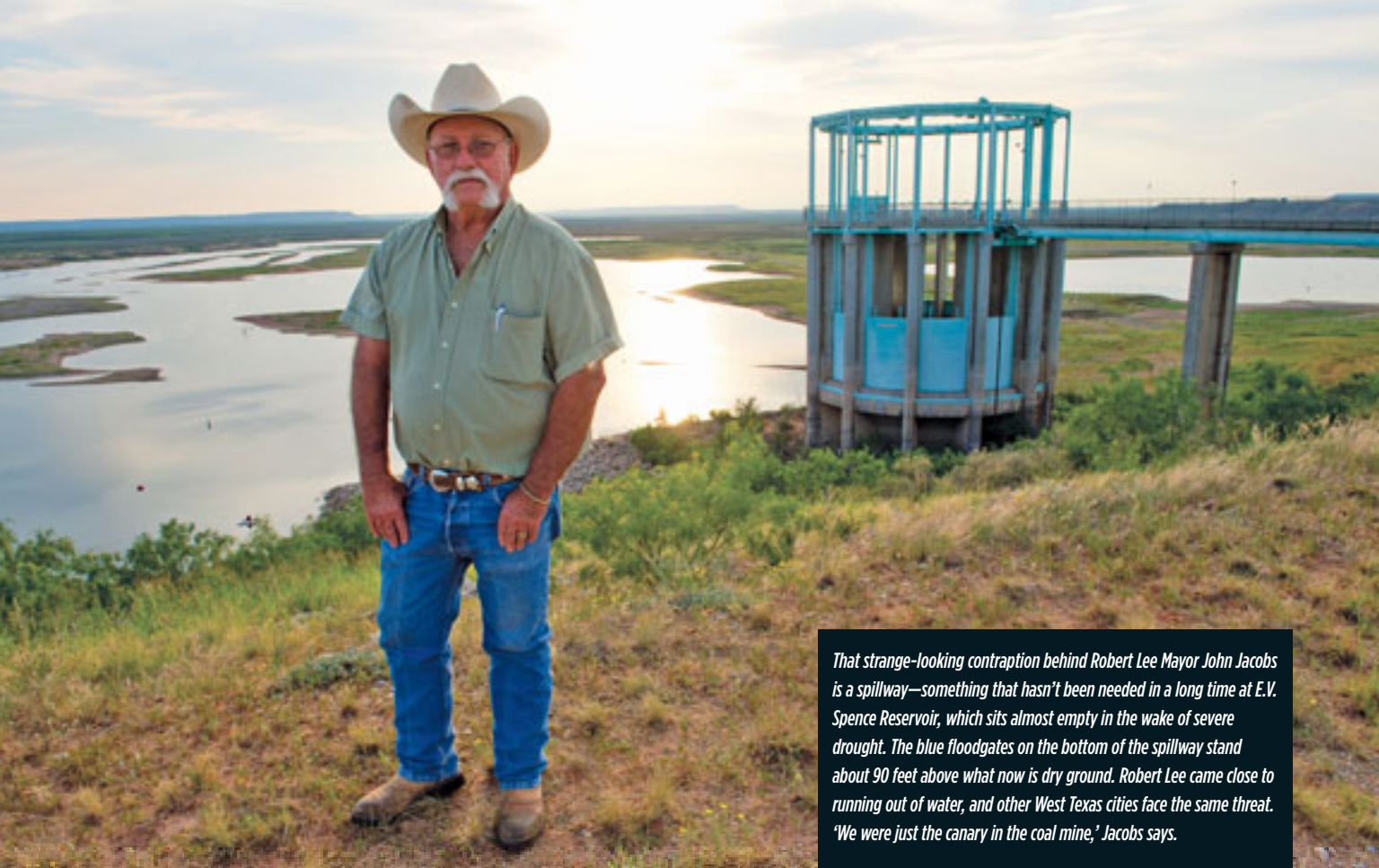
So, groundwater is a property right, and as such requires a whole lot of trust and awareness of the unwritten "law of the biggest pump" when it comes to management of groundwater resources locally, regionally or statewide. Otherwise, if all property owners exercised their right to pump, there wouldn't be any groundwater left to fight over.

Surface water, on the other hand, is owned by all Texans, even though despite the different laws, really, it's all the same water.

*Joe Nick Patoski is the author of nine books, including *Generations on the Land: A Conservation Legacy* (Texas A&M University Press, 2010). Patoski, an avid swimmer and kayaker, lives in Wimberley, in the Hill Country.*



*Water: It's a deep subject, and veteran journalist Joe Nick Patoski has been trying to get to the bottom of it for years. Spring-fed Jacob's Well, his favorite swimming hole, sustains the Blanco River and recharges the Edwards Aquifer. But while Wimberley's Jacob's Well is threatened by drought and increased pumping of the Trinity Aquifer, some homeowners in nearby Austin have paid to have private wells drilled in the Edwards—not for drinking water, but for water to keep their lawns lush and green.*



*That strange-looking contraption behind Robert Lee Mayor John Jacobs is a spillway—something that hasn't been needed in a long time at E.V. Spence Reservoir, which sits almost empty in the wake of severe drought. The blue floodgates on the bottom of the spillway stand about 90 feet above what now is dry ground. Robert Lee came close to running out of water, and other West Texas cities face the same threat. 'We were just the canary in the coal mine,' Jacobs says.*

# Water For All?

If Texans don't wake up to the realities of drought and absolute musts of conservation, we're going to experience water shortages of epic proportions

**BY CAMILLE WHEELER • PHOTOS BY WOODY WELCH**

*'Why worry? they said. It would rain this fall. It always had. But it didn't. And many a boy would become a man before the land was green again.'*

From *THE TIME IT NEVER RAINED*, by Elmer Kelton

ON A WARM APRIL MORNING NORTH OF SAN ANGELO, thick yellow wildflowers cover roadside ditches like luxurious rugs. But as

State Highway 208 winds toward the tiny town of Robert Lee, the eye snags on the inescapable: charred, dead trees standing sentry on hills still bald from vicious wildfires a year ago.

Inside City Hall, Robert Lee Mayor John Jacobs steps out of his office, offering a cheery, weatherproof grin beneath his horsehoe moustache. Yes ma'am, come on in. You think he'd be sick of the drill by now: For the past several months, major



media outlets—PBS, the Wall Street Journal, MSNBC, etc.—have been rolling into town to gawk at the cracked, parched ground of the huge, almost-empty E.V. Spence Reservoir that’s no longer helping supply water for half a million people, including the 1,050 residents of Robert Lee.

But Jacobs, a gentleman who removes his cowboy hat indoors, patiently chauffeurs visitors around town. He even let a German TV crew see that he wouldn’t get trampled while slinging out range cubes for his cattle.

Like Charlie Flagg, the fictional protagonist in *The Time It Never Rained*, the 66-year-old Jacobs is a multigenerational rancher with deep West Texas roots. Both men call San Angelo the nearest big city. And both understand a fundamental truth: Water is life.

His cattle sold, Flagg’s character resorts to “burning pear,” burning the spines off prickly pear cacti for his Angora goats to eat during the prolonged drought of the 1950s.

During that same real-life drought, Jacobs was about 6 when he learned to drive, working the clutch and stick shift on a Ford pickup. His father, walking behind the vehicle, burned pear for his hungry cattle with a handheld torch connected by hose to a propane tank in the pickup bed.

Decades later in 2011, when record heat, fire and drought scorched the land, Jacobs didn’t bother with the practice. Cacti pears were so dry and shrunken, he says, his cattle wouldn’t have been interested.

Jacobs, who has downsized his herd from 80 to 30 mother cows, has endured his share of drought. But, he allows, he’d

never seen, or heard, anything like last year when big rocks—*pow!* he says, remembering the sound—exploded in pastures during hellishly hot wildfires. And nobody, he says, ever dreamed of seeing the day when E.V. Spence—which at capacity holds 488,760 acre-feet, almost 160 billion gallons—would sit drained and useless, like a swimming pool in which somebody pulled the plug.

The Colorado River Municipal Water District, which owns and operates E.V. Spence, stopped pumping from it in September 2011. The district permitted Robert Lee, a longtime customer, to keep drawing water from the reservoir on its own, but by early 2012, the remaining water was too shallow and salty for pumping.

So here it is April, and on this day, Robert Lee is pumping and treating water from Mountain Creek Lake—essentially a large stock tank in town, built around 1950—that once met all of Robert Lee’s water needs. Needless to say, residents are conserving water. Nobody’s yard is green. And everybody’s counting the days until a 12-mile emergency water pipeline from nearby Bronte is connected.

Yes, Jacobs says, E.V. Spence Reservoir is a depressing sight. But he ruefully smiles and grabs his hat and pickup keys. Come on. I’ll drive you out there.

From an overlook, it’s hard to believe that the sprawling basin below, slowly being overtaken by tumbleweeds and salt cedar, was once a full, artificial lake. Over there, Jacobs says, gesturing toward a nearby cliff, is where his two sons, as teenagers, used to jump into the reservoir, plunging into water

## ‘We’re All in This Together’

Electric co-ops to members: We won’t leave you high and dry

There’s no escaping the discussion: From the Panhandle—big stretches of which remained in extreme drought conditions at press time—to the Rio Grande Valley, people are worried about water.

Not long ago, Texas Electric Cooperatives President/CEO Mike Williams visited Deaf Smith Electric Cooperative in Hereford. The scheduled conversation with President/General Manager Steve Louder and the co-op’s board of directors was about electricity. But they wound up talking about—you guessed it—drought and water.

More than 70 percent of the demand for the co-op’s power comes from irrigation pumping of the Ogallala Aquifer, which is being depleted faster than it is being recharged. After last year’s record-setting drought, and in light of the declining water table, there’s a real question about whether people can continue to make a living in some parts of the Panhandle.

It’s a dialogue, Williams says, in which the electric co-op model plays a vital role. For 75 years, he says, co-ops have been in the life-improvement business, specifically by providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity. Now, in the face of statewide water shortages, co-ops play critical roles as communication catalysts, bringing together public, private and governmental entities in search of the

answer to the big question: What can we do?

For starters, Williams says, “Co-ops have walked the talk that we really are in the quality-of-life business. We’re more than invested. We’re not going anywhere. There’s no us and them—we’re all in this together.”

Co-ops, Williams says, care about people as members, friends and neighbors. “Electric cooperatives, their directors, their staffs, the people who work there—they live in those communities,” he says. “Their future as an electric cooperative is inextricably tied to the health and welfare of those communities. They care about whether the water runs out or not because if it does, then maybe those communities don’t continue to exist.”

In Hereford, the discussion focused on risk management related to water, the region’s economic engine. If the Ogallala’s level continues to steadily drop, the growth and welfare of the entire region will be affected. Without water, Louder says, farmers will have to start growing dryland crops or change occupations—or even move away.

“But the members of Deaf Smith Electric Cooperative are resourceful, and we will work together with them to make whatever adjustments we must,” Louder says.

so deep they never worried about hitting bottom.

Today, from that same cliff, it's almost a straight 100-foot-plus drop to a dry beach of scrub brush and rocks. You could rappel down and start walking all the way across the bottom of the barren lake bed between shallow pools in which ducks nonchalantly swim.

Jacobs stares across the desolate expanse, remembering bass fishing tournaments held here and boats so thick on the water you couldn't stir 'em with a stick. Now the reservoir is a skeleton, with its bones—reddish, rocky earth—exposed. "That," a grim-faced Jacobs says, "is the picture of drought."

### 'We're Running Out of Water'

AND THIS IS THE PICTURE OF FEAR: On May 21, Mountain Creek Lake was down to about its last 8 inches. On May 22, Robert Lee—desperately pumping the last drops from what had become an emaciated pond—started receiving piped water from its neighbor, Bronte.

"We cut it close," Jacobs dryly understates. What's happening in West Texas is a wake-up call: Water shortages, say state water officials and conservationists, could happen anywhere

in the state. We're all in the same boat. "People tell me to quit talking about it," Jacobs says, "but we're running out of water."

The Robert Lee mayor gets no argument from the Texas Water Development Board, whose 2012 state water plan (see "Water for Texas," Page 16) sounds the alarm: During times of drought, the state does not have enough existing water supplies.

It's an ominous projection on many levels, including this one: More than 11,000 megawatts of Texas electric power generation rely on cooling water from lakes and reservoirs at historically low levels, according to a 2011 drought impact report from the state comptroller's office. Without sufficient rainfall, that capacity could be jeopardized.

"You can't run a modern society without electricity," says State Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon, who compares Texas' water woes to the calm before the 2005 storm of Hurricane Katrina, when experts agreed that New Orleans' levee system was insufficient—and no one reinforced it. "Nobody's willing to do it until, whoops, catastrophe," he says.

"And that's what it might take for this state," Nielsen-Gammon continues. "We might actually have to have an urban area run out of water or have major blackouts for people to



*As San Antonio water officials and city council members look on, Superintendent Art Ruiz explains how El Paso's Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant converts brackish water to fresh drinking water. The concentrate—the byproduct waste produced during desalination—is piped underground to wells and injected 4,000 feet deep into dolomite rock formations that prevent migration to fresh aquifer water. The facility is drawing global interest, including from San Antonio, which plans to bring a desalination plant online in 2016.*



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<sup>‡</sup> "Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition;" a publication of the U.S. Department of Labor. Individual student earnings vary based on experience. Growth figures represent a ten-year period ending 2020.

recognize that this is something important enough that it has to be dealt with, not just on paper, but in practice.”

## ‘Drought Happens’

PERHAPS NOTHING BETTER ILLUSTRATES water officials’ frustrations than the tongue-in-cheek “hydro-illogic” cycle being circulated at closed-door meetings. The chart describes people’s perceived attitudes toward weather: drought—concern; severe drought—panic; rain—apathy.

As of June, much of the state had received above-average rainfall for the year, but some of the highest amounts fell in the Dallas, Houston and San Antonio metropolitan areas, Nielsen-Gammon says, tending to steer public perception toward a false conclusion: Everything is nice and green here, so the drought must be over.

Yet in early summer, more than half of Texas remained in drought conditions, with three areas suffering the most: the Big Bend region, the extreme western portion of the Panhandle, and a triangle formed by Abilene, Childress and Lubbock. You’d better believe those people know where water comes from. Meanwhile, there are those who don’t have a clue:

- Years ago, in response to the TWDB’s annual water-use survey, one mayor mailed back his responses with a politely stated letter: “We do not use ground or surface water. Our water comes from a water tower.”

- In 2011, as Texas’ drought became severe, the TWDB received several phone calls from individuals wanting to know—seriously—where the state’s water pipeline was and how they could tap into it.

If only it worked that way—someone could just wave a magic wand over Texas’ driest spots and render them lush and green. Instead, we’re left with cold-hearted science: Most water planners use what’s considered the state’s drought of record—a six- or seven-year period starting in 1950, depending on location—as a worst-case scenario. But a study published last year in the Texas Water Journal is making officials rethink that conclusion. Research of tree rings—bald cypress in South Central Texas, Douglas fir in West Texas and post oak in Central Texas—indicates that several extended droughts were longer and/or more intense than the 1950s dry spell.

Further, note the study’s authors—from the University of Arkansas, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and The University of Texas—Texas has suffered severe decadal-scale droughts at least once a century since the 1500s. The authors don’t mince words: “When water managers consider past droughts, population growth, and climate change, it becomes highly probable that the future poses unprecedented challenges.”

In other words, even as we put the horrific images of 2011 behind us, it can still get worse. Or, as Nielsen-Gammon says: “Drought Happens,” the slogan the state climatologist jokes about putting on a T-shirt.

To some urbanites, the idea of a reservoir—or a town—running out of water is simply unfathomable. By way of education, Nielsen-Gammon likens drought to a child maturing into adulthood: The longer an extreme dry spell lasts, the more strength it gains. It takes years for reservoirs to fill up, and it takes years for them to go down. In semi-arid areas, such as West Texas, reservoir levels can drop each successive year, until finally, if the drought doesn’t break, they hit bottom.

To be fair, plenty of Texans comprehend drought. And many people understand that, depending upon where they live, water comes from aquifers, rivers, reservoirs and, of course, the sky. But, as Robert Lee’s Jacobs reminds: “Only the good Lord can make it rain.”

## Water from Water

FLYING INTO EL PASO, gazing out the window at the desert floor coming into sharper view, it suddenly seems unwise to relinquish a plastic cup of ice as we start our descent. Save for scattered shrubs and cacti whose coloring blends with the chalky-brown dirt below, the bleak terrain offers few signs of life. No green. No water for miles and miles and miles.

As the plane’s landing gear unfolds, and the flight attendants swoop down the aisle to scoop up drinks, finished or not, it’s hard to let go. Just looking at the desert is enough to make one thirsty. But a quiet chuckle comes: As a visitor to El Paso, it’s easy to succumb to hyperbolic thinking. Water, after all, is what brought this reporter here.

Water. Cold, precious water that’s being saved, reclaimed, protected and transformed in this far West Texas city tucked into the northern corner of the Chihuahuan Desert where the average annual rainfall of 8.8 inches is more than 20 inches below the norm around much of the state.

Yet in what approximates a modern-day miracle, El Paso

## ‘Water for Texas’

The Texas Water Development Board’s 2012 proposal, called “Water for Texas,” requests \$53 billion from the Legislature to cover capital costs. The message to state lawmakers, who convene for regular session in January, is this: “In serious drought conditions, Texas does not and will not have enough water to meet the needs of its people, its businesses and its agricultural enterprises.”

### Here’s a snapshot:

- **Texas’ population:** Projected to increase 82 percent by 2060.
- **Total existing water supplies:** Projected to decrease about 10 percent; groundwater supplies projected to decrease about 30 percent.
- **Without new water-supply projects:** Texas is projected to be 8.3 million acre-feet (1 acre-foot equals 325,851 gallons) short by 2060.
- **Recommended volumes of total water management strategies by 2060:** Conservation and reuse, one-third; infrastructure for existing water supplies (i.e., new pipelines), one-third; and water-supply development (including new reservoirs, brackish water and seawater desalination, aquifer storage and recovery), one-third.
- **Shifting water needs:** By 2060, municipal needs—not agricultural irrigation, the current biggest user—will represent the largest share of Texas’ total water demand.
- **Recommendations to Legislature include:** Construction of 26 additional major reservoirs (storage capacity of 5,000 acre-feet or more) projected to produce 1.5 million acre-feet of water by 2060; elimination of restrictions on transference of surface water from one river basin to another.



# Save It for a Sunny Day

Even during drought, rainwater harvesting is more than a drop in the bucket

BY CAROL MOCZYGEMBA

Hard-packed, fractured stretches of bone-dry earth and pale, cloudless skies with months of unrelenting heat isn't exactly an appropriate backdrop for a conversation about rainwater harvesting.

Or is it?

Sanjeev Kalaswad, rainwater harvesting coordinator with the Texas Water Development Board, thinks it's just the right context for enlightening Texans about collecting and storing rainwater. The severity of ongoing drought in some parts of the state pits us in a stare-down with our worst fears: What if we run out of water?

Kalaswad offers a bit of consolation: "Even during a drought we get some rain," he says. And even if it's less than an inch, or a weak drizzle, a surprising amount of water can be collected with the right system, he says.

No matter when you decide to install a rainwater collection system, it's a pretty safe bet that over time you will reap the benefits. Although the size and complexity of collection systems run the gamut between a few barrels connected to a downspout, and massive, multithousand-gallon concrete tanks fed with a network of pipes, the basic principle is the same: Use the roof of your house or some other building to channel rainwater into a main artery hooked to a cistern, or water storage vessel.

Under average conditions, it's possible to harvest 620 gallons of rainwater for every inch of rain that falls on a 1,000-square-foot roof. In a 2006 report to the Texas Legislature, the Texas Rainwater Harvesting Evaluation Committee stated, "Approximately 38 billion gallons of water would be conserved annually if 10 percent of the roof area in Texas could be used for rainwater harvesting."

A great success story comes from the Hill Country: When Bandera Electric Cooperative members John Kight and his wife, Mary Evelyn, started construction on their Boerne home in 2000, they installed a rainwater collection system to support their total water needs, from a kitchen faucet to an outdoor sprinkler. "It would have cost \$26,000 to dig a well, and the water had sulfur and iron in it and was very hard," said Kight, a retired civil engineer. "It tasted bad."

He did the numbers. For \$14,500, he could build a 30,000-gallon rainwater harvesting system that would sustain the couple through scant rainfall.

Kight's rainwater collection system has been operating since 2001 and has not run dry. In the meantime, Kight has become a rainwater-harvesting evangelist and conducts regular workshops on the subject at the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne. He helped lobby the Legislature



*John Kight knows every detail of the construction, the hydraulic science, the biological environment and the precise measurement of what goes in and out of his 11 forest-green, polypropylene water tanks every day.*

to allow local taxing authorities to exempt all or part of the assessed value of property used for rainwater conservation systems, provide sales tax exemptions for rainwater harvesting equipment and materials, and prevent homeowners' associations from banning rainwater harvesting systems.

At the height of the 2011 drought in August, Kight had recorded one-one-hundredth of an inch of rainfall, with 21,150 gallons of water left in the 40,500-gallon capacity system. (Kight added five tanks after 2001.) In that same month, he and Mary Evelyn used an average of 44 gallons of potable and 42 gallons of nonpotable water per day. Kight notes that the average national water use is 60 gallons per person daily, but rainwater harvesters typically use only 35 gallons a day per person.

Rainwater, free of the minerals usually present in groundwater, cuts down on housekeeping, too. There's no calcium buildup around the tub or the kitchen sink. The dishwasher doesn't get clogged with mineral deposits, the coffeemaker doesn't need a vinegar bath, and you can pour plain tap water into the steam iron.

But there's something else that's even better. Kight dips his hand into the refrigerator's icemaker and presents a palm full of small, crystal-clear ice cubes. He puts them in a sparkling glass and fills it with tap water. It's pure and cool, like liquid satin on the tongue. Water never tasted so good.

**Carol Moczygemba**, executive editor

**On TexasCoopPower.com**

More about rainwater harvesting.

officials proudly point to the statistics: Since 1991, when its water conservation ordinance was enacted, El Paso projects it has saved more than 231 billion gallons of water. And through a diverse conservation and water management program, the city estimates it is saving almost 19 billion gallons a year.

No, you can't change the desert. But, says Ed Archuleta, president and CEO of the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board, you can change the culture. What that meant in 1989, when Archuleta arrived in El Paso to oversee the department, was the start of an aggressive conservation program and a 50-year water management plan designed to protect the city's primary water sources: the Hueco and Mesilla bolsons, or aquifers; and the Rio Grande, whose flow relies on seasonal snowmelt from Colorado and New Mexico mountains.

That foresight has yielded remarkable results: Per one of the city's slogans—"Water shouldn't only be used once!"—El Pasoans use more than 2 billion gallons of reclaimed effluent (treated wastewater) each year, including for industrial use, golf course and residential property irrigation, and power-generation cooling at El Paso Electric.

And then there's a magnetic message—making water from water—that's attracting researchers from around the globe, including desert countries such as Saudi Arabia, to the \$91 million Kay Bailey Hutchison Desalination Plant. The world's largest such inland facility has the capacity to produce 27.5 million gallons of freshwater a day, boosting the El Paso Water Utilities' daily freshwater production by 25 percent.

Hutchison, a U.S. senator who lives in Dallas, helped secure \$26 million in federal funding for the plant, the largest project of its kind involving the U.S. Department of Defense and a community. It serves El Paso, which owns the facility, and Fort Bliss, an Army post that owns the land. In 2011, more than 734 million gallons from the plant were blended into Fort Bliss' freshwater supply.

Through reverse osmosis, a process in which pressurized raw water passes through fine membranes, separating salts and other contaminants, the plant turns salty brackish water pumped from the Hueco Bolson into drinkable water. The permeate, the desalted water, is blended into daily freshwater supplies.

The concentrate—the water containing everything removed during desalination—is pumped 22 miles underground to solar-powered deep-well injection sites on Fort Bliss property surrounded by open desert.

It's a win-win-win situation: For El Paso, for Fort Bliss and for the Hueco Bolson, in which pumping captures the flow of brackish water toward freshwater wells. The aquifer was dropping 1½ to 3 feet a year by the early 1990s. Now, incredibly, despite drought and little rain runoff, it is stable and at 1960s levels thanks to conservation efforts, city officials say.

"Show me an aquifer that's been depleted and is now recovering or at least stable," Archuleta says. "I don't think you'll find too many."

On a mid-April morning inside the desalination plant, the pleasant hum of electric generator units sounds like a waterfall. Standing beside rows of gleaming, stainless steel-encased membranes, Plant Superintendent Art Ruiz fills two papercone cups beneath spigots. "Go ahead and tell me what it tastes like," he says.

Timid sip. Hmm ... it's uh ... pretty good. Is this a trick?

Ruiz smiles, handing over the second cup. "Now, with your

finger, taste that." Whoa! WAY salty. Yep, that's the concentrate. And the first cup was the permeate. Amazing. It tasted just fine.

Innovation. Conservation. Reclamation. Education. Diversification of water strategies, Archuleta says, is what keeps El Paso afloat. Too many cities, he muses, suffer from short-term thinking: The drought's over, it's raining, we can put water issues on the back burner. "If you continue that fallacy, it'll burn you after a while," he says.

Take a lesson from the water experts: "El Paso," Archuleta says, "always has a plan."

*Camille Wheeler, former associate editor*

## On [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com)

"It's culture shock out here," Manager John Grant says as reservoirs go dry and the Colorado River Municipal Water District runs out of surface water.

**You can't make it rain**, but in Texas, you can make water: The state has 40 active brackish-water desalination plants, and construction of a seawater desalination facility is scheduled to start in 2013 on South Padre Island.

**History bluntly indicates** that drought will hit us hard, time and again. So what gives? The answer: We do. Two huge cities—Dallas and San Antonio—show us how to save water.

# Every Drop Counts

"Landscaping," says Ed Archuleta, president and CEO of El Paso Water Utilities, "is not a requirement for living." So should we stop grooming our green lawns? Not necessarily—but we should be smarter about how we grow grass and consider switching to water-friendly xeriscaping, which isn't just for the desert. Consider cultivating these conservation tips designed to save you water—and money:

**Indoors** Texans can save at least 20 gallons per day simply by installing water-efficient fixtures and repairing leaks.

- Toilets can account for 30 percent of home water use. Replace old toilets with high-efficiency ones (less than 1.3 gallons per flush) and fix toilet leaks, which can waste up to 200 gallons of water per year.
- To check for leaks, turn off all faucets and water-using appliances, then record the water-meter reading. After 20 minutes, if no water has been used and the reading has changed, a leak exists somewhere.
- Run the dishwasher and washing machine only when full.
- Use a water-efficient showerhead.

**Outdoors** Summer outdoor water use can account for up to 80 percent of total residential water use.

- To prevent evaporation: Don't water when it's windy; water lawns early in the morning during summer heat; and use drip-irrigation systems for bedded plants, trees and shrubs.
- Grow drought-tolerant grass, such as Turffalo (a hybrid buffalo grass developed by Texas Tech University), Bermuda, buffalo and zoysia.
- When running the sprinkler, set an empty tuna-fish can upright in the yard. When the can is full, the grass has received enough water.
- Don't hose off sidewalks or driveways—use a broom.



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## CONSERVATION AND SAFETY INFORMATION



A little sweat equity in home improvement projects can cut the costs—but only if you plan ahead and do the work safely.

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## Think Safety During Harvest

It's easy to get caught up in the rush of late summer harvesting, but don't forget about safety.

Portable grain augers, oversized wagons, combines and other tall or cumbersome equipment could come in contact with overhead power lines, creating an electrocution threat to those on the ground nearby—as well as the operator—if proper steps aren't taken. Always lower a portable grain auger or elevator before you move it, even if only a few feet. As a general rule, keep all objects at least 10 feet away from overhead lines.

Be extra careful when working around trees and brush; they often make it difficult to see power lines.

Your electric cooperative encourages you to plan to harvest safely. For more ways to stay safe on and off the farm, visit [safeelectricity.org](http://safeelectricity.org).

## Tackle Home Projects Safely

BY KELLY TRAPNELL

**Do-it-yourself offers a great way to save money and learn new skills. But before you tackle that home improvement project you saw online or on TV, practice these safety measures to avoid injury while getting game-winning results.**

### Score points with safety equipment

Just like a helmet and pads are required on a football field, safety items are essential for DIY tasks. Read and follow directions on every power tool you use. Wearing eye and ear protection and gloves, as well as tying back loose hair and securing loose clothing, are all important to keeping you safe. If renting a tool, ask the store staff for safety tips.

### Look up, down, and all around

For outside projects, first check the area where you will be working. Identify potential hazards and take time to avoid or correct any problems. Don't forget to look up for power lines and avoid using long poles or ladders within 10 feet of overhead wires. If power tools are needed, be sure everything is in good working order.

Will your project involve any digging? Call 811 before you dig, even if you think you know where underground lines may be. The 811 service will mark all underground lines in your area free of charge before you start work.

### Avoid the blitz

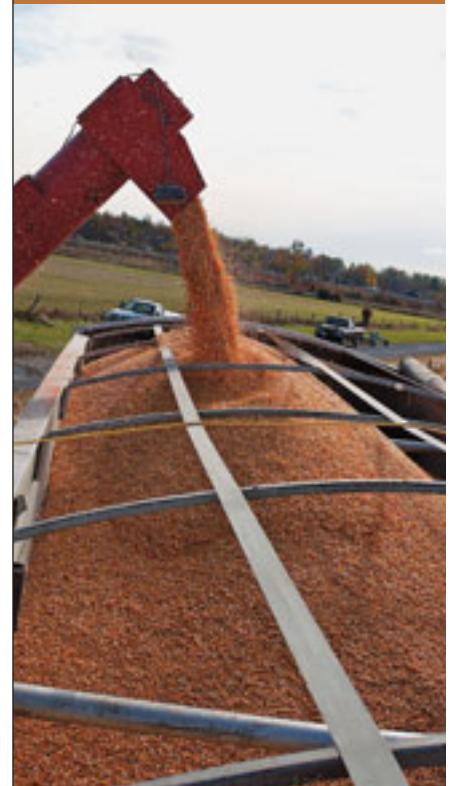
Water and electricity don't mix, so avoid running cords through wet areas. Inspect cords for fraying or damage before use, and be sure outlets can handle any extra load from power tools. Overloading outlets can lead to more than a shock: Fire hazards may result from demanding too much from an electrical system.

### Be honest with yourself

If a job seems like it might be too much to handle, leave it to a professional. Take into consideration heavy lifting, expensive tools that will be used only once, and whether you really have the time. That way, you won't be tempted to skip safety measures.

For more safety advice, visit [safetyathome.com](http://safetyathome.com).

*Kelly Trapnell writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*





# 10 TIPS FOR Big Summer Savings

**1** | **RAISE YOUR THERMOSTAT TO 78 DEGREES OR HIGHER.** This is the No. 1 way to conserve energy.

**2** | **WHEN YOU ARE AWAY FROM HOME FOR MORE THAN EIGHT HOURS, RAISE THE THERMOSTAT SETTING** and expect to see a 1 percent savings for each degree of setback.

**3** | **KEEP WINDOW SHADES CLOSED WHEN THE AIR CONDITIONER IS ON.** Sunny windows account for 40 percent of unwanted indoor heat and can make your air conditioner work considerably harder.

**4** | **CHECK AND CLEAN FILTERS.** Cleaning and replacing air conditioner filters monthly allows the system to run more efficiently.

**5** | **INSTALL CEILING FANS.** Moving air over the body provides a cooling effect. The use of ceiling fans can mean savings of about 25 percent on cooling costs and make the temperature seem 10 degrees cooler. Just remember, fans cool people, not rooms, so turn them off when leaving the room for an extended period of time.

**6** | **MAKE SURE CEILING FANS ARE BLOWING DOWN.** Most fans have a switch to change the fan direction. Make sure ceiling fans are blowing downward (in a counter-clockwise direction) to send air past your body to make you feel cooler.

**7** | **RUN HIGH ENERGY-USING APPLIANCES LATE IN THE EVENING.** Use the dishwasher and clothes washer after 7 p.m. When used during the day, these appliances produce additional heat, causing your air conditioner to work harder.

**8** | **USE COLD WATER TO WASH DISHES AND CLOTHES.** This will save on water heating costs.

**9** | **UNPLUG EQUIPMENT WHEN IT IS NOT IN USE.** Electric chargers, televisions and audio/video equipment use electricity and produce heat even when not in use. Running an older refrigerator can use up to three times the energy of a modern one.

**10** | **TURN LIGHTS OFF WHEN EXITING A ROOM.** Consider replacing incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs. And remember to recycle CFLs.

Ceiling fans are a great way to stay cool and save money. Just make sure they're blowing the right direction: Down in the summer, up in the winter.



If your vehicle hits a utility pole or power line, stay put and call 911.

## CRASH!

### What to do if you hit a utility pole

If you have a car accident that involves a utility pole and fallen power lines, don't get out of your car.

Instead, stay inside and use your cellphone to call 911. If you don't have your phone with you, yell for help until someone else agrees to make the emergency call.

The reason: Until an electric utility line crew reaches you and de-energizes the power line, you have to assume the wire is "live" and can electrocute you and your passengers. Wait for the OK from the pros before touching anything outside of your car.

Of course, if your car catches on fire, you'll need to get out in a hurry. In that case, jump out so you land on both feet as far away from your car as possible. Hop—don't walk—away from the car, making sure that both feet touch the ground at the same time with each hop.

Do not touch the utility pole, any utility wire or anything that's touching or even close to a utility line. Assume everything is energized with electricity that can harm or even kill you if you touch it.

# The Language Of Whales



At SeaWorld San Antonio, gentle, gregarious belugas teach us the mysteries of the deep.

BY EILEEN MATTEI

Natasha, a 1,300-pound beluga whale, glides to where I stand in thigh-high water on the edge of an 18-foot-deep training pool at SeaWorld San Antonio. From 3 feet away, she raises her massive white head and sprays chilly saltwater over my wetsuit-encased body. Sputtering, I give the hand signal for Natasha to dive and circle back to me. Her quick response means she understands. I'm talking to a whale!

In the Beluga Interaction Program, Natasha's reward is a fistful of restaurant-quality herring when she does as requested. I interpret her high-pitched whistles and squeaks as pride in her achievement—and her desire for fish, of course.

A few minutes' acquaintance with a chatty beluga whale validates the species' nickname, "canary of the seas." Belugas, which hear at higher frequencies than humans, make at least 11 different vocalizations by emitting sounds through their blowholes. In the pool, we communicate with visual cues, using a sign language that the whales learn through "successive approximation training." That training breaks down a whale's behavior (nodding its head, floating on its back, racing around the pool) into baby steps, says Shirlee Crandall, technical senior trainer for the program.

"We make it enjoyable for them so they want to do it, so they are choosing to participate. Just like kids, they learn the small, easy behaviors first," Crandall says. Every time a whale responds correctly to a command, the behavior is reinforced,

usually with a batch of whole fish. Training and social interaction are voluntary on the whales' part. If they don't want to do what is requested, or don't understand a command, at the end of the day they still get their full ration of fish, which runs between 20 and 75 pounds, depending on body weight.

For effective training, Crandall explains, it's important to learn the preferences of each whale. In addition to fish, whales learn to enjoy other forms of praise, such as belly rubs, splashes and whale toys, such as balls. The 12-year-old Luna, for example, really likes to play with toys. Natasha, meanwhile, rarely does.

An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 belugas swim in the Arctic and subarctic waters off Alaska, Greenland and Canada, although their numbers are threatened by several factors, including water pollutants and commercial hunting. Charcoal gray at birth, belugas turn whiter with age (thereby blending with ice as a camouflage against predators) and can grow to 16 feet long and about 3,000 pounds on a main diet of fish, squid and crabs.

SeaWorld's eight belugas swim in 2.5 million gallons of chilly 58-degree saltwater. The whales range in age from Natasha and Martha, in their 30s—belugas can live 50 years—to 2-year-old baby Atla, one of nine belugas born in San Antonio over the past two decades. Every day, year-round, each beluga participates in four to eight learning, play and exercise sessions under the guidance of nine trainers. The interaction program, which continues even when SeaWorld is closed, mixes partici-



pants like me into the whales' learning and play sessions.

"You are trainers in the water today. You are going to be asking for behaviors and then reinforcing behaviors," trainer Kelly Adamonis tells the 10 of us who have signed up for an afternoon session. Martin Brophy, a serious 11-year-old from Goliad, chose the whale interaction program as his birthday present. A couple from Del Rio are taking the figurative plunge with whales to celebrate their engagement. Annie Reese, 17, envisions a future in marine biology. We squeeze into SeaWorld wetsuits and split into three groups.

After we ease onto the pool's submerged ledge, wading in shallow water where we will stay, trainer Laura Meitin describes the signal I will give Luna. With clasped hands, I give Luna the sign to wiggle her melon, the dome on her massive head. She does so and drops open her

huge mouth for a fish snack. Luna's flexible pectoral (side) flippers—soft and cool to my fingers—keep her balanced, while her tail propels her through the water at speeds up to 14 mph.

Meitin runs Luna through her repertoire so each participant standing in the water gets to communicate with, touch and reward the enthusiastic whale. I twirl like a ballerina, and so does Luna. I discover that Luna knows her left from her right better than I do. She gets a belly rub and splashes for her cooperation.

Meitin slaps the water, calling Imaq, a 1,900-pound whale, to us. Meitin nods at him, and he nods back. She hands us fish, and we hold them beneath the surface, where Imaq slurps them out of our hands. Meitin circles her thumb and forefinger: "This is his cue to make a series of different noises." But Imaq keeps making the same noise. Meitin tells us to stand still for three seconds and not acknowledge this incor-

rect behavior, saying, "I'm not communicating in a way he understands. Maybe I'm giving the hand signal incorrectly."

But Imaq interprets the next signals perfectly. He springs out of the water like a dolphin, curving up and splashing down, and we give him his reward. A headstand, his tail waving high, follows as does a marlin-like backward tail walk.

Imaq gives me my first whale kiss—a cold, gentle buss on my cheek. I kiss him back, planting a heartfelt smooch on his giant domed head.

Being in the water with belugas is educational, but the true joy comes from building a relationship with a whale. With squeaks, whistles and playful splashes, Luna, Imaq and Natasha talk to me in the only "sign language" I understand. That these beautiful giants allow me to touch them and are willing to touch me back speaks volumes.

*Eileen Mattei, frequent contributor*

**A WHALE OF A WAVE:** The Beluga Interaction Program gives visitors the thrill of joining in a conversation with mammals that can weigh more than a ton. As for the studious whales, well, they eat it up, too.



COURTESY OF SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO

# The Squirrel Whisperer

In the grand scheme of life,  
does one tiny creature really  
matter? One woman's answer:  
Yes.

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

I'M NOT AFRAID OF HEIGHTS. But one hot August morning, I knew that even the tallest ladder couldn't reach the tiny orphan that huddled high within the huge live oak that shades our front yard. Frustrated, I murmured a quick prayer as I circled the tree, trying to figure out what to do. From the dire look of things, only a miracle could save that baby. And quite honestly, I doubted *that* would happen.

Just the day before, I'd heard an unfamiliar, high-pitched shriek coming from somewhere up in the old oak. *A rat snake must have gotten a baby bird*, I thought sadly. That evening, as my husband, James, and I strolled across the yard, I described what I'd heard earlier in the day. Suddenly, the same screech sounded. This time, though, it came from a different oak.

Anxiously, James and I hurried over to the tree and scanned the outer branches. Way above us, clinging to a clump of ball moss, we spotted the tiniest Eastern fox squirrel I'd ever seen. Still screeching, the baby awkwardly clambered farther down the branch. Now and then, it'd lose its footing. "It's going to fall!" I exclaimed.

Meanwhile, another scream sounded from the old oak. Sure enough, two more babies clumsily climbed among the high branches. Where was the mother squirrel? Should we try and rescue them? But how? I was clueless.

"Let's let nature take its course," I suggested reluctantly. James nodded. After all, they were just *squirrels*. Goodness

knew we had enough of those. Nonetheless, we kept watch from lawn chairs set on the front porch. Minutes later, a movement off in the grass caught my eye. I stood up for a better view.

"It's a baby, James! It did fall!" I rushed inside the house for a towel while James kept vigil. Back outside, I carefully wrapped the baby snugly within the towel's soft folds. "Look, another one fell," James said, pointing to a second squirrel on the ground. Gently, we tucked it inside the towel, too.

"I wasn't going to tell you, but ..." James looked at me, sheepishly. "Their mother must have been run over. Because earlier this week, I did see a dead squirrel in the street." That explained why the trio had left their nest.

We took the two orphans to Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation, a nonprofit facility near Kandalia, not too far away. "Yes, it's a good thing you brought them because they're not weaned yet," the young volunteer told us after examining the pair. "Girls," she added, smiling. "Both of them."

So we'd rescued two. But a third baby—alone, hungry and vulnerable to predators—remained high in the oak. I worried all night.

The next morning, I hurried outside and scanned the oak limbs. I listened, too. No baby squirrel. Where was it? Had it survived the night? Every half hour or so, I peeked at the oak through our bedroom blinds. I'd also go back outside and check. Still no sign. Until ...

"I see it, I see it!" I squealed as I flew



down the hallway and out our front door. Finally, I'd spotted a tiny silhouette, huddled atop a large horizontal limb. It was still alive! But now what? As I circled the tree's base, I craned back my neck and looked straight up some 30 feet to where the baby perched. *You can't reach that squirrel, Sheryl! Forget it.*

But I couldn't forget it. "C'mon, baby!" I cooed. It eyed me curiously but didn't move. "C'mon down!" Over and over again, I called as I circled the tree, always keeping the squirrel within view.

To my dismay, it just climbed higher on wobbly legs. Thinking it might fall, I cupped my hands, ready—but uncertain—whether I could even catch it. Somehow, though, the little thing hung on. *What's the point? It's just a squirrel. Give up, Sheryl.*

But I just couldn't. Then it turned and began to inch its way gingerly down the oak! "C'mon, baby, c'mon," I coaxed as I stretched my hands toward it and patted the rough bark reassuringly. Halfway down, though, it stopped and peered at me from a thick V in the tree's trunk.

Maybe a ladder would reach now? But before I left to fetch one, I decided to try once more. "C'mon, baby! Oh, *please*, come down," I called quietly. To my surprise, it started toward me! Slowly, head-first, that tiny squirrel edged down the oak to where I stood on tiptoes, leaning against the tree, still patting the bark. "C'mon, baby! C'mon!"

Stunned and awed, I waited as it continued downward. Would it really come to me? Tears pricked my eyes. With all my might, I stretched my fingertips a tad higher, just enough to touch its itty-bitty black nose and wispy whiskers. Its round brown eyes stared at me.

"It's OK, baby," I whispered. I stepped higher on the oak's base and quickly clasped my hand around its frail, furry body. It struggled some, but I hung on tight. In a few seconds, I nuzzled the squirrel baby against my neck. Inside a plastic box, I placed it in the same towel that had covered its sisters.

Back at the rehab center, a volunteer—who said our brave survivor was a boy—said, no, it's not unusual for orphaned squirrels to seek humans. Maybe so. But this I know: I saw trust in the eyes of a tiny creature that I thought didn't matter, and *that* was a miracle to me.

**Sheryl Smith-Rodgers**, frequent contributor



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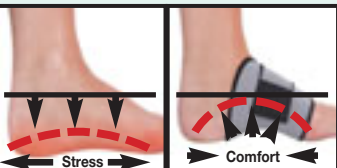
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# Lottie Deno, Lady Gambler

In 1872, an impeccably dressed young woman sashayed along the dusty streets of Fort Griffin in North Texas. Although she looked like a cultured Southern belle with a wardrobe straight from the Paris fashion houses, the red-haired beauty, who went by the name Lottie, was one of Texas' most notorious gamblers.

BY MARTHA DEERINGER

TRAILED BY A PAST CLOUDED IN MYSTERY, the lady pushed through the batwing doors of the Bee Hive, her preferred gambling house, where she proceeded to extract the last cent from a well-to-do gentleman at a card game of faro. As the story goes, someone yelled from the back of the saloon, "Honey, with winnings like them, you ought to call yourself Lotta Dinero." With a slight adjustment, she did.

Lottie Deno both angered and intrigued the hard-bitten men of the Texas frontier forts. Beguiling and mysterious, she handled a deck of cards with maddening dexterity, cleaning out foolish soldiers who had just drawn their pay. Most of the regulars suspected that she cheated at cards, but none could catch her at it. Previously known as Mystic Maud, the lady gambler guarded her secret past like a royal flush, causing wild rumors to circulate about her ancestry.

Few of Lottie's contemporaries ever discovered that she was born Carlotta J. Thompkins on April 21, 1844, the daughter of well-to-do parents, on a plantation near Warsaw, Kentucky. Her father, a racehorse breeder, sent her to an Episcopal convent and took Lottie with him on business trips across the United States and Europe. But it was in New Orleans that he introduced his eldest daughter to the world of gambling, betting heavily on his horses and introducing her to the secrets of winning at cards.

Lottie's nanny, assigned to her at birth from among the slaves who worked the Thompkins' plantation, was a giant of a woman, 7-foot-tall Mary Poindexter. Mary accompanied Lottie everywhere, long after she grew to adulthood. When the two women walked the streets alone, Lottie's father didn't worry. Nobody messed with Mary Poindexter.

In 1861, when Lottie was 17, the Civil War took a disastrous toll on her family. Her father enlisted in the Confederate Army and was killed in battle. Lottie's mother, in failing health, sent her daughter to Detroit to stay with family friends, hoping that she would marry a young man who could take over her father's business. Lottie cavorted through the city, dancing her nights away until Mary pointed out that they would soon run out of money. Lottie received a fortuitous invitation to visit a local gambling fraternity. Dressed in her finest, she attended ... and played.

Her nights at the poker tables provided income, enough to send money home to her mother and younger sister, although she told her family nothing about the money's origins.

In Detroit, Lottie teamed up with old friend Johnny Golden, a former jockey who had once ridden her father's racehorses. But Lottie's mother made it plain that Johnny was not acceptable husband material and would not be welcome in Kentucky because he was Jewish. Throughout the Civil War, Johnny and Lottie worked the gambling houses along the Mississippi River. They ultimately split, and Johnny agreed to meet Lottie in San Antonio in the near future.

Mary, meanwhile, took her job as Lottie's guardian seriously, once even throwing herself on a rattlesnake in her mistress' path. Mary was bitten in the scary encounter near the Mississippi and lost a finger. In another incident, two Confederate officers spotted Lottie strolling on the deck of a riverboat. One officer began shouting that Lottie had cheated him at cards and raced up the gangplank to confront her, but Mary stepped between them, lifted the officer



into the air and tossed him overboard.

In 1865, Lottie arrived in San Antonio and a year later was offered a job dealing cards at the University Club. About five years passed before Johnny put in an appearance, but by then Lottie had fallen in love with Frank Thurmond, a club owner who eventually departed for West Texas after allegedly killing a man during a card game. In time, Lottie also headed west, arriving at Fort Griffin, where she rubbed elbows with such legendary gamblers as Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp, once winning more than \$3,000 from Holliday in one evening.

After many years as a glamorous gambler, she joined Frank in New Mexico. The couple married in 1882 in Silver and moved to Deming, where Lottie gave up gambling and became a founding member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

The colorful life of Lottie Deno, who died on February 9, 1934, and is buried next to her husband in Deming, reached legendary proportions when she was immortalized as the character Miss Kitty in the long-running television series "Gunsmoke."

Martha Deeringer, frequent contributor

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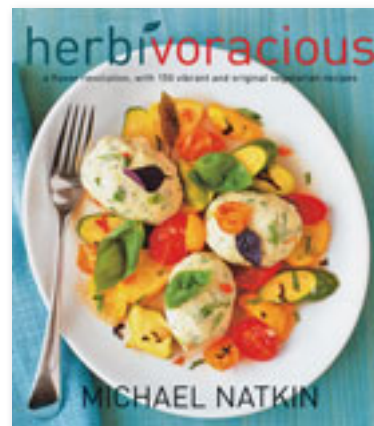
# These Are the Salad Days

When temperatures spike on an August afternoon, who wants to stand over a hot stove making dinner? Not me. I'd much rather be at the cutting board using my knife to create a cool salad, either as the main dinner event or a sideshow.

Salads don't have to mean an unchanging diet of lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers. They can be tossed together with a wide array of combinations—vegetables, fruits, cheeses, meats, nuts and seeds—each adding their own flavors and textures. And the possibilities expand with what you use to dress your salad, from a simple vinaigrette to a creamy emulsification.

Summer is the best time to eat fresh fruits and veggies, which are near the peak of their ripeness and flavor. So if the heat's got you down, try cooling off with salad for supper.

Here's a nice idea for a salad that's refreshing and light. It comes from a cookbook filled with fresh ideas on vegetarian cuisine. Michael Natkin's *Herbivoracious* (The Harvard Common Press, 2012) contains 150 original recipes combining flavors that work together in unexpected ways. One of these is a side salad that would pair well with a spicy entrée. I could not find Valencia oranges as the recipe called for and substituted naval oranges instead. The results were still quite tasty.



BY KEVIN HARGIS

## Jicama, Radish and Orange Salad

Half of 1 jicama

- 1 bunch radishes, trimmed and quartered
- 4 Valencia oranges, cut into supremes\*, juice reserved
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 handful torn cilantro leaves, for garnish

- Peel jicama and cut into batons, or strips, that are about 2 inches long, ¼ inch wide and ¼ inch deep.
- Combine batons, radishes and orange supremes in a salad bowl with salt and generous grind of pepper.
- Add ¼ cup reserved orange juice and toss lightly. Taste and adjust seasonings. Garnish with cilantro and serve.

Servings: 4. Serving size: ¼ salad. Per serving: 75 calories, 1.6 g protein, 0.1 g fat, 18.7 g carbohydrates, 5 g dietary fiber, 151 mg sodium, 13.1 g sugars

### \* Making a Supreme

A supreme is a segment of a citrus fruit without any pith or membrane. To make supremes, first slice a half-inch off the top and bottom of a fruit. Stand fruit, one cut side down, on a cutting board and use a sharp knife to cut off the peel and pith (white portion), traveling from top to bottom and following the fruit's contour. When all peel has been removed, hold the fruit over a bowl and slice in on both sides of a segment, as close as possible to the membrane. If segment doesn't fall right out, a slight twist of the knife should remove it.

When done, sections of fruit should be sitting in juice. Squeeze remaining peel and membrane to extract any remaining juice.

**Note:** If you are concerned about your knife technique, just use standard segments and squeeze a fifth orange for juice. Please, don't hurt yourself.

### Essential Salad Tools

- **Sharp Knife** After a few uses, even the finest chef's knives lose their edge. If your tomatoes look more like they've been crushed than sliced, consider having your knife professionally sharpened. And employ a honing implement before every use.
- **Salad Spinner** If you've ever suffered through a soggy salad caused by greens that were washed but inadequately dried, you'll agree this kitchen gadget is worth it. It consists of a basket with a mechanism for imparting centrifugal force that whirls away excess moisture, leaving lettuce crisp and dry.
- **Big Bowl** Ever tried to toss a salad in too small a bowl? You probably ended up with more lettuce on the counter than in the container. Use a bowl of adequate size to make mixing easier.
- **Salad Tongs** I love my pair of wooden salad servers that resemble bear claws. They make tossing and serving a breeze.
- **Old Jar** If you like to mix your own dressings, there's nothing wrong with recycling a glass jar to use as your container. (Just make sure the lid seals tight.)

Colorful ingredients make the refreshing Jicama, Radish and Orange Salad a treat for the eyes.



**ANN BAKER** | BOWIE-CASS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

*The recipes we received for this month's Salad Days contest ranged from simple vegetable mixes to elaborate conglomerations of varied ingredients. The winning recipe combined a smoky-sweet dressing with a little spice to make a memorable dish suitable to stand alone as a meal.*

## Spicy Shrimp, Avocado and Spinach Salad with Bacon Dressing



- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 24 large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1½ teaspoons salt, divided
- ½ cup Thai sweet chile sauce
- 4 slices thick-cut bacon, diced into small pieces
- 1 tablespoon molasses or brown sugar
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- 16 ounces baby spinach
- 2 ripe avocados, sliced
- 1 small red onion, sliced into rings

- Heat butter and olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Put half of shrimp into hot skillet, sprinkle with ½ teaspoon salt and sauté until pink, turning once. Cook about 3 minutes per side. Remove with slotted spoon into large bowl. Cook remaining shrimp, sprinkling with another ½ teaspoon salt and adding more butter and oil if needed.
- When done, remove to bowl, pour chile sauce over all and stir to coat. Set aside.
- Meanwhile, fry bacon in a small skillet over medium-high heat until crisp, about 5 minutes. Remove to paper towel-lined plate.
- Remove all but 2 tablespoons drippings from skillet, then add molasses, vinegar, 2 tablespoons water and ⅛ teaspoon salt. Cook over medium heat until bubbly. Remove from heat. Chop bacon into pieces and add to dressing.
- Divide spinach among four serving plates. Top with similarly divided avocado and onion slices. Add six shrimp to each plate. Pour a quarter of the dressing over each salad.

Servings: 4. Serving size: ¼ of salad. Per serving: 354 calories, 12.5 g protein, 24.6 g fat, 17.5 g carbohydrates, 6.5 g dietary fiber, 1,551 mg sodium, 7.6 g sugars, 76 mg cholesterol

## \$5,000 Recipe Contest

August 10 is the deadline for our eighth annual **Holiday Recipe Contest**, sponsored by the Texas Pecan Board. You have only a few days left to enter your **ORIGINAL** recipe containing Texas pecans. Recipes cannot have been published previously. Only three entries per co-op member. See complete rules at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).

There are three ways to enter: **ONLINE** at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com) (under the Submit and Share tab); **MAIL** to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; **FAX** to (512) 763-3408. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op.

## Kielbasa Summer Salad

- 1 pound fully cooked kielbasa or Polish sausage
- 1 can (15.5 ounces) black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 2 medium tart apples, cored and cut into ½-inch chunks
- 1 medium bell pepper, chopped
- 4 large green onions, thinly sliced
- ⅓ cup oil
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ½ to 1 teaspoon black pepper

- Halve sausage lengthwise and cut into ¼-inch slices; brown and drain on paper towels.
- In a large bowl, combine sausage with peas, apples, bell pepper and onions.
- Combine oil, vinegar, mustard and sugar in a bowl or jar with a tight-fitting lid and whisk or shake to combine. Pour oil mixture over sausage mixture, add black pepper to taste and toss.
- Cover and refrigerate at least four hours or overnight before serving.

Servings: 10. Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 275 calories, 8.7 g protein, 19 g fat, 14.6 g carbohydrates, 2.2 g dietary fiber, 439 mg sodium, 4.6 g sugars, 26 mg cholesterol

SUSAN VAVROCH | BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## Steak and Blue Cheese Salad

- 4 sirloin steaks (8 ounces each), trimmed
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon granulated onion
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- ¾ cup raisins
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon minced white onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup fat-free buttermilk
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 8 ounces blue cheese, crumbled
- Vegetable oil for frying
- 1 medium red onion, sliced into rings about ⅛ inch thick
- Flour for coating
- 3 romaine hearts, torn into leaves

- Season steaks with salt and pepper. Mix thyme, oregano, granulated onion, cumin and paprika. Rub mix onto steaks at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours before grilling.
- Grill steaks to desired doneness and keep warm.
- Whisk raisins, mayonnaise, minced onion, garlic, buttermilk, lemon juice, cilantro and blue cheese together. Set aside.



- > Heat about 2 inches of vegetable oil in a large pan over medium-low heat. Deep fat thermometer should register 325 degrees.
- > Dredge onion rings in flour and fry in oil until golden brown and crisp. Drain on paper towels and season lightly with salt.
- > Divide romaine among 4 dinner plates and spoon dressing on lettuce. Thinly slice steaks and arrange on dressed romaine. Garnish with fried onion rings. Pass around any remaining dressing.

Servings: 4. Serving size: ¼ salad. Per serving: 872 calories, 59.4 g protein, 44.4 g fat, 50.2 g carbohydrates, 4.4 g dietary fiber, 1,166 mg sodium, 26.6 g sugars, 193 mg cholesterol

CINDY JAMES | PEDERNALES ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

See more salad recipes along with winning recipes from years past online at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).



## Tahitian Salad

- 1 small box (6 ounces) wild rice, cooked per directions
- 1 can (11½ ounces) mixed vegetables, drained
- 1 can (7½ ounces) corn, drained
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- ¼ bell pepper, chopped
- 3 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 1 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ cup vinegar
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- Salt and pepper to taste

- > Mix all ingredients in a large bowl.
- > Cover and chill overnight.

Servings: 6. Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 356 calories, 71 g protein, 22.8 g fat, 29.7 g carbohydrates, 3.9 g dietary fiber, 639 mg sodium, 6.2 g sugars, 54 mg cholesterol

MARY LYNN GARRETT | BANDERA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

**Correction:** The Texas Mac & Cheese recipe in July's edition misstated the amount of black pepper needed. It should have been 1 tablespoon.

## 8TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST

### Delicious, NUTritious Texas Pecans

Fresh, plump and bursting with flavor, Texas pecans can't be beat. Find out for yourself. Order some Texas pecans and enter our 2012 Holiday Recipe Contest. Send in your best *original* recipes, sweet or savory, using Texas pecans. *Let's get cracking!*



### \$5,000 in Total Prizes

5 Winners! \$2,000 Grand Prizewinner. \$1,000 Best Savory Recipe. \$1,000 Best Sweet Recipe. Two Category Runners-Up Each Win \$500.

Send us your best original Texas pecan recipes—savory and sweet. Show us how you use Texas pecans to dress up vegetables, meats and salads or your nuttiest cookies, pies and candies. All recipes must include pecans (Texas pecans are our favorite). Winners will be featured in our December 2012 issue. **Enter by August 10, 2012, at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).** Go to [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com) for details and official rules.

Order your Texas pecans today.  
[www.TexasPecans.org](http://www.TexasPecans.org)

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER



Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com). Each entry MUST include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your Texas electric cooperative, or it will be disqualified. Specify which category you are entering, savory or sweet, on each recipe. Send entries to: Texas Co-op Power/Holiday Recipe Contest, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You can fax recipes to (512) 763-3408. Up to three entries are allowed per co-op membership. Each should be submitted on a separate piece of paper if mailed or faxed. Mailed entries can all be in one envelope. No email entries will be accepted. For official rules, visit [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).

# Loose Saggy Neck Skin – Can Any Cream Cure Turkey Neck?

**DEAR DORRIS:** I'm a woman who is 64 years young who suffers from really loose skin under my chin and on my lower neck. I hate the term, but my grandkids say I have "turkey neck" and frankly, I've had enough of it!



I have tried some creams designed to help tighten and firm that loose, saggy skin, but they did not work. Is there any cream out there that can truly help my loose neck skin?

*Turkey Neck, El Paso County*

**DEAR TURKEY-NECK:** In fact, there is a very potent cream on the market that firms, tightens and regenerates new skin cells on the neck area. It is called the **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream®**. This cream contains an

instant lift ingredient that tightens the skin naturally, as well as deep moisturizing ingredients to firm the skin and make it more supple. Amazingly, the **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream®** also has Stem Cells taken from *Malus Domestica*, a special apple from Switzerland.

These stem cells are actually unprogrammed cells that can mimic those of young skin that stays tight, firm and wrinkle free. As an alternative to the scary surgeries or face lifts that many people resort to, this cream really packs a big punch on the loose saggy skin of the neck.

The **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream®** is available online at **Dermagist.com** or you can order or learn more by calling toll-free, **888-771-5355**. Oh, I almost forgot... I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me **11% off**. The code was "TXN6". It's worth a try to see if it still work.

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### Testimonial

I cannot say enough about how good the foot pain cream is. I suffer from neuropathy in my feet and legs and at times the pain is so bad it's unbearable. The cream takes away the pain and burning from my feet and legs. I would like to see more diabetics and people who suffer from neuropathy have a chance to try this wonderful product. Thank you, thank you PhysAssist.

Diane T. / Greensboro, NC

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**Up Close and Personal** We were wowed by the more than 150 beautiful photos we received for this month's contest. There is a lot of talent in Texas! What you see here is just a sampling; please check out the rest of our favorites on our website. **ASHLEY CLARY-CARPENTER**

**On TexasCoopPower.com**

See more *Up Close and Personal* photos.

◀ Baby praying mantis, **Leslie Leake**, United Cooperative Services

Beetle hiding on Texas skeletonplant, **William Robitaille**, Pedernales Electric Cooperative ▼



▲ Peafowl, **Jaden Jostrand**, Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative

Skittles the cat, **Dana and Hailey Wright**, South Plains Electric Cooperative ▼

**Upcoming Contests**

**October Issue: Ooops!**

*Deadline: August 10*

**November: Water Towers**

**December: Night Photography**

Send your photo for the October contest—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Ooops!, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, before **August 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.** If using a digital camera, submit your highest-resolution images at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://TexasCoopPower.com/contests). We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.



▲ Ladybug on dandelion, **Laura McGregor**, Sam Houston Electric Cooperative



**Pick of the Month**

**Deep Summer Bluegrass Festival**

**Sherman** [August 22-25]  
(903) 546-6893, [crystalopryhouse.com](http://crystalopryhouse.com)

*One East Texas town. Four days of jamming. But there's more than just music. Also enjoy camping under the stars and a flea market on Saturday.*



**August**

**04**

**Brownwood** 'Remembering When'—Hank Williams Remembered, (325) 660-8338

**Georgetown** Faith in Action Caregivers Benefit Dance & Silent Auction, (512) 868-9544

**Wimberley Market Day**, (512) 847-2201, [shopmarketdays.com](http://shopmarketdays.com)

**10**

**De Leon** [10-11] Texas Truck & Tractor Pull, Peach & Melon Festival, (254) 968-2587

**Hitchcock** [10-11] Good Ole Days Festival, (409) 986-9224

**11**

**Chappell Hill** Lavender & Wine Fest, 1-888-273-6426

**16**

**Huntsville** Diva Night, (936) 295-8113, [chamber.huntsville.tx.us](http://chamber.huntsville.tx.us)



**August 11**  
**CHAPPELL HILL**  
Lavender & Wine Fest

**16**

**Johnson City** [16-18] Blanco County Fair & Rodeo, (830) 868-7684, [bcfra.org](http://bcfra.org)

**17**

**Highland Village** [17-19] Balloon Festival, (972) 317-9073, [hvballoonfest.com](http://hvballoonfest.com)

**18**

**Rosenberg** Rosenberg Roundup, (832) 595-3525, [rosenbergevents.com](http://rosenbergevents.com)

**23**

**Fredericksburg** [23-26] Gillespie County Fair, (830) 997-2359, [gillespiefair.com](http://gillespiefair.com)

MANDOLIN: 2012 © WALTER ARCE. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. LAVENDER: 2012 © MARILYN BARBONE. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.

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and festivals around Texas. For a complete listing, please visit [TexasCoopPower.com/events](http://TexasCoopPower.com/events).

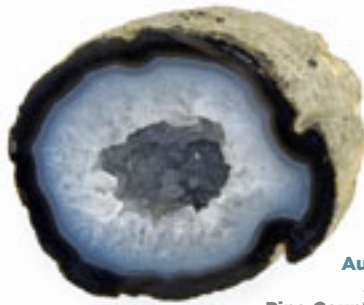
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**San Antonio** Hill Country Doll Show, (830) 606-5868, dollldr.com

**Jasper** [25-26] Pine Country Gem & Mineral Show, (409) 384-3974, pinecountrygms.org

30

**Boerne** [30-9/4] Kendall County Fair, (830) 249-2839, kcfa.org



August 25  
JASPER  
Pine Country Gem  
& Mineral Show

31

**Belton** [31-9/2] Central Texas State Fair, (254) 933-5353, centraltexasstatefair.com

## September

01

**Port Lavaca** Flip Flop Festival, (361) 552-2959, portlavacatx.org

06

**Bryan** [6-9] Brazos Valley Fair & Expo, (979) 823-3976, brazosvalleyfair.com

07

**Abilene** [7-15] West Texas Fair & Rodeo, (325) 677-4376, taylorcountyexpocenter.com

08

**Quitman** Classic Car Cruise Night, (903) 763-4414



### Submit Your Event!

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event for October by August 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar!



August 31  
BELTON  
Central Texas  
State Fair

COTTON CANDY: 2012 © ANDREY MALINKIN. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. GEODE: 2012 © JAMES BOSSERT. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. CAR: 2012 © MARGO HARRISON. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.

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# Bracken Bat Cave

For the first time in 20 years, the public can watch—and listen—to the emergence of nearly a quarter-million Mexican free-tailed bats from a Central Texas cave.

BY SUZANNE HABERMAN

LIKE THE FIRST DROP OF RAIN that brings on a storm, a single Mexican free-tailed bat emerges around dusk in summer from the mouth of Bracken Bat Cave, a 100-foot-wide crescent-shaped opening into a cavern in the Hill Country north of San Antonio. The bats' exodus is slow at first as they linger at the cave's lip, circling round and round inside before emerging.

As more bats flow from deep inside the Earth, the fluttering of wings grows louder, like a rainstorm gathering. Over the next four hours, tens of millions more bats will follow the first in streams of graceful swirls that rise into the wide sky and dissipate in the distance.

Surrounded by 697 undeveloped acres owned and protected by Austin-based Bat Conservation International, Bracken

Bat Cave is the summer home to the largest colony of bats in the world. Each year, the mostly female, dark brown to gray Mexican free-tailed bats migrate from Mexico to Texas for summer to birth and raise their pups. While no congregation is as large as the Bracken Bat Cave colony, these bats take refuge all across the state, including in downtown Austin under the Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge, which shelters the world's largest urban bat colony.

Every night from about March to October, these tiny creatures fly out from their underground roosts to feed. They spread out over a 60-mile radius from the cave at heights of up to 10,000 feet over the next eight to 12 hours to feed on hundreds of tons of insects, such as moths and

agricultural pests. Their emergence is so dense that it shows up on Doppler radar.

The nightly bat emergence from Bracken Bat Cave lures a host of expectant watchers. A Great Horned Owl and two Harris's Hawks scope out potential dinners from nearby trees. Their shapes cast ominous silhouettes against the pink and blue horizon at sunset. On the ground, skunks, raccoons and opossums prowl, and rattlesnakes lurk in wait to strike low-flying bats from the air.

People, too, can witness the bat flights from Bracken Bat Cave (for more information, go to [batcon.org](http://batcon.org)). This summer, for the first time in BCI's 20-year ownership of the cave, bat flights are open to the public for a fee on Wednesday through Sunday evenings through late October. Additionally, purchasing memberships to BCI provides visitation options, including free tickets or discounts on tickets, depending on the membership level. Memberships start at \$30.

In August, the meet-up time is 5 p.m., and bats emerge around sunset. After gathering at Natural Bridge Caverns about two miles away, groups of visitors caravan over rugged dirt roads and then hike about half a mile on easy-to-walk trails to a natural amphitheater-style seating area overlooking the cave. Near the site, signs encourage visitors to be quiet so as not to disturb the bats and enjoy the primitive, natural experience. The excited chatter dies down as spectators settle on cedar benches and boulders on the rim of the sinkhole above the cave.

But once the bats take wing and begin swirling directly overhead, guests don't need to be shushed. Together, they fall silent in reverence, like desert dwellers watching and listening to the pitter-patter of welcome rain.

Suzanne Haberman, *staff writer*

## On TexasCoopPower.com

Where else can you see Mexican free-tailed bat colonies in Texas? We provide all the details.

Every night from March to October, at around sundown, the bats take flight. They spend the next 12 hours feeding on hundreds of tons of insects.



MICHAEL DURHAM/MINDEN PICTURES/BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL





# Chicago Doctor Invents Affordable Hearing Aid

## Outperforms Many Expensive Hearing Aids

Reported by J. Page

**CHICAGO:** A local board-certified Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) physician, Dr. S. Cherukuri, has just shaken up the hearing aid industry with the invention of a medical-grade, affordable hearing aid. **This revolutionary hearing aid is designed to help millions of people with hearing loss who cannot afford—or do not wish to pay—the much higher cost of traditional hearing aids.**

**“Perhaps the best quality-to-price ratio in the hearing aid industry” – Dr. Babu, M.D. Board Certified ENT Physician**

**DOCTORS AND PATIENTS AGREE:  
“BEST QUALITY SOUND”  
“LOWEST AFFORDABLE PRICE”**

*“I have been wearing hearing aids for over 25 years and these are the best behind-the-ear aids I have tried. Their sound quality rivals that of my \$3,000 custom pair of Phonak Xtra digital ITE”*—Gerald Levy

*“Perhaps the best quality-to-price ratio in the hearing aid industry”*

—Dr. S. Babu Board-Certified ENT Physician, National Authority on Hearing Loss

*“I have a \$2,000 Resound Live hearing aid in my left ear and the MDHearingAid in the right ear. I am not able to notice a significant difference in sound quality between the two hearing aids.”*

—Dr. May, ENT Physician

Dr. Cherukuri knew that hearing loss could lead to depression, social isolation, anxiety, and symptoms consistent with Alzheimer’s dementia. **He could not understand why the cost for hearing aids was so high when the prices on so many consumer electronics like TVs, DVD players, cell phones and digital cameras had fallen.**

Since Medicare and most private insurance do not cover the costs of hearing aids, which traditionally run between \$2000-\$6000 for a pair, many of the doctor’s patients could not afford the expense. Dr. Cherukuri’s goal was to find a reasonable solution that would help with the most common types of hearing loss at an affordable price, not unlike the **“one-size-fits-most” reading glasses** available at drug stores.

He evaluated numerous hearing devices and sound amplifiers, including those seen on television. Without fail, almost all of these were found to amplify bass/low frequencies (below 1000 Hz) and not useful in amplifying the frequencies related to the human voice.

### Inspiration from a surprising source

The doctor’s inspiration to defeat the powers-that-be that kept inexpensive hearing aids out of the hands of the public actually came from a new cell phone he had just purchased. **“I felt that if someone could devise an affordable device like an iPhone® for about \$200 that could do all sorts of things, I could create a hearing aid at a similar price.”**

### Affordable Hearing Aid With Superb Performance

The high cost of hearing aids is a result of layers of middlemen and expensive unnecessary features. Dr. Cherukuri concluded that it would be possible to develop a medical grade hearing aid without sacrificing the quality of components. The result is the MDHearingAid PRO®, starting well under \$200. **It has been declared to be the best low-cost hearing aid that amplifies the range of sounds associated with the human voice without overly amplifying background noise.**

### Tested By Leading Doctors and Audiologists

The MDHearingAid PRO® has been rigorously tested by leading ENT physicians and audiologists who have unanimously agreed that the **sound quality and output in many cases exceeds more expensive hearing aids.**

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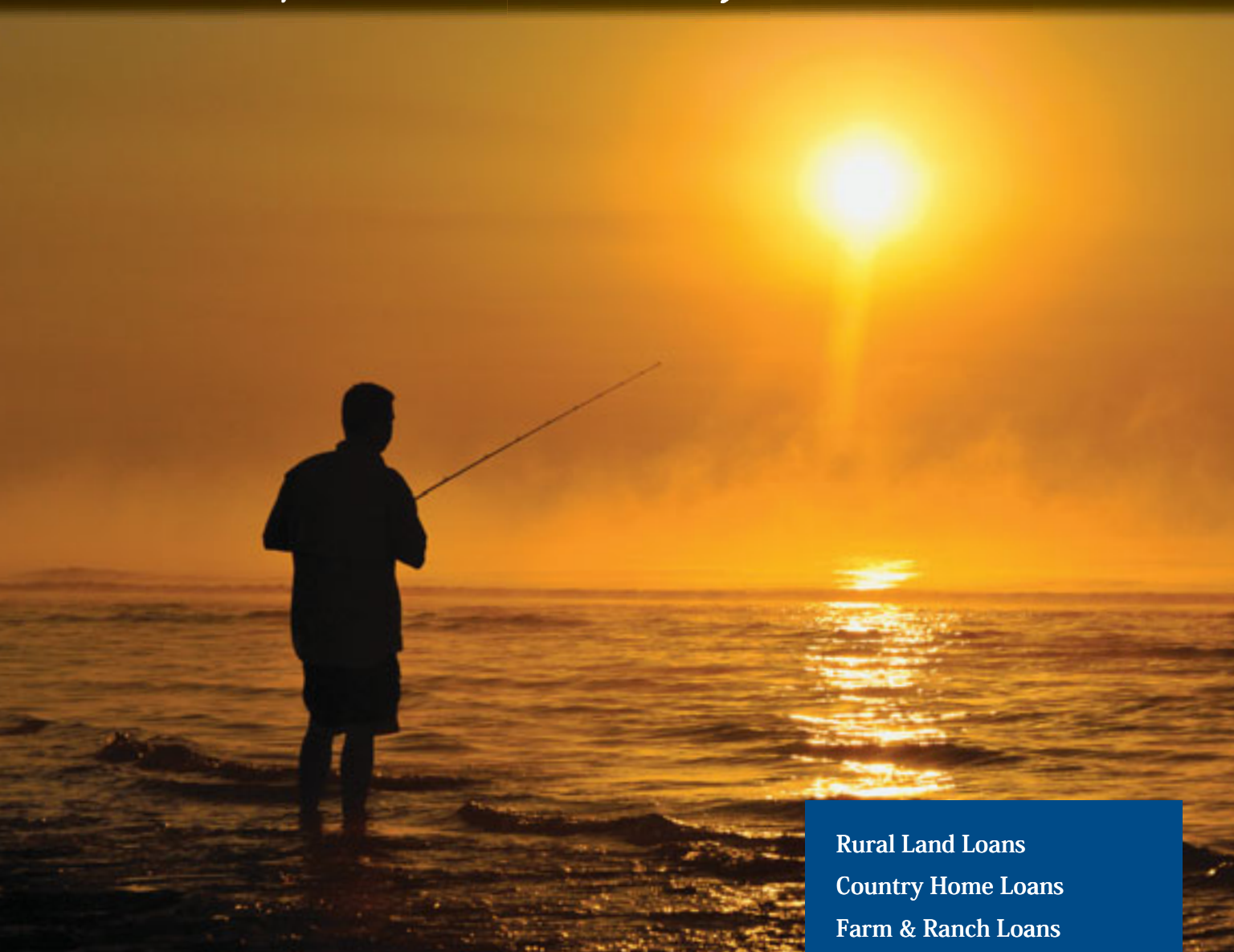
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