

TEXAS CO-OP POWER



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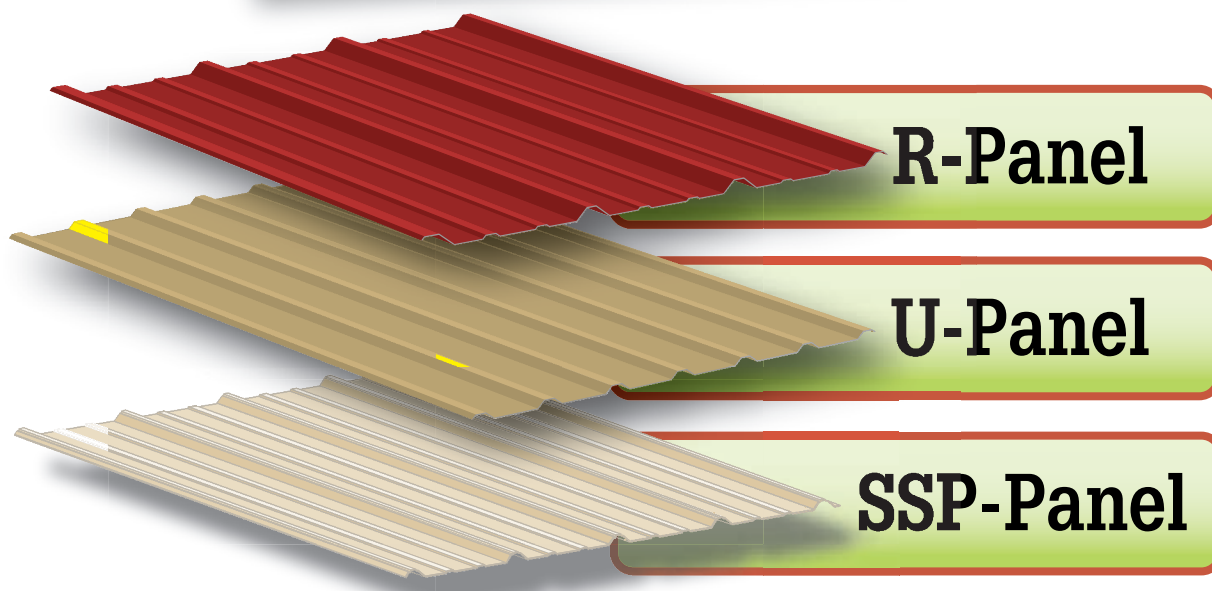
Rattlesnakes deserve
respect and caution,
not universal loathing

Trinity Valley EC
Local News
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Cowboys brand cattle at the XIT Ranch.

FEATURES

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By Mike Leggett

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By Gene Fowler

NEXT MONTH

Firmly Rooted The Stark family lumber empire in Orange forged cultural destinations that offer nature, art and history.



COWBOYS: COURTESY PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM. EGRET: ALEKSANDER BOLBOT | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



ON THE COVER Rattlesnakes are among the most commonly encountered snakes in the state. Illustration by David Danz

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TexasCoopPower.com

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Excerpts by Bronson Dorsey

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By Gene Fowler

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A Tree's Trials

I'm a crape murderer—but not because I'm trying to restrict the height of them [*Crape Murder*, February 2020]. My crape myrtles border our driveway. They bloom beautifully and look great during the warm months.

However, once the first freeze occurs, they turn brown and become a bit of an eyesore. Even worse, left untrimmed, they drop dead leaves and seed pods onto my driveway throughout the winter, much of which is then blown into the garage. Foot traffic then brings them inside.

TOM MILLHOLLON | GRANBURY
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

I enjoyed Sheryl Smith-Rodgers' article, but it should have been titled Crape Assault and Battery because it's almost impossible to kill the average crape. Three years ago, I cut off a 6-inch diameter volunteer crape just above the ground (that was too close to the house), and it came roaring back.

I repeatedly cut it back and finally was able to kill it by pouring a thick layer of concrete over the stump. There's nothing delicate about a crape!

DUDLEY DOBIE | AUSTIN
FAYETTE EC

For all of my 50-year career in Texas horticulture, I have yet to hear even one valid reason for this practice. When author Sheryl Smith-Rodgers quoted Greg Grant, she went to one of Texas' finest resources. Indeed, we must "stop the madness."

NEIL SPERRY | MCKINNEY
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC



True Confession

I had never seen a crape myrtle before I moved to Texas [*Crape Murder*, February 2020]. There was a row of them along the property line of my lot in a mobile home park. My neighbor told me to cut them back. Soon afterward, I found out that was wrong. I've felt bad ever since. They were fairly tall.

LISA CULBERTSON | VIA FACEBOOK

Not a Flicker of Doubt

In Focus on Texas in February, you identified a bird as a woodpecker. The bird is a flicker.

MARYLIN DOW | SCROGGINS
WOOD COUNTY EC

Editor's Note: We checked with Clifford Shackelford, an ornithologist at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "It's a male red-bellied woodpecker," he said. "The flicker would never have that much red on the head."

Crawfish Crazy

I am crawfish crazy [*A Tale of Texas Crawfish*, February 2020]. It's a pastime, like baseball or fishing. Conversations over mudbugs and beer—can't beat it.

RYAN WAGNER | VIA FACEBOOK

You left out the best place along the coast in Calhoun County.

Bubba's Cajun Seafood has been serving up its own special seasoning on heaps of steaming crawfish for almost 10 years.

BECKEY BOYD GOODEN | SEADRIFT
VICTORIA EC

I call 'em what they are, crawfish, and the very best come out the Atchafalaya spillway, not farm raised.

DARYL RODRIGUEZ | VIA FACEBOOK



You can call them whatever you want. I call them good.

MICHAEL WOODARD | VIA FACEBOOK

I grew up in West Texas, and we called them crawdads. I never knew people ate them.

MARCIA HERALD | VIA FACEBOOK

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

Texas Co-op Power

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HAPPENINGS

School Launch Program

Brett Williams' push for a STEM-based curriculum at Fredericksburg High School in 1996 certainly took off. Williams found a fun way to teach students lessons in science, technology, engineering and math while building a model rocket, which they then launched.

He called his program SystemsGo, and it spread to other schools. Students design rockets to meet specific criteria, such as sending a 1-pound payload 1 mile high or exceeding the sound barrier.

This year, more than 80 high schools in four states will participate in **ROCKETS 2020** launches. The first event in Texas is **APRIL 24-25** in **JACKSBORO**. Launches in Stonewall and Anahuac will follow later in the spring, and Jal, New Mexico, will host an event.

Rockets will launch throughout the events, which are open to the public and free.

INFO ► (830) 997-3567, systemsgo.org

WEB EXTRAS
► Find more happenings online.

BY THE NUMBERS

20 MILLION

That's how many Americans demonstrated on behalf of the environment on the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970. Gaylord Nelson, a Wisconsin governor and U.S. senator, started the movement 50 years ago.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE



I never should have told my parents . . .

► **Tell us how** you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or post them on our Facebook page. Please include your city and co-op.

Below are some of the responses to our February prompt: **My most unforgettable first date was ...**

With two different boys. They both showed up at the same time. Awkward.

BARBARA TALIAFERRO | SPRINGTOWN TRI-COUNTY EC

With a girl who had to stop and go to the bathroom in the woods on the way home.

JIM MORROW | HIGHLAND VILLAGE | COSERV

The one that resulted in my lunch date and I being inseparable from that day forward.

CONNIE THOMAS | VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.

POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

Sharing Veterans' Voices

WHEN JAPAN'S ENVOYS signed the documents surrendering to the Allies on September 2, 1945, in Tokyo Bay, they could not know they were being watched by a sailor from Fayette County. Charlie Ripper, a shell man for the 16-inch guns on the USS Colorado, had an eye on the ceremony. "I was on lookout duty," Ripper said, "and from the lookout tower I could see them sign the papers."

Ripper and 62 other World War II veterans—men and women—some who remained stateside to support the war effort and others who slogged through muddy battlefields, told their stories to Fayette County Electric Cooperative member Elaine Thomas, who included each narrative in her book, *Veterans' Voices and Home Front Memories*.

"I have been a regular columnist for the *Fayette County Record* for more than a decade," Thomas said. "I was talking to Charlie Ripper and asked him if I could interview him for an article."

Ripper agreed on the condition that he not be called a hero. "The only heroes are the ones who didn't come home," Ripper said.

Thomas' stories about Ripper and others in the *Fayette County Record* drew raves from the community. They led to a special section in the paper and then the book.

Four hundred people turned out for the *Veterans' Voices* book signing in November 2018, and 17 veterans and three female civilians whose stories appear in the book were able to accept appreciation from the community for their service. Proceeds from the book, available on Amazon, support a scholarship at Blinn College's Schulenberg campus.



Elaine Thomas with World War II veteran Charlie Ripper of La Grange.

POWER OF OUR PEOPLE recognizes co-op members who improve their community's quality of life. Nominate someone by emailing people@texascooppower.com.

LIFESTYLE

MAKING CENTS

April 1 is National One Cent Day.

That's not an April Fool's Day joke. It's true.

A penny used to be worth something—enough to prompt the centuries-old saying, "A penny saved is a penny earned." In fact, some readers remember penny candy and corner stores, where, for just 1 cent, you could actually get something sweet.

The U.S. first issued a 1-cent coin in 1792. Because of inflation, what used to cost 1 cent then costs 27 cents today.



Though easily disregarded, the penny is the most abundant coin in the country, with about 7.8 billion produced by the U.S. Mint in 2018. But because pennies cost 2.06 cents each to produce, American taxpayers lost more than \$82 million that year minting them.

That's not a joke, either.

WORTH REPEATING

"What is the difference between a taxidermist and a tax collector? The taxidermist takes only your skin."

—MARK TWAIN

(With that, we remind you the tax collector comes calling April 15.)

A photograph of a snake with a brown and tan mottled pattern, coiled in a field of green grass and small red and yellow flowers. A corrugated metal pipe lies horizontally across the lower right portion of the frame. The text "A SNAKE" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the upper right area.

A
SNAKE

TO
LOVE

BY MIKE LEGGETT

FRIEND OR FOE?

What is your experience with rattlesnakes? Tell us at letters@texascooppower.com.

OUTDOORS JOURNALIST COMES TO ADMIRE RATTLESNAKES, WHICH ARE NOT THE EVIL BEINGS OF LEGEND AND MYTH IN TEXAS

I can trace my love affair with rattlesnakes back more than 60 years to a cool, misty October Saturday morning in the mid-1950s when somebody showed up at the little general store in DeBerry with a very large canebrake rattler in the back of a pickup.

I would have been 6 or 7 years old then, and there was no threatened status as there is now for these shy, somewhat gentle reptiles. In those days, when anybody encountered one, the snake invariably lost a war with a load of No. 6 squirrel shot. This one had succumbed to just such a blast, but it wasn't his missing head that fascinated me. It was the full-grown fox squirrel that lay in the slit-open belly of the snake. His last meal.

That rattlesnake was absolutely beautiful to me and kicked off a quest that has kept me fascinated for more than six decades. I loved that snake and hated that it had to die.

I wouldn't see another rattler for at least 30 years. By then I was the outdoors editor at the *Austin American-Statesman*. I

was looking for someone who kept rattlesnakes to allow me to check the efficacy of wading leggings designed to blunt the attacks of stingrays and rattlesnakes. A Texas Parks and

A western diamondback rattlesnake, found in the western two-thirds of the state and one of eight species of rattlesnakes native to Texas.

Wildlife Department employee offered a 3-footer, and I placed my right boot down next to the snake. The strike was surprisingly fast, not even registering as a blow against my calf. There were golden droplets of venom hanging off the ballistic cloth of the leggings.

I went several more years without crossing paths with another rattlesnake, but once I hit my stride, I began to see them and hear them more often. I would catch them when I could and pose them for photos in the wild.

I've seen them during spring turkey season especially, usually crossing a road or *sendero* and trying to go on about their business. I've literally stepped on rattlers, stepped over them and walked within inches of them as they hid in the brush, usually under a guayacan or other shrubby kind of South Texas bush. Only one of those tried to bite me, a big snake—more than 5 feet long—that fired off from under a bush in South Texas one day. I killed it with a deer rifle, something I've always regretted.

Most of the time, rattlesnakes try to stay hidden or move to a hiding place and avoid any contact with humans. In the course of daily life in Central Texas, if you encounter a snake, odds are it will be a western diamondback rattlesnake or a Texas rat snake. But rattlesnakes are not the evil beings of legend and myth in Texas.

RESPECT THEIR LETHAL POWERS

We are too big for rattlers to eat, and they know that. But they will bite if pressured or frightened, and anyone who suffers a bite from a rattler is in for a tough time.

On average, one to two people per year die from snakebites in Texas, according to the Department of State Health Services, and often, those individuals were handling the snake in some way, either by trying to pick it up or fool with it. Most snakebites in Texas are by western diamondbacks, the most common venomous snake in the state.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A RATTLESNAKE

Here are some steps that could help lessen the nasty effects of the snake's venom.

Don't panic. Head straight for a doctor or hospital. Doctors will have access to anti-venom drugs that can help save lives and limbs.

Throw out those old tales about cutting an X above the fang mark or sucking out the venom. You'll probably do more harm than good.

Remain still. Movements help distribute the venom throughout the body.

Remove jewelry or tight clothing around the bite.

Keep the bite area below the level of the heart to keep the venom from spreading.

DO NOT apply a tourniquet or ice to the bite. And no steroids should be used in treatment.

There is a vaccine for dogs and cats that, with an annual injection, can help reduce the effects of rattlesnake bites. Veterinarians typically keep it in stock.

Except for the big timber areas of East Texas, western diamondbacks are the most widespread of venomous snakes, with a range covering the area along either side of Interstate 35 and on into the mountains of West Texas. The South Texas desert and the coastal plains are home to very large diamondbacks, 6–7 feet long. Prairie rattlers show up in the grasslands and scrub brush of the Texas Panhandle.

There are no regional differences in aggressiveness or venomous status of the local snakes, which all have the equipment to bite and injure or kill humans.

University of Texas herpetologist Travis Laduc has spent lots of time studying rattlesnakes and the way they bite. Capturing many hours of footage with ultrahigh-speed cameras, he's learned that the bite itself, from coiled position to contact and back to coiled position, takes but half a second. In that half-second, the rattlesnake can deliver a load of hemotoxic venom that works through the bloodstream.

THEIR ROLE IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Rattlesnakes are abundant in most of their natural range, and they are there for a reason. Rats and mice might be stacked a foot deep without rattlesnakes around to eat a few from time to time.

However, I'm not saying you should ignore a rattler in your yard or close to your house where kids or pets might be in danger. I've lost two Labs to rattlesnakes over the years myself.

My wife and I came home one night. As we walked up onto the front porch in the dark and I was trying to get the key into the lock, we were shaken by the loudest buzzing I've ever heard—so loud up under the porch I thought it had to be cicadas. However, Rana wasn't fooled. She was back in the truck in seconds and yelling for me to get in as well.

I climbed into the cab and turned the lights on to illuminate a large rattlesnake lying on the doormat, just inches from where I had been standing moments before. We had cats then, and as outdoor cats tend to do, they had choused that snake until he couldn't get away and was cornered against the front door.

I had no choice but to do away with the snake. That's one rule I don't break: No snakes around the house.

In Central Texas, where I live and where a generous portion of Texas rattlesnakes live, that is kind of a classic encounter. Maybe you find one hiding in your flower bed one morning or crawling through your corral. We should be thankful for them and for what they do to keep vermin under control.

Here's a challenge for anyone who comes across a rattlesnake: Let it stay in its hiding place or just crawl away into the brush. If it's hiding, rattle or not, it's just hoping you'll go on by and leave it to hunt in peace.

Mike Leggett was outdoors editor for the *Austin American-Statesman* from 1985 to 2013. He has a lifelong fascination with rattlesnakes and is currently writing a book about rattlers, due out in 2021. He lives in Burnet and is a member of Pedernales EC.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to learn more rattlesnake facts.



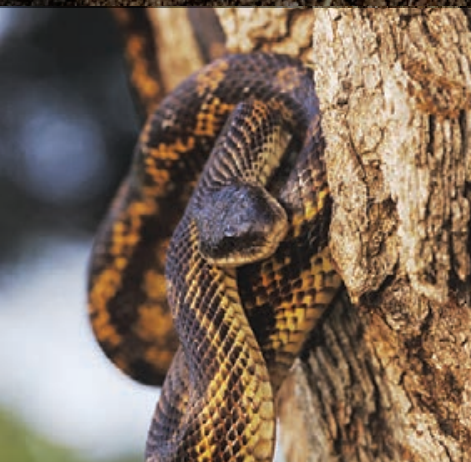
COTTONMOUTH



COPPERHEAD



CORAL SNAKE



TEXAS RAT SNAKE

COMMON SNAKES OF TEXAS

VENOMOUS

Rattlesnakes are not the only venomous snakes in Texas, though they are by far the most common and tend to strike the most fear in Texans' hearts.

Next on the list of most feared snakes is the **cottonmouth**, or **water moccasin**. Ranging in color from a splotchy gray to nearly black, it is commonly found around swampy, slow-water terrain and habitat.

The **copperhead** is a small, beautifully colored and patterned snake found mostly in yards and wooded areas of East Texas but also Central Texas. It is common in cities and towns and is known to deliver bites to children playing outside or adults walking on the lawn.

Coral snakes, which deliver neurotoxic venom, are found throughout the eastern half of the state, including Central Texas. They are small, slender snakes and must literally chew on a person to get their venom into the bite.

NONVENOMOUS

Texas rat snake Maybe the most common snake in Texas, this acrobatic climber feeds on rats and mice, birds and birds' eggs. It can grow to be quite large but is not dangerous to humans. It will bite, though, and protect itself with an obnoxious musk.

Coachwhip A slender, mostly light brown to tan snake that will kill and eat rattlesnakes, it doesn't attack people by whipping their legs, as folklore suggests. It eats birds, small reptiles and almost anything else it can catch and swallow. The Central Texas whipsnake, a member of this family, has a black head and a black-and-white pattern on the rest of its body.

Hog-nosed snake Most common in East Texas, this little snake has an upturned nose and feeds on insects. It will play dead if threatened. It has a brownish to gray body with broken patterns of brown and black on its back.

Diamondback water snake A brownish snake with yellowish belly, it is common in lakes and ponds through much of Texas, especially the damper eastern half of the state. It eats fish, frogs and other aquatic fauna. It is often mistaken for a water moccasin and killed.

Speckled king snake A large snake, it's commonly known as a chicken snake for its habit of sneaking into hen houses and devouring eggs and baby chicks—though the rat snake is more likely the culprit in those raids.

MIKE LEGGETT



COACHWHIP



HOG-NOSED SNAKE



DIAMONDBACK WATER SNAKE



SPECKLED KING SNAKE



XIT

THE RANCH
THAT BUILT THE CAPITOL



JOHN A. WILSON

THE SHORT-LIVED XIT RANCH, THE WORLD'S LARGEST, LEFT BEHIND MYTHS AS LASTING AS THE EDIFICE IT FUNDED

WHEN SAM HOUSTON'S youngest son, Temple, spoke at the state Capitol dedication in 1888, he waxed eloquent about the grand building. "Texas stands peerless amid the mighty, and her brow is crowned with bewildering magnificence!" he said. "This building fires the heart and excites reflection in the minds of all."

Houston also commented on the logistics required to manifest this structure, which started with the creation of the 3 million-acre XIT Ranch and included the construction of the Austin and Northwestern Railroad to deliver red granite for the Capitol from Marble Falls to Austin.

"The XIT looms large in Texas mythology and ranching history because it was the largest fenced ranch in the world during its heyday," says Nick Olson, director of the XIT Museum in Dalhart, which preserves images, stories, saddles and artifacts associated with the XIT. "And it's the ranch that built the largest state Capitol in the country." At the time of its dedication, the Texas Capitol was the seventh-largest building in the world.

Neither the XIT Ranch nor the special, narrow-gauge railroad tracks exist today. The XIT lives on as a carefully tended legend, and the reality of the ranch is difficult to separate from the myths. Capitol and XIT historian Bill Green says the ranch's legacy can be seen as a branding tool because businesses in Dalhart and around the Panhandle adopt the name: XIT Roofing, XIT Real Estate, XIT Feeders, and XIT car dealerships and communications companies. Thousands of area residents own small patches of the fabled ranch. Cattle outfits operate on lands purchased from the original XIT acreage.

Moreover, the XIT legacy looms globally. "I was curator of history at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum for 17 years," Green explains, "and we had visitors from all over the world. They all knew two things about Texas: the Alamo and the XIT."

BUILDING THE CAPITOL

STATE LEGISLATORS realized they needed to plan for a new Capitol in the 1870s, and the Texas Constitution of 1876 set aside 3 million acres of land along the western border of the Panhandle to fund its construction. Even though they allocated the land, they did not articulate a procedure for how to survey the land and execute the legal agreements required to construct the building itself. In 1879, the Legislature approved a process for surveying the land and moving forward with a working plan. Not long after the existing Capitol burned in 1881, the newly appointed Capitol Board, including the governor, treasurer, attorney general and land commissioner, solicited bids.

In 1882, the contract to construct the edifice went to four Illinoisans: brothers John and Charles Farwell, Amos C. Babcock and Abner Taylor, who formed the Capitol Syndicate. Taylor

then hired a 27-year-old German immigrant named Gustav Wilke to serve as contractor. In 1885, the syndicate made an agreement by which it could occupy and ranch on the XIT land even though it did not yet have the title to it. Once the Capitol was complete, the legal title would be conveyed from the state to the syndicate.

To finance the cattle ranching, John Farwell formed the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company of London. He and his partners raised about \$5 million to keep the ranch running until it could be broken up and sold to individual ranchers and homesteaders. Back in Austin, construction started on the Capitol, with the Farwells paying for the initial stages from their own funds.

As Green points out, Europeans of the time had a rather romantic view of Texas ranching, and British investors had bankrolled several large Texas ranches, including Charles Goodnight's JA Ranch. The British Empire enjoyed global reach, and there was little opportunity to pursue the promise of such lucrative investments at home.

OPERATING THE RANCH

THE FIRST LONGHORNS arrived on the XIT range in 1885, delivered by a team of drovers led by Ab Blocker. J. Frank Dobie wrote that Blocker was “the most original-natured trail boss I have known.” At the third XIT Reunion in 1938, where aging cowpokes gathered to swap tall tales and reminisce, Blocker told Lewis Nurdyke, author of the 1949 XIT volume, *Cattle Empire*, that he sketched the XIT brand in the sod with his boot heel for the ranch’s manager at the time, B. H. “Barbecue” Campbell. Blocker demonstrated for Campbell that the brand could be accomplished with five applications of a straight-line branding iron and would be nearly impossible for rustlers to alter. XIT it was.

In his 1929 book, *The XIT Ranch of Texas*, J. Evetts Haley explained that managing the sprawling ranch posed huge challenges for Campbell. “Barbecue exercised slight control over his men and allowed the ranch to become a rendezvous for rustlers, outlaws, and hard cases of all kinds,” Haley wrote.

Ranch operations improved when Albert G. Boyce, described by Haley as “a frontier cowman of commanding presence and vast experience,” became manager of the XIT in 1888. When Boyce took over, he fired and replaced most of the ranch’s 150 cowboys. At the same time, John Farwell improved profitability by replacing the ranch’s longhorn herds with Hereford, Angus and other purebred stock.

To further streamline the XIT’s business, Boyce divided the massive ranch into eight sections, each with a separate function, and established ranch headquarters in the town of Channing, where he built a house. The northernmost section was named Buffalo Springs. The others included Middle Water, Ojo Bravo, Alamasitas, Rita Blanca, Escarbada and Spring Lake. The southernmost division was Yellow Houses, named for nearby limestone formations called *las casas amarillas*.

Cowpunchers, well drillers, windmill toilers



Above: Bronco busting at the Yellow Houses division of the XIT Ranch in 1904. Below: The Capitol in Austin in the late 19th century.



and freighters—who kept the ranch’s remote outposts equipped with necessities—came from all walks of life. One cowpoke was even said to have a special love for the poetry of John Keats. When Boyce’s daughter Bessie opened a letter from a farm boy in Maryland who professed to love horses, she hired him by return mail. A hand named Blue Stevens later recalled that he gathered cow chips—used as fuel—for 21 days straight, picking up enough chips “to heat branding irons for every cow in the U.S.A.”

Noted ranching photographer Ray Rector cowboyed on the XIT as a youth. According to the 1995 volume *The Papers of Will Rogers*, the cowboy philosopher worked on the XIT around 1901. A photograph of Yellow Houses’ chuck wagon dining includes an hombre identified as Rogers, who later recalled the Plains as “the prettiest country I ever saw in my life.”

Operating under threat of receivership by British investors for most of its existence, the XIT began selling off its acreage in 1901. The last cattle left the ranch in 1912. In 1936, the first XIT Reunion drew a crowd to Dalhart, and the annual event is now known internationally as “the world’s largest free barbecue.”

The Escarbada division headquarters building—deconstructed, moved, reconstructed and restored—can be seen today at the National Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock. The XIT general office and manager’s residence still stand in Channing, where an annual Christmas in July event began in 2018. (The 2020 event will be July 25.) The Capitol Visitors Center in Austin features a display on the XIT story.

Was the XIT too sprawling and massive to be a successful ranching operation? Manager Boyce thought so. But Andy Wilkinson, playwright of *Charlie Goodnight’s Last Night*, takes a longer view. “When you let all the big windies about the fabled ranch drift off into the sunset,” muses Wilkinson, “what still remains is a spread of 3 million acres, 1,500 miles of barbed wire, tens of thousands of cattle, and enough outlaws and heroes and honest-to-goodness cowhands to populate all the rangeland myths of the American West.”

Writer and author **Gene Fowler** specializes in art and history.

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We were able to secure these authentic desert gems for a remarkable price. You could easily spend as much as \$900 for a White Buffalo pendant in sterling silver. But, our philosophy is to pass our good fortune on to our customers, which is why you can own a piece of Native American history for under \$100.

The **White Buffalo Collection** celebrates the unique and rare beauty of this legendary stone. Generous cabochons of White Buffalo are set in filigreed sterling silver settings with an antiqued finish that beautifully complements this stone's distinctive white background and black matrix.

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Line Crews Keep the Lights On



MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER/CEO JEFF LANE

ELECTRICITY TRAVELS ALONG AN INTRICATE NETWORK OF wires and poles to power our homes and businesses. Most of the time, it's a seamless journey, but occasionally, the path of electricity is disrupted by obstacles like fallen tree branches, animals or car accidents. When that happens, Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative's lineworkers are

ready to restore that connection no matter the weather or time of day.

We couldn't carry out our mission without the daily dedication of our line crews. It's a demanding job on the front line of our co-op that often requires working around the clock in challenging conditions to serve our members and communities. They are first responders who get us through some of our darkest hours. We count on them to power our lives, day in and day out.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association officially acknowledged the tireless efforts of this talented group with this 2014 resolution:

Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on;

Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure;

Whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents; and

Whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen;

Therefore be it resolved that NRECA recognize the second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day and make available to electric cooperatives



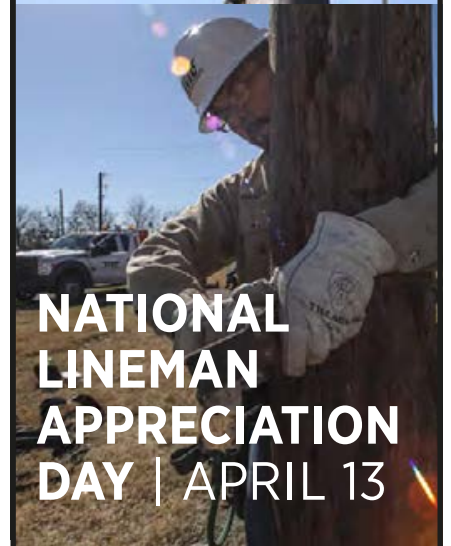
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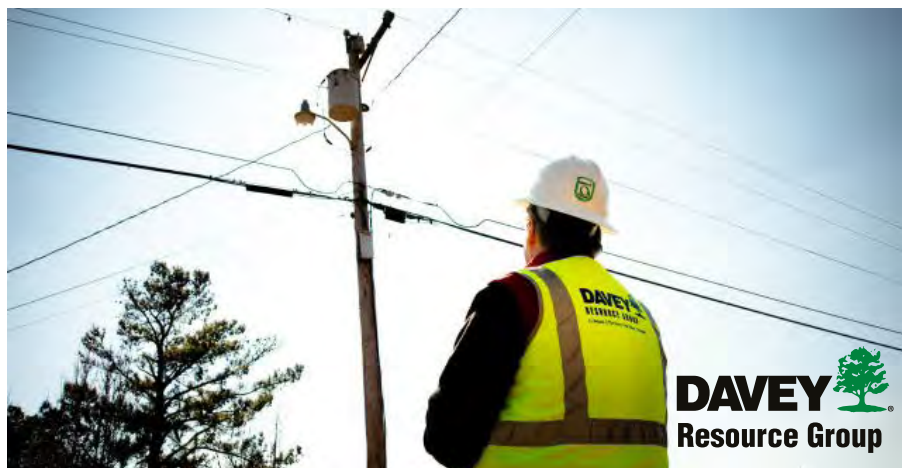
materials and support to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America's electric cooperatives.

We proudly join with NRECA and cooperatives across the country to honor lineworkers and show our appreciation and respect for the service they provide for our members.

TVEC's lineworkers, as well as those from across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition. We invite our members to take a moment to thank a lineworker for the work they do. Leave a message for them on our Facebook page and use the hashtag #ThankALineman to show your support for the men and women who light our lives.

**SOME HEROES
WEAR HARD HATS**





System Inventory Aims To Boost Operational Efficiency

WITH ABOUT 8,000 MILES OF power distribution line and all of the poles, transformers, switches, fuses, breakers, capacitors and other equipment to support our 55,000 co-op members, Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative's line crews have a lot of territory to cover. In fact, it is just about enough line to circle the continental United States.

Recent technological advances and mapping upgrades give lineworkers access to information about the grid while they are in the field, and a system inventory project over the next year will make that even better.

Working with contractor Davey Resource Group, TVEC's system inventory will give crews, dispatchers and engineers an unprecedented level of information and detail about our electrical grid.

The inventory will involve physically assessing each pole and piece of equipment on the system. That means that at some point over the next year, you are likely to see representatives of DRG and TVEC along electrical rights-of-way in your area. In many areas, they may be using all-terrain vehicles to access lines away from roadways.

All crews will wear identifying information, and you may contact us at any time with questions.

Updates about where crews are working will be posted on tvec.net and social media as the project progresses. All work on the system inventory is expected to be complete by May 2021.

Thank you in advance for accommodating these workers as they help us improve service for you. 40473568001

System Inventory Benefits

System Reliability - Reduce outages by identifying and replacing aging components and optimize planning of system maintenance and upgrades

Outage Response - More accurate system integration for fault location technology and planning for future system redundancies and automation

Load Analysis - Ensuring current and future needs are accommodated

Mapping - The system inventory will complete TVEC's transition to digital mapping. This will accelerate response times, and place improved information in the hands of linemen, who will be able to better prepare for work assignments.

Catch Up! with the Co-op!

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative will host four evening meetings this spring to share co-op information and get member feedback on how the co-op is doing and what is important to members going forward.

The town-hall style meetings will take place in the evening at TVEC's Kaufman and Athens office and will include a light meal followed by updates on co-op business from General Manager/CEO Jeff Lane.

Co-op leaders will also be on hand to answer questions, listen to feedback and provide information regarding TVEC programs and services.

Because of limited meeting space, members need to RSVP for their preferred meeting date.



BE PART OF IT

Athens

TVEC District Office
909 W. Larkin St.

Thursday, April 2, 6:30-8 p.m.
Tuesday, May 12, 6:30-8 p.m.

Kaufman

TVEC Headquarters
1800 E. Hwy. 243

Thursday, April 16, 6:30-8 p.m.
Tuesday, June 2, 6:30-8 p.m.

**Space is Limited, Please
let us know you are coming!**

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Email: memberrelations@tvec.coop

TVEC Department in Focus: Lineworkers

IT SEEMS APPROPRIATE THAT LINEMAN APPRECIATION Day is celebrated at the beginning of spring storm season. The skill, determination and courage to repair downed lines and broken poles in the middle of the night during a thunderstorm is the very thing that sets linemen apart from workers in less demanding field. However, it is the day-to-day work ethic and ingenuity that these professionals bring to the job that adds tremendous value to Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative members.

“The first thing the linemen have to have is pride in their work, and that is instilled from one generation to the next as these guys come in and learn what it means to do this job,” said TVEC Director of Operations Rodney Wesley. “The younger guys coming in may not understand all of what they are getting themselves into, but the older guys really mentor the younger ones to see this is a great trade to be in. It is a place where you can have the fulfillment of a career where you are taking care of your community and also taking care of your family.”

The basics of electricity delivery have not changed in the 82 years since TVEC was founded, but the last decade in particular has seen a revolution in how linemen work. The technological changes and computerization of the trade have given the younger generation something to help the older linemen with.

“Getting a lineman to change his ways after 20 years is like

pulling teeth, but in the last five or 10 years, the younger guys are bringing the older guys along into the digital world,” Wesley said. “The younger guys want to try everything and see how it can help do the job better and safer, which is the goal for all of us.”

Most line work is done with the help of modern machinery, from digger and bucket trucks to excavators and skid-steer machines. Along with those tools, computerized mapping, analysis devices and workflow software means modern linemen must also operate in the virtual world.

Technology isn’t the only change Wesley has seen since starting his own career at TVEC as a lineworker more than three decades ago. The current group of linemen have distinguished themselves as even more committed to a high level of member service than their predecessors.

“We have some of the most dedicated, loyal and hardworking guys out there,” Wesley said. “Everybody may have some ups and downs in managing the stress of the job, but they really come together when things need to get done. There is a common mission and they are more like family than co-workers. It is really good to see that culture where they support each other and hold each other to a high standard.”

Nationwide, co-ops will celebrate National Lineman Appreciation Day on April 13.



Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative lineworkers and operations employees.

Add Light Switches to Your Chore List

SCRUBBING YOUR HOME'S LIGHT SWITCH

and outlet covers is probably not high on your chore list, but it should be on there somewhere.

Light switches, in particular, are breeding grounds for germs as they are flipped on and off throughout the day and night by multiple people. And, since switch plates and outlet covers often get grimy, too, they need to be cleaned—safely.

Light switches

- ▶ Never spray cleaning products directly on switches. If the liquid enters the switch plate, that's a major safety risk.
- ▶ Locate the electric box in your home or business to turn off the circuit breaker or fuse first. This will prevent shocks and other risks.
- ▶ After you ensure the electricity is turned off, remove the light switch plate from the wall and wash it with soap and warm water.
- ▶ Dry thoroughly and screw back on the wall, then turn the electricity back on.

Outlet covers

- ▶ Turn the power off to prevent any safety hazards.
- ▶ Remove the plate cover and wipe it down with warm water and soap.
- ▶ Spray a cleanser onto a cotton swab and carefully wipe away the dirt on the outlet cover.
- ▶ Reinstall the cover and turn the power back on.



It's Important To Be Counted

IN MARCH, MOST HOUSEHOLDS WERE

invited to respond to the 2020 census.

The census provides critical data that lawmakers, business owners, teachers and many others use to provide daily services, products and support for you and your community. Every year, billions of dollars in federal funds go to hospitals, fire departments, schools, roads and other infrastructure based on census data.

The results of the census also determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, and they are used to draw congressional and state legislative districts.

Participating in the census is required by law. A complete and accurate count is critical for you and your community because the results of the 2020 census will affect

community funding, congressional representation and more for years to come.

If you haven't already done so, be sure to complete your survey. Responses can be submitted online, by phone in one of 13 languages or via the traditional paper questionnaire.

The 2020 census marks the 24th time that the country has counted its population since 1790.

For more information, visit [2020census.gov](https://www.2020census.gov).



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10 Tips for Spring Energy Savings

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Here are some ideas particularly well suited to spring.

1. **Clear the air:** Open windows to allow fresh air to circulate.
2. **Cook outside:** Enjoy the sunshine by using your grill or smoker to add festive flavors to meals.
3. **Search and seal:** Cracks and spaces let conditioned air slip outdoors. Caulk and weatherstrip to seal leaks.
4. **Natural light:** Open blinds and curtains and turn off the lights to save energy.
5. **Be fan friendly:** Use ceiling fans to circulate air and keep cool.
6. **Atmospheric adjustment:** Remember to adjust your thermostat settings for the warmer months ahead.
7. **Tune up:** Schedule an appointment with a heating, ventilating and air conditioning technician to identify any potential problems with your system.
8. **Peak savings:** Plan household chores that require electricity during off-peak hours (when energy demand is low).
9. **Take charge:** Consider disconnecting electrical devices you don't use regularly until you need them. Plugged-in devices use energy even when not in use.
10. **Move outdoors:** Time spent outdoors offers opportunities to turn off lights, TVs, computers and appliances. You'll be more active, have more fun and save more money.

Win \$25 Just for Reading

Somewhere, hidden on Pages 18-23, is a TVEC account number. Read closely. If the account number is yours, contact the Member Services Department by April 30 to receive a \$25 credit on your electric bill. Don't miss out—you could be a winner!



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**Athens Samaritans, Labor of Love
\$3,000**

Founded in 2013, the TVEC Charitable Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization. The foundation was created to serve the community and help improve the quality of life for residents in our service area. **The foundation is funded entirely by donations from TVEC members who participate in Operation Round Up.** For more information, please call 1-800-766-9576 or visit tvec.net.

The Sneed-Boyce Violent Feud

Love triangle involving wealthy ranching families erupts in bloodshed

BY GENE FOWLER

FAMILY STORIES, FILTERED THROUGH A forest of genealogy and oral tradition, often have a way of teaching us more history than scholars and their books. My late grandmother often told stories about a West Texas ranch on which she and my grandfather worked in the early 1910s.

The ranch, near Paducah, was owned by Beal Sneed. One of my great-uncles, Beech Epting, worked for Sneed as a tenant farmer. One day, Sneed's wife, Lena, ran off with Albert Boyce Jr., the son of a former XIT Ranch manager. The resulting feud connected two wealthy Texas families in an affair that bloomed into a torrid, front-page scandal that would result in several deaths. My grandmother's stories explained how Epting got caught up in the drama.

Sneed and Boyce had each sought Lena's affection when all three were students at Southwestern University in Georgetown. Sneed married her, but she declared her love for Boyce in 1911, so Sneed placed her in Fort Worth's Arlington Heights Sanitarium for moral insanity, a dubious diagnosis even a century ago. Upon release, Lena fled to Canada with Boyce but later returned to Texas and rejoined her husband.

So aggrieved was Sneed that he shot and killed Albert Boyce Sr. in Fort Worth's Metropolitan Hotel in early 1912. Sneed believed that the elder Boyce had assisted his son in breaking up the Sneed home. That March, Sneed's own father was murdered by a tenant farmer whom Sneed believed was connected to the Boyces. In September, Sneed asked Epting to accompany him to Amarillo to close out some

business affairs. Because he believed the Boyces were intent on revenge, Sneed told Epting the two needed to travel incognito.

It turned out that Sneed's business in the Panhandle was the removal of Al Boyce Jr. from this world with blasts from a 12-gauge shotgun. Sneed was charged with murder, and Epting was charged as an accomplice.

After each killing, Sneed promptly turned himself in to authorities. The trials resulting from the murders generated reams of newspaper copy and inflamed emotions to a fever pitch. According to an account in the *Handbook of Texas*, at least four men died in disputes related to the first trial, held in Fort Worth, and women dueled with hatpins in the courtroom and the courthouse halls.

A hung jury in Sneed's first Fort Worth trial for the murder of Boyce Sr. resulted





in a mistrial, and Sneed was acquitted in both of his subsequent murder trials, held in Vernon and Fort Worth. The Vernon jury only needed three minutes of deliberation to find Sneed not guilty of killing Boyce Jr. A jury in the Panhandle town of Memphis took a half-hour to liberate Epting from an accomplice-to-murder charge.

Followers of the sensational cases in other states expressed dismay that a man could be excused for two coldblooded murders. The foreman of one jury, when asked how his peers reached the verdict, replied, "Because this is Texas." An unwritten law, he and others argued, allowed a man to protect the sanctity of his home and marriage by any means necessary.

I first learned of these events in Epting's life in the early 1980s. By then, most of the family members who knew anything about the Sneed matters had passed on.

Intrigued, I dug up what I could find and published an article in a Western magazine. I didn't learn much about the senior Boyce then, but in researching a story about the XIT, I came to see him as an important and admired figure in Panhandle history.

Then I connected with Clara Sneed, a writer and researcher from Berkeley, California. A descendant of Beal Sneed, she had much more information about the events, though her family members—like many Texans who had some connection to the saga—had been reluctant to discuss the tragic story. In her account, published in the *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, Clara described the lingering discomfort in the decades after the killings. "I am told," she wrote, "that one could not be friends with both families: One had to choose sides."

Writer and author **Gene Fowler** specializes in art and history.

Several of author Gene Fowler's ancestors worked on Beal Sneed's farms and ranches in the 1910s. Beech Epting, Fowler's great-uncle, sits in the horse-drawn wagon at left.

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Death on Tiny Wings

Mosquito-borne yellow fever terrorized Texas multiple times in the 1800s

BY MARTHA DEERING

IT BEGAN WITH A HEADACHE, FOLLOWED by chills, fever, muscle and bone pain, and dizziness. “After a few hours, the eyes are bloodshot, and have a peculiar shining, drunken appearance,” wrote Dr. Ashbel Smith, who treated patients on Galveston Island during the yellow fever epidemic of 1839. “A diminution of the pains and febrile excitement very generally takes place, from eight or 10 to 20 hours.”

At this point, the patient either began to recover or progressed to the critical stage. The yellow tinge of jaundice that gave the disease its name appeared, followed by the dreaded “black vomit,” which signaled the approach of death.

From 1668 to 1893, port cities along the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Ocean and Mississippi River basin were stricken by 135 major yellow fever epidemics, according to a 1986 article in *Texas Medicine*. At least nine times between 1839 and 1867, Galveston suffered outbreaks that killed a total of 6,000–8,000.

Yellow fever, also called yellow death or yellow jack (after the yellow flags ships were required to fly when passengers showed signs of illness), terrified early Texans. Once stricken, a healthy person could be dead within three days, and doctors were at a loss to explain the fever’s rapid spread. Smith was correct to believe that it was not contagious. But he and other physicians wrongly believed garbage heaps and unsanitary conditions produced particles called miasmata that infected



those who breathed the contaminants. That theory was questioned during the epidemic of 1853, as increased sanitation and quarantines did not stop the disease and 60% of Galvestonians got sick.

The virus that causes yellow fever likely originated in Africa and was transmitted to the Americas by slave ships as early as the 1600s. Major outbreaks occur in populated areas where breeding mosquitoes transmit the virus from person to person. Frightened residents of Galveston and other cities hit by large outbreaks burned barrels of tar in the streets and sprayed sulfur and lime in the homes of infected patients—believing the substances served as disinfectants. Even so, the agony subsided only after a hard freeze, often resurfacing when spring arrived.

During the 1839 epidemic, a cabin just east of 18th Street in Galveston, built on raised blocks with two windows and a door in the middle, served as the general hospital. It was erected away from town to isolate the sick. Shallow burials nearby revealed bones exposed by the sea washing over them.

A Cherokee woman named Sarah Ridge Paschal successfully treated yellow fever patients in her home with traditional Cherokee herbal medicine, including tea from orange tree leaves. All of her patients survived, and neither she nor any of her three children caught the fever.

Texas doctors were unable to recognize the mosquito vector. Pathologist Walter Reed, experimenting on humans in Cuba in 1900, confirmed Carlos Finlay’s hypothesis of 1881 that mosquitoes transmitted the disease. The experiments proved that mosquitoes flourished in fresh water and transmitted the disease after a viral incubation period of at least 12 days. This essential information spread, and mosquito control improved.

Smith went on to become the driving force behind the establishment of the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Today, yellow fever can be prevented by a single dose of vaccine.

Martha Deering, a Heart of Texas EC member, lives in McGregor. Read more of her work at marthadeering.com.

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Farmers Market

IN MY VIEW, FARMERS MARKETS ARE ONE of the best ways to see Texas on display. From rows of stacked peppers to bowls of the sweetest berries to the friendly faces behind the tables, a farmers market is a conduit to all that grows around us—and inspires me to get into the kitchen.

We're coming into the best time to experience these local markets. As the growing seasons converge, you might see collards alongside early tomatoes or strawberries along with the last of the winter citrus. Now is the time to experiment!

This dish is a favorite in my house, and it's a great way to get kids to eat vegetables. Instead of chicken, you can use ground beef—or cooked lentils for a meatless option.

MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Zucchini Taco Boats With Chicken

- 4 medium zucchini
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ½ cup diced onion
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup tomato sauce or salsa
- ½ cup shredded cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees and lightly coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with nonstick spray.
2. Slice zucchini in half lengthwise and scoop out centers, reserving the flesh in a bowl. Place zucchini hollow-side up into baking dish.
3. Cut chicken into small pieces, about half-inch cubes. Warm olive oil in a sauté pan over medium-high heat, then add chicken and cook until cooked through and starting to brown, about 8 minutes. Add onion and reserved zucchini flesh and continue to cook 1 minute.
4. Mix together chili powder, cumin, oregano, paprika and salt and sprinkle over chicken. Stir to coat and cook 2 min-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Recipes

Farmers Market



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

BLAIR SHELTON-TONGSON | LAMAR ELECTRIC

Fresh sweet corn is the star of this dip that is ideal for entertaining. Reminiscent of esquites—Mexican street corn salad—it also features cumin, chili powder and jalapeño. “For an extra kick,” says Shelton-Tongson, “add a dash or two of ground cayenne pepper.” If fresh corn isn’t available, use thawed frozen corn.

Baked Street Corn Dip

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sour cream
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon chili powder, plus more for garnish
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ stick) butter or vegetable oil
- 3 cups sweet corn kernels (about 4 ears)
- 1 cup diced tomatoes
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 clove garlic, pressed or minced
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, plus more for garnish
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, mix together cream cheese, sour cream, mayonnaise, cumin, chili powder, and salt and pepper. Stir until creamy, then set aside.
3. Melt butter or heat oil in a large skillet over low heat. Add corn, tomatoes, jalapeño and garlic. Sauté gently 8–10 minutes.
4. Remove corn mixture from heat and stir into cream cheese mixture. Add cilantro and shredded cheese, stirring until well blended.
5. Pour into a medium baking dish and bake 12–15 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool 5 minutes. Garnish with chili powder and cilantro and serve warm with tortillas or corn chips. ▶ Serves 12.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

- utes. Stir in tomato sauce or salsa and simmer 5–10 minutes, until thickened.
5. Divide chicken mixture into zucchini and top with cheese.
 6. Cover with foil and bake 35 minutes. ▶ Serves 4.

COOK'S TIP A melon baller works wonderfully to scoop out the insides of the zucchini, but if you don't have one, a spoon will do.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Carrot Fritters.

Chopped Spring Veggie Pasta Salad

MARIAN EVONIUK | PEDERNALES EC

Pasta salad is an easy, versatile way to enjoy everything the farmers market has to offer. If you like, you can skip the step of roasting the peppers and asparagus—just make sure you select thin, tender asparagus stalks at the market.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ pound asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 6 cups plus $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water, divided use
- 2 cups uncooked tricolor rotini
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cups peas
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped red onion
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped cucumber
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup loosely packed cilantro, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Italian salad dressing

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Spread asparagus and pepper evenly over a large, parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. Roast uncovered 20 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.
3. Bring 6 cups water to a boil in a 2½-quart heavy saucepan, then add pasta. Cook until pasta is al dente, about 8 minutes.
4. Drain pasta in a colander, rinsing with cold water, and pour into a large mixing bowl.
5. Using same saucepan, add the

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You'll want the best **Game Day Snacks**, our September recipe contest, when football season kicks off. Send us your favorites. The deadline is **April 10**. Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.

remaining 1/4 cup water and the green beans. Cover and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook 3–4 minutes. Add the peas and continue cooking an additional 3–4 minutes, until veggies are tender but still have some bite. Drain and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process.

6. Into the large bowl containing the pasta, add the asparagus, peppers, green beans, peas, red onion, cucumber, tomatoes, cilantro, garlic, salt, pepper and Italian dressing. Mix well, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving. ▶ Serves 6–8 as a side dish.

Zucchini Nut Bread

SILVIA ARNOLD | RUSK COUNTY EC

Zucchini bread is a classic way to use summer squash—and with good reason. “This has been a favorite of the family for years,” says Arnold. Make sure to use quick-cooking oats, which are chopped rolled oats, for this recipe. The oats will help absorb some of the moisture from the zucchini while also keeping the bread tender and delicious.

- 3 eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup quick oats
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 cups grated zucchini
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour two 8-by-4-inch loaf pans and set aside.
- 2.** In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, sugar, oil and vanilla until well combined.
- 3.** In a separate bowl, stir together flour, oats, cinnamon, baking soda, salt and baking powder. Stir into wet ingredients until no dry bits remain.
- 4.** Stir in zucchini and walnuts, then divide batter between prepared pans.
- 5.** Bake 1 hour, until a toothpick inserted into the center of each pan comes out clean. ▶ Makes 2 loaves.



Know Before You Go

New to farmers markets or need a refresher? Here are some tips for making the most of your trip.

SHOP EARLY for the biggest selection. During peak seasons, items like strawberries, asparagus and even eggs can sell out quickly.

BRING CASH and pay in exact amounts, if possible. Farmers appreciate not having to make change.

PUT A COOLER in your car. Along with a reusable tote, it will help keep items cool and organized for the trip home.

MEGAN MYERS

TEXAS COOP POWER

NEXT MONTH

FIRMLY ROOTED The Stark family lumber empire in Orange forged cultural destinations that offer nature, art and history.

LEDGER ART Native American drawings from the 19th century offer unique historic perspective.

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Sunsets

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WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.

▲ **ALTA COCKRELL**, Deaf Smith EC: “My son William the night I took his senior pictures outside of Hereford.”

▶ **CHARLES CARLSON**, Bandera EC: This sunset photo of mammatus clouds was taken on the Frio River near Garner State Park.



▲ **JIMMIE HEIMAN**, Guadalupe Valley EC: “Spring flowers and sunset in rural Lavaca County.”



▲ **TIFFANY ROGERS**, MidSouth EC: A musician stands at the end of a pier on Lake Livingston to play out a tune on his guitar late one August evening.

◀ **LAURA BREWER**, CoServ: “The perfect setting for reflection on the pond.”

UPCOMING CONTESTS

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| SEPTEMBER SHAPES | DUE MAY 10 |
| OCTOBER SELFIES | DUE JUNE 10 |

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April 11

Onalaska Lew Vail Memorial Easter Parade and Egg Hunt, (936) 646-5000, cityofonalaska.us

Elgin [11-12] Hip Hop Shop, (512) 229-3227, elgintx.com

16

San Saba [16-17] Creative Quilting Event, (325) 372-5141, sansabachamber.com

17

Beaumont Rend Collective Revival Anthem Tour, (409) 838-3435, beaumontcvb.com

Paducah [17-18] Cottle-King Old Settlers Reunion & Rodeo, (806) 492-2143, facebook.com/cottlekingoldsettlers

Terrell [17-18] Kaufman Quilt Guild Show, (972) 979-9152, kaufmanquiltguild.org

18

Burton Cotton Gin Festival, (979) 289-3378, texascottonginmuseum.org

Mason Mason County Republican Women's Home Tour, (325) 347-5516, masonxoc.com

McQueeney McQueeney Baptist Church Open Car Show, (210) 265-9200

Southlake Bobbyfest, (817) 999-8332, bobbyfest.com



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Chappell Hill [18-19] Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas, (979) 836-6033, facebook.com/bluebonnetfestival

Cypress Mill [18-19, 25-26] Bunkhouse Gallery Art Show and Sale, (512) 517-3453, bunkhousegallery.com

23

Avinger, Hughes Springs, Linden [23-25] 50th Annual Wildflower Trails of Texas, (903) 756-7502, wildflowertrailsoftexas.org

Waxahachie [23-25] Crossroads of Texas Film & Music Festival, (469) 309-4045, facebook.com/crossroadsoftx

Hallettsville [23-26] Fiddlers' Frolics, (361) 798-2311, fiddlersfrolics.com

24

Granbury [24-25] Wine Walk, (817) 964-7993, granburywinewalk.com

Gun Barrel City [24-25] Quilt Guild Annual Quilt Show, (903) 340-6547, gunbarrelquiltersguild.org

Clute [24-26, May 1-3] *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, (979) 265-7661, bcfas.org

25

Cisco Folklife Festival, (254) 631-6501



April 25
Tatum
Pecan Pie Festival

Conroe Relay For Life of Conroe & Walker County, (713) 706-5686, relayforlife.org/conroeandwalkercotx

Jacksonville North Cherokee VFD Fish Fry, (903) 571-5854

Karnack Earth Day Flotilla, (903) 736-3063

Rising Star Rising Star VFD Crawfish Boil, (254) 433-3285, risingstarfd.org

Tatum Pecan Pie Festival, (903) 947-6403, facebook.com/tatumpecanpiefestival

Brazoria [25-26] Migration Celebration, (844) 842-4737, migrationcelebration.org

May

2

Georgetown Preservation Georgetown Home Tour, (512) 869-8597, preservationgeorgetown.org

Hilltop Lakes Hilltop Lakes Equestrian Association Kentucky Derby Gala, (713) 503-0470

3

Wylie Wylie 500 Pedal Car Race, (972) 516-6016, wylietexas.gov

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Dark Landmark

Dead Man's Hole near Marble Falls remains as a grim reminder of Civil War brutality

MY FASCINATION WITH TEXAS HISTORY inspired me to visit Marble Falls and Dead Man's Hole, the dark landmark south of town.

I started my visit at the Falls on the Colorado Museum, housed in a 129-year-old school building. My education began by peering at the bones of Rockie, a 700-year-old bison whose remains were found on a nearby ranch.

Remnants of the town's pioneer days include artifacts ranging from saddles to railroad ties. I visited the town's namesake falls beneath nearby Lake Marble Falls, and I was fascinated by tales of the town's grim Civil War experience as it relates to Dead Man's Hole.

Of course, I couldn't go exploring on an empty stomach, so I stopped by the legendary Blue Bonnet Cafe, which has been feeding hungry travelers since 1929. My chicken-fried steak was made even better by the towering wedge of coconut meringue pie that followed.

After lunch, I drove 4 miles and found the historical marker for Dead Man's Hole. A few hundred feet away, I saw the hole in the limestone. The 7-foot-wide Dead Man's Hole earned its grisly name during the Civil War, when locals disposed of the bodies of at least 17 Union sympathizers in the cave.

In those days, after Texas seceded, many Hill Country German communities remained loyal to the Union. Burnet County voted overwhelmingly against



Chet Garner at Dead Man's Hole outside Marble Falls.

secession, but local Confederate zealots, called fire eaters, killed some of those who favored the North. Dead Man's Hole became both courtroom and cemetery as hasty trials resulted in slaughter.

After Burnet County Judge John R. Scott was deemed a Union loyalist, he attempted to flee to Mexico but was gunned down, his body tossed into Dead Man's Hole. Even though the historical marker puts the number at 17, legend suggests as many as 36 bodies were thrown into the pit.


Whatever the actual number, it troubled me just to stand nearby, even in the middle of the afternoon more than a century later. The cavity is now covered by a steel panel to keep anyone from slipping in. I hopped down onto the metal and felt an unnerving thump as my weight hit the steel and sent reverberations into the

depths below. I bent down and attempted to peek through. I dropped a pebble down and listened to it bounce off rocks until it faded away. From the sound of it, the hole went on forever.

The cave was not fully explored until 1951, when a group of Austin spelunkers pulled out multiple sets of bones. Local lore suggests that the last skeleton was brought to the courthouse, and while it was awaiting a proper burial, it disappeared.

I stepped away from the hole and made certain I was the only person present that afternoon. As the hair on my neck began to stand up, I decided I didn't want to find out if anyone was nearby. I began to briskly walk (OK, run) back to my truck.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

 **WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video of his visit to Dead Man's Hole.

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