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FEBRUARY 2023

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carnivorous plants
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**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18



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February 2023



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Four of the five species of carnivorous plants in the U.S. are found in the Big Thicket.

*By Pam LeBlanc
Photos by Dave Shafer*

Breaking Up

Sailors offer bon voyage and watch the USS Kitty Hawk's final journey—to a South Texas recycling yard.

*By Eileen Mattei
Photos by John Faulk*

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ON THE COVER

A pitcher plant awaits its next meal.

Photo by Dave Shafer

ABOVE

Bob Hope entertains aboard the USS Kitty Hawk in the Philippines in 1962.

Photo by Corbis | Getty Images

Walk This Way

HOW'S THIS for a carbon footprint?

The state's severe drought last summer mostly dried up the Paluxy River that runs through Dinosaur Valley State Park, exposing dinosaur tracks from around 113 million years ago.

Scientists say 15-foot-tall Acrocanthosaurus left tracks in sediment that hardened into what is now limestone in the park, about 60 miles southwest of Fort Worth.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE RAINY DAYS MAKE ME ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Below are some of the responses to our December prompt: **I can't believe I used to wear ...**

Bib overalls, no shirt, a straw hat and I went barefoot.

OTIS LINAM
VICTORIA EC
VICTORIA

Blue suede cowboy boots.

LEON CASTANEDA JR.
PANOLA-HARRISON EC
MARSHALL

White lipstick in the '60s—and we thought we looked good.

GWEN SPIESS
BLUEBONNET EC
BRENHAM

Underwear with no slot in front—made by my mom from flour sacks.

JACK HOWARD
WOOD COUNTY EC
WINNSBORO

Parachute pants.

GLENN QUESENBERRY
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
HICO

Leisure suits and platform shoes.

JOHN MONK
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES
GODLEY

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—CARTER G. WOODSON

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988 Saves Lives

PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP or counseling in a crisis can now call or text 988 to reach the national suicide prevention lifeline from anywhere in the U.S. The hope is that the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline becomes synonymous with mental health care, just as 911 is with public safety.

Suicide rates in rural America were 18.9 per 100,000 people compared to 13.2 in urban areas in 2021, according to the National Institutes of Health. And the difference in suicide rates between rural and urban areas widened between 1999 and 2019.

Stress and anxiety from raising crops or livestock, depression from being in a remote setting, and the stigmatization of mental illness are factors that sometimes lead to suicidal thoughts, according to Rural Health Information.



COURTESY CHEF GARNER

A Raw Deal

“My mom would make meatloaf, and once all the seasoning was mixed in, she and I would eat a tiny bite before she cooked it.”

BROOKE ZUCHA
VIA FACEBOOK

Fish Fanfare

Nowadays the accepted way to display a bass is to grip it by the lower jaw and allow it to hang perfectly vertical [*Lakes' Allure*, November 2022]. Alternatively, you can grip the lower jaw and support it under the belly if you want to display it horizontally.

In either case, you *do not* want to twist the fish's jaw to force it open, as the two anglers on Page 14 [below] seem to be doing.

Alan Buckner
CoServ
The Colony

These events have exploded in popularity in the past 8-10 years and offer a great experience for many kids who don't play traditional sports. You mentioned a few of the organizations but left out the Southeast Texas High School Fishing Association.

Randy Hanna
Houston County EC
Zavalla

I like a rare steak, but I'm not sure I could try this [*A Raw Deal*, December 2022].

JANELLE
OVERHOUSE
VIA FACEBOOK



COURTESY JULIAN CLEPPER

The Wonder of Waylon

The Arable Twos [November 2022] was happy, positive, beautifully written and, for me, quite uplifting. I could picture Waylon doing all those things Martha Deeringer so perfectly described. It had me smiling the entire time.

Art Farias
Pedernales EC
Lampasas

We raised our two boys this way (in Ohio, not Texas), and I know this is how children become accomplished and confident men and women. Adults, no matter what job they hold, have the roots that built them strong from childhood.

The story is worded so profoundly that it brought tears to my eyes.

Jody Brown
Tri-County EC
Perrin

Under His Guidance

In 1980, Bill Steele took our coed Scout Explorer post and a few of us sponsors on a winter trip to Bustamante, Nuevo León, Mexico, to explore the caves there [*Uncharted Territory*, October 2022]. We learned so much and have many great memories of that trip.

Ed Palmer
Pedernales EC
Dripping Springs

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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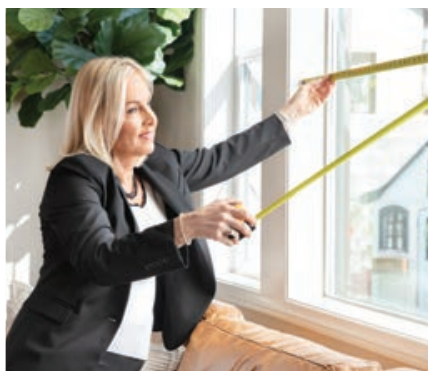
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Caught Cuisine



The Big Thicket's four species of carnivorous plants entice then consume unwary insects

Hundreds of slender, funnel-shaped plants line a boardwalk at Big Thicket National Preserve, where I'm trailing biologist Andrew Bennett on a warm April morning.

They look hungry.

The lime green, red-veined throats of the foot-tall plants gape, like baby birds awaiting a worm delivery from a parent. But these unusual plants have other plans for dinner: unsuspecting insects.

Four of the five types of carnivorous plants that grow in North America—the pitcher plants we're now admiring, along with sundews, bladderworts and butterworts—are found here and elsewhere in East Texas. (Venus' flytraps, whose eating parts resemble a hinged lima bean with teeth, don't grow in Texas; they're endemic to the Carolinas.)

I'm on a quest to find all four Texas natives, and Bennett, acting chief of resource management at Big Thicket, has offered his help.

We're off to a good start. We have no trouble finding these trumpet-shaped pitcher plants, which grow by the thousands along the mile-long, aptly named Pitcher Plant Trail in the Turkey Creek Unit of the 113,000-acre preserve.

Carnivorous plants, Bennett says, thrive in soils that are low in nutrients. They're not endangered, but they do require a very specific habitat, and these East Texas bogs provide it.

First, pitcher plants need wetlands. The groundwater in this part of the preserve is close to the surface, so the ground tends to stay wet. They also need periodic fire, to create a more open understory and to recycle nutrients into the soil. Rangers at the Big Thicket use prescribed burns to do that. And finally, they need insects, which provide nutrients in soils without much nitrogen. The Big Thicket has no shortage of those.

For some people, carnivorous plants call to mind the off-Broadway show *Little Shop of Horrors*, based on a 1960 film about a ravenous bit of vegetation. Audrey Jr., as it was called in the original film (it was remade in the 1980s), was a



cross between a Venus' flytrap and a butterwort, and it needed human blood—not just a few insects—to survive.

Unlike Audrey Jr., pitcher plants don't feed on humans. They don't use quick movements to hunt their food, either. And they're a lot smaller than the theatrical version of the plant.

Insects are attracted to pitcher plants because of their color, nectar and scent. When a bug lands on the waxy lip of the plant's funnel, it slides down into the tube, where downward-pointing hairs keep it from climbing out and

OPPOSITE Pitcher plants grow by the thousands in Big Thicket National Preserve in East Texas. ABOVE The entrance to the preserve's Pitcher Plant Trail is outside the town of Warren.





escaping. Eventually, it winds up in a tiny pool of fluid at the bottom of the funnel. Enzymes in that fluid slowly eat away at the wasps, ants and other foraging insects that land there, and the plant absorbs nutrients from the “bug soup.” Cut one open and you might find several disintegrating insects stacked up inside it.

During our walk, the sun lights up the pitcher plants like rows of bright green candles. Bennett and I admire them for a while, strolling up and down the boardwalk. Then he leans over, pointing out something low to the ground. I follow his finger and see it: a small, roundish plant hugging the ground. It’s made up of small arms, each one tipped with a fingernail-sized fleshy paddle flocked in glistening red hairs. Those hairs secrete a sticky substance—and beware any insect that sets foot in it. The sundew, like the pitcher plant, uses enzymes to slowly absorb any prey that gets caught.

The best time to see both plants is late April and May.

“It seems like people always expect them to be a lot bigger, especially sundews, or to trap more actively, like Venus’ flytraps do,” Bennett says. “These are more passive. They wait for bugs to fall in or get stuck.”

Still, they’re charismatic plants, and this concentration of them is among the largest in the U.S.

“I don’t know of a bigger stand in Texas,” Bennett says.

With pitcher plants and sundews checked off our list, Bennett and I head back to our trucks to continue our hunt.

It’s a 20-minute drive to our next stop down a quiet, narrow road inside the preserve, where we pull off and squirt a little bug spray on our ankles to fend off the mosquitoes before striking out into the forest.

The going is slow. There’s no trail to follow here, so we slog our way through thick underbrush and around tall trees. Everything looks the same to me, and it’s hard to maintain a straight line, so Bennett consults his GPS. He knows the exact coordinates of where we’ll find the bladderwort.

At one point a flash of movement catches my eye, and I spring back just in time to avoid a copperhead, a venomous pit viper with beautiful gray and rust-colored markings. The snake blends into the ground cover so well that it disappears from sight a moment later.

Soon we reach a swamp the size of a baseball diamond. The ground squishes underfoot at its edges, and the place smells organic and earthy. Emerald-colored moss covers logs like velvet, and tannins have turned the shallow water the color of tea. A barred owl hoots in the distance. The whole place feels primordial. I wouldn’t be surprised to see a dinosaur emerge from the gloom.

A shaft or two of light filters through the leaves into the bog in front of us, where tupelo trees stand knee-deep in the water. Bennett, who is wearing boots, sashes in. A moment later, he’s found what he’s looking for.

Bladderwort, which looks like delicate strands of dill fringed with clusters of pinhead-sized balls, floats on the surface of the brown water. Those tiny balls are the plant’s namesake bladders, and they not only keep the plant afloat; they trap the tiny aquatic bugs that it needs to survive.

Biologist Andrew Bennett scoops bladderwort from a swamp.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Tiny, colorful sundews use enzymes to absorb insects that get trapped in their glistening hairs. Delicate strands of bladderwort. The elusive butterwort escaped the author's eye, but our photographer spotted one.

And unlike the pitcher plants, which passively trap their food, the bladderwort moves using a reflexive process called thigmotropism. As insects are lured into openings on the tiny bladders, they close, trapping the prey inside.

That leaves just one plant on my checklist: The wily and elusive butterwort.

This time, we're out of luck. We can't find any of the plants, with their taco-shaped leaves dotted with droplets of

TAKE A HIKE

If you want to examine East Texas' flesh-eating flora, hit these trails.

The Pitcher Plant Trail in the Big Thicket National Preserve's Turkey Creek Unit is a 1-mile loop about 40 miles north of Beaumont that's free to the public.

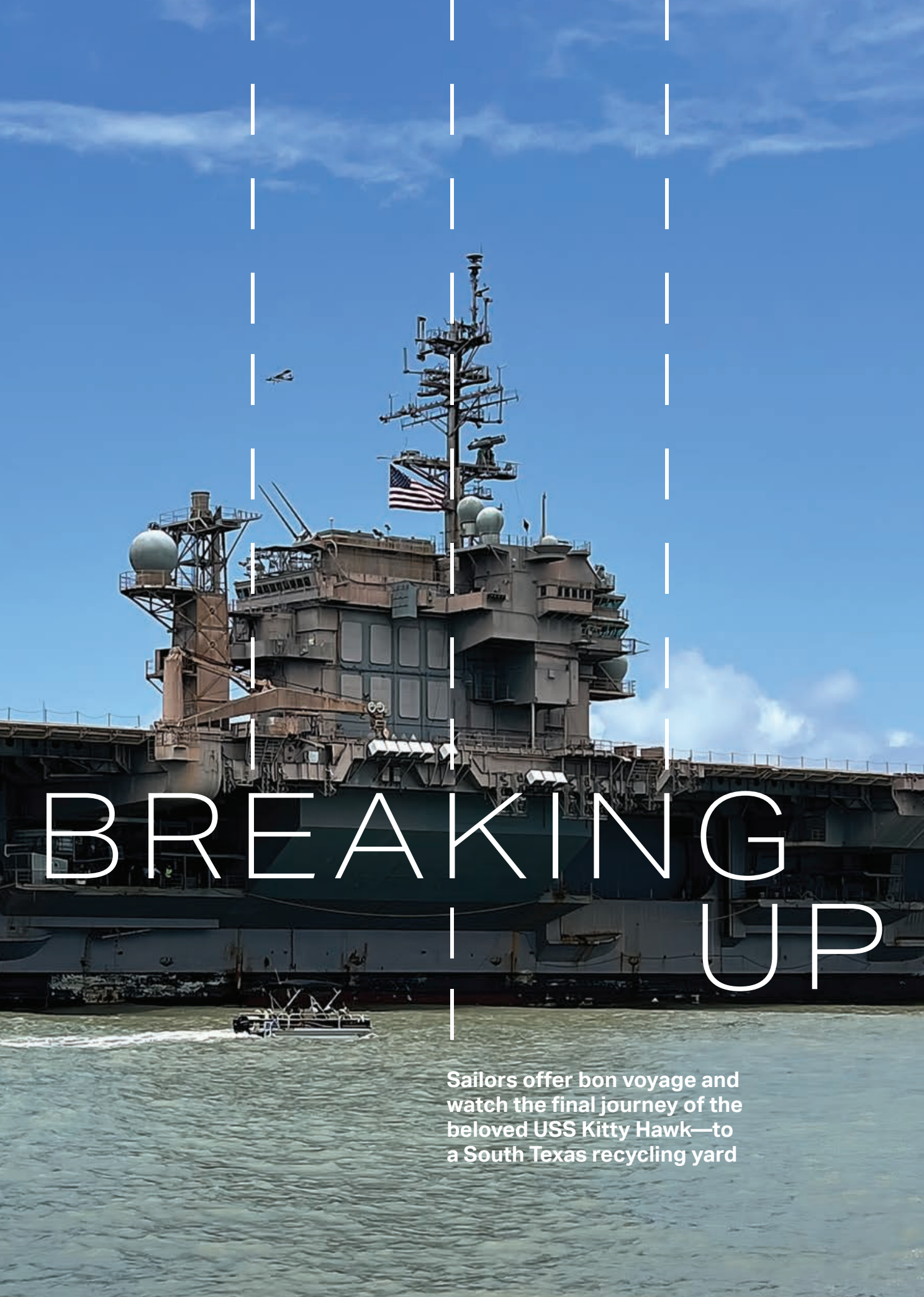
The Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary is just down the road. The 6 miles of trails there are also free to access.



sticky ooze. Bugs looking for water get stuck in the butterwort's secretions, triggering enzymes that break down their soft body parts.

That's OK. Now I have another reason to return to East Texas: to continue my search for these unusual little plants.

I glance at the vegetation around me. Until now, I've thought of all these flowers, bushes, trees and vines as a sort of soft green wallpaper to the outdoors. Now, the carnivorous ways of some of these plants have given me a new jolt of respect. ■



BREAKING UP

Sailors offer bon voyage and watch the final journey of the beloved USS Kitty Hawk—to a South Texas recycling yard

David Gross stands among about 5,000 men and women who served on the USS Kitty Hawk between 1961 and 2009 as the towering supercarrier is towed through Brazos Santiago Pass.

They're crowded onto South Padre Island's south shore to pay their respects and reminisce about the extraordinary aircraft carrier that had been their home away from home.

That home moved around: Vietnam and Afghanistan, in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, but mostly in the western Pacific, until it was retired 14 years ago as the last conventionally powered American carrier. But today, after 48 years of active service, the decommissioned ship arrived at the Port of Brownsville, never to sail again.

Watching the Kitty Hawk head to the recycling yard is "kind of like having the house you grew up in torn down," says Gross, who came from San Diego to see the carrier one last time. He served as a roof rat—part of the flight deck crew—40 years ago.

Veterans—from the Silent Generation, baby boomers, Gen Xers and millennials—roar in pride and appreciation as Gross raps out a long, proud tribute: "We are the Kitty, and we ride the back of a Hawk. We were young. We were strong, working day and night long—12 on and 12 off, jet exhaust we did cough. Yeah, we're the crew of the Kitty, and we walk the walk."

OCEANFRONT HOME

The Kitty Hawk, a small floating city (population 5,280) with a major airport, housed the ship's company, deployed air wing and the admiral's staff.

Essential duties of those onboard ranged from air traffic controller, jet mechanic, roof rat and parachute rigger to pilot, electrician and cook working in 12-hour shifts. Many sailors were teenagers when they first came aboard and formed enduring bonds with their ship and shipmates.

"The Kitty was by far my favorite ship. Everyone had a can-do attitude," says Gordon Wilcox, a 21-year veteran who served two tours on the carrier. The Alvarado resident and United Cooperative Services member initially photographed shipboard events for news releases. Later he worked with reconnaissance cameras used by pilots.

Aviation electrician A.J. Reynolds served two tours on the carrier. "I was 18 or 19 when I first went on the Kitty Hawk," says the Bandera Electric Cooperative member. "It was special. I'll never forget it."

OPPOSITE The USS Kitty Hawk, home to 130,000 sailors in its history, sails in Texas waters for its final journey. ABOVE Sailors wave American flags as the supercarrier returned to a Japanese port in 2003 after operations in the Persian Gulf.



His sentiment was echoed by Joseph Houck of Somerset, who was aboard 1989–93. He came to South Padre to see the first ship on which he had served and recalled watching dolphins racing alongside as the carrier reached 30 knots. "For fun, we had roller chair derbies during sea trials," he says.

Jet engines once roared as catapults launched Phantoms, A-6s and Hawkeyes from the carrier's short deck. Coupled with the shrill whines of fighters and reconnaissance planes landing and coming to abrupt stops as their tail hooks caught a cable on the deck, sailors' attempts at sleeping could get complicated.

Another complication occurred in March 1984, when a nosy Soviet sub passed directly in front of the Kitty Hawk in the Sea of Japan. The carrier plowed over the nuclear vessel, which rolled underneath it. The sub remained mostly intact but left behind a propeller in the carrier's bow, a Cold War triumph still celebrated by the Kitty's crew. Sailors fondly remembered, too, the superb seamanship of the captain who heeled over the Kitty Hawk to pass under the Golden Gate Bridge without taking off the antennas.

Rich Orth was onboard for the Kitty Hawk's first voyage around the Horn of Africa in 1961, and he was among the 68 civilians invited on board for its last powered cruise, from San Diego to a reserve fleet at Bremerton, Washington. "It was a different Navy back then," he says. "Nothing compared to the Hawk."

GONE FROM SIGHT

Looming 140 feet above the water, taller than most island condo buildings, the Kitty Hawk slid past its devotees May 31, 2022, en route to the Brownsville Ship Channel while tour boats and fishing boats flitted around it like tiny remoras nibbling on a whale.

The Kitty Hawk came to rest at International Shipbreaking Limited after being towed almost 17,000 miles from Bremerton. ISL is one of three companies in the U.S., all in Brownsville, that meet the strict environmental, safety and health standards required to dismantle Navy and U.S.-flagged ships. ISL counts the aircraft carriers Independence, Ranger and Constellation among more than 80 U.S. Navy and Maritime



Kitty Hawk veterans sign a commemorative flag near Brazos Santiago Pass.

Administration vessels it has recycled since 1995.

ISL has a service contract with the Navy for each ship, secured by a penny payment, says Bob Berry, the company's co-founder and vice president. "We don't own the ship." But once pieces are cut up and set on the ground, they do own the salvaged metal. "Salvage material goes out by barge, rail and truck all over the world, depending on the best prices on the steel scrap market," he says. Armored steel plating, made with special alloys, is destined for a Pennsylvania mill that will remake it for use in other Navy ships.

By May 2024, 60,000 tons of metal (a remarkable 95% of the ship) will have been recycled from the Kitty Hawk, according to Berry. "We've done enough ships that we know exactly how much metal comes out," he says. With all their stainless and structural steel, aluminum, brass, and copper, ships are among the most recyclable manufactured products. (Cars are 65% recyclable.)

A monitor over Berry's desk shows views of the busy, noisy 80-acre recycling yard. He explained the Kitty Hawk first underwent environmental and safety inspections before a contractor removed asbestos and flammable materials. Then rectangles, 8 feet by 10 feet, were cut into the hull superstructure and folded outward like a sardine can lid to provide work crews with natural light and ventilation. After removing wiring and pipes for recycling, ISL employees use cutting torches to break up the 1,047-foot-long ship into sections.

Gawky cranes with giant magnets and grapples remove modular sections of the ship in the reverse order of their assembly 60-plus years ago at a New Jersey shipyard. The

towering structure known as the island, or mast, was the first section cut loose and lowered to the ground. The sections swung from the ship to shore weigh up to 10 tons each. Hydraulic shears and torches reduce the metals to manageable chunks. The carrier's four main steam-driven engines, which supplied up to 100,000 horsepower each, must be cut into segments before removal. Armaments are demilitarized and then cut into unidentifiable pieces.

Watching the Kitty Hawk head to the recycling yard is "kind of like having the house you grew up in torn down."

ISL donated switches and gauges from the Kitty Hawk to the USS Lexington Museum in Corpus Christi.

While former Kitty Hawk sailors and aviators had hoped the carrier would become a museum, they can console themselves with challenge coins cut from its brass and available from ISL. Hefty chunks of the flight deck have been cut into brick-sized mementos as well.

The public can see the dismantling progress only during the winter months, when South Padre tour companies offer ship channel cruises. The Kitty Hawk and the USS John F. Kennedy are among the eight ships ISL is breaking up in 2023.

"With the remaking of her earthly frame, her spirit will live on," says Chris Green, ISL president.

After the carrier reached its final mooring, one former sailor remarked on Facebook, "She got to go out with her kids all around her showing their love." ■

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Millions of years ago, this fierce sea creature roamed waters covering the Bluebonnet region. The giant reptile's skeleton, spotted a century ago by students, returns to limited public display this year.



The reconstructed mosasaur found in 1935 on the banks of Onion Creek resides at the Texas Memorial Museum on the University of Texas at Austin campus. The first phase of the museum's reopening is expected this year. *Photo courtesy Texas Memorial Museum.* Above, an artist's depiction of a mosasaur swimming in ancient seas. *istockphoto*

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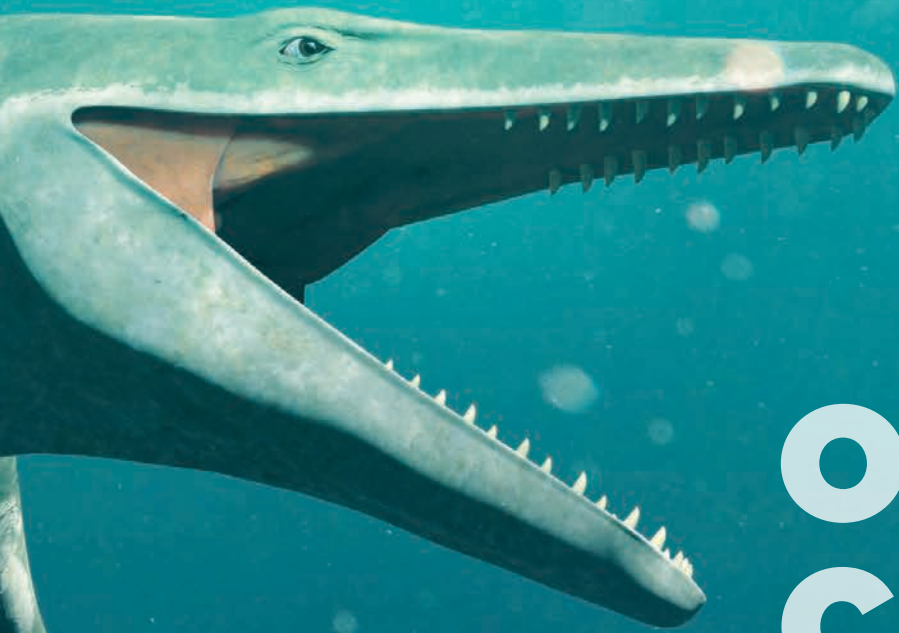
Quick Facts: Onion Creek Mosasaur

CLASSIFICATION: *Mosasaurus hoffmannii*, among the largest species of mosasaur.

SIZE: 30 feet long, including a 12-foot tail; the head was 4-feet, 8-inches long with large eyes; jaws were 3-feet wide; two sets of teeth, one in the back of the mouth, so it could grab, hold and swallow prey whole. Though massive, the Onion Creek Mosasaur is among the smaller of mosasaurs that swam the globe: the largest could reach 50 feet long.

PERIOD: Late Cretaceous, 66 million years ago, while dinosaurs roamed the Earth.

WHERE IT LIVED: In the sea that once covered 40% of North America and much of the rest of the planet. The Onion Creek Mosasaur was found near where Texas 71 crosses Onion Creek, east of Austin-Bergstrom International



meet
the

ONION CREEK

Mosasaur

Airport. Mosasaur remains have been found on all seven continents.

HABITAT: Spent nearly all its time in water, and most likely gave birth in water. As a reptile, however, it needed to surface for air periodically.

DIET: Sharks and other fish, ammonites (extinct mollusks), sea birds, sea turtles and other marine reptiles like plesiosaurs.

EVOLUTION: Believed to have evolved from small land lizards; looked similar to today's monitor lizards, such as the Komodo dragon.

LIFESPAN: 20-30 years.

Sources: Britannica, National Geographic, Paleontology, Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum, Texas Memorial Museum at the University of Texas at Austin, The Journal of Paleontological Sciences and Tuscaloosa News

By Denise Gamino

ELON MUSK and the Tesla Gigafactory may be the biggest recent sensations in eastern Travis County near the Colorado River, but about 66 million years ago, a truly jaw-dropping phenomenon roamed that area.

Meet the immense sea creature that got to Texas ages before anyone else.

The Onion Creek Mosasaur was a ferociously aggressive 30-foot marine reptile that lived during the dinosaur age. Its 3-foot-wide open mouth and 4-foot-long jaw made it the top predator — and largest animal — in the inland sea that covered much of Texas and 40% of present-day North America millions of years ago. The voracious mosasaurs, swimming in water as deep as 600 feet, “would eat pretty much anything which could fit into their enormous mouths — which, it turns out, was a lot,” according to the National Park Service. Its diet included sharks, fish, birds, ammonites (extinct mollusks) and even other mosasaurs.

The menacing mosasaur (MOSE-uh-sawr) skeleton is the preeminent display at the Texas Memorial Museum on the University of Texas at Austin campus. The museum was closed to the public almost a year ago

Continued on next page

Where Onion Creek Mosasaur was found



The nearly complete skeleton of the mosasaur was found in 1935 near today's intersection of state highways 130 and 71. Above is a stretch of Onion Creek today, near that area. *Sarah Beal photo*

Continued from previous page

because of budget cuts, but new funding has allowed behind-the-scenes work to continue. The museum is scheduled to reopen in stages, beginning this fall. The Onion Creek Mosasaur will be seen from afar by visitors at that time, but the public would be allowed a closer inspection of the mosasaur when the second phase of the museum's reopening occurs in the spring of 2024.

Texas Memorial Museum's website describes the Onion Creek Mosasaur skeleton as "spectacular." It's believed that geologists first saw a part of the giant fossil 100 years ago near present-day Texas 71 and Onion Creek, but the nearly complete skeleton was found there in 1935 by fossil-hunting UT geology students. Those students graduated and went on to have prominent careers in the oil — a fossil fuel — industry.

No one knows whether other petrified mosasaurs may be buried in that area, possibly now covered by roads or buildings. Unlike the federal government, Texas does not require a paleontology review before construction projects begin.

But for at least a century, the area of Onion Creek near today's Travis County Southeast Metropolitan Park has been known as such a "fossiliferous," or fossil-rich, spot that it became a favorite specimen-hunting site for UT geology professors and their students. Most finds were oyster shells, clams and other fossilized seashells.

Mosasaurs existed in the Late Cretaceous Period, which geologists believe ended violently about 66 million years ago when an asteroid about 6 miles wide slammed into what is now the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, causing an enormous inferno and a deadly planetwide dust cloud. The impact is thought to have been as powerful as 10 billion atomic bombs of the type used in World War II. The result was the mass extinction of all dinosaurs (except the forerunners of today's birds), as well as ocean creatures such as mosasaurs, ammonites and plesiosaurs.

Millennia after that extinction event, on a Saturday afternoon in the fall of 1935, soph-

omore UT geology students W. Clyde Ikins, from Weatherford west of Fort Worth, and John Peter "Pete" Smith, from Dallas, made the 14-mile trip from the UT campus to the fossil-hunting site on Onion Creek. They were looking for fossilized marine oysters, a common specimen to the area, to fulfill a laboratory assignment.

"We had gone about a quarter of a mile north of the highway bridge on the east bank of the creek when we discovered some bones sticking out of the bank near the water level," Ikins wrote to UT in the mid-1960s. "We found several vertebrae, rib bones, and a section of the jaw bone about two feet long. The jaw was complete with the large teeth which were used to crush mollusks. The teeth were so well preserved that they had their original polish and luster.

At this stage we were very impressed with our find, but had no idea that it would turn out to be probably the most complete mosasaur skeleton that has been found to date."

Smith was equally proud. "We got a great thrill out of the find as I had been hoping to find one since the day that Dr. (Robert) Cuyler (associate professor of geology) took us on our first Geology 1 field trip," he wrote in a 1967 letter to UT. "He mentioned that they (mosasaurs) were around, it just took time to find them."

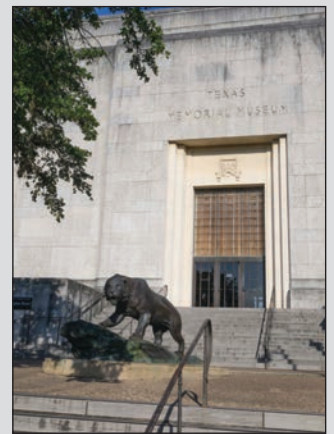
Ikins and Smith dug out several mosasaur bones that day and brought them back to UT.

University geology officials were beyond elated by the rare discovery. The prized bones were found just in time to be excavated and showcased in UT's Gregory Gymnasium as part of a statewide extravaganza.

History on hold

The Texas Memorial Museum of science and natural history began, appropriately, with a big bang.

In June 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt set off the dynamite that broke ground for the museum on the University of Texas campus in Austin. Roosevelt, who was on a presidential campaign train trip across Texas, remained on his parked passenger train near present-day East Fourth Street and Interstate 35 while pushing a big red, remote-control button to blast the limestone.

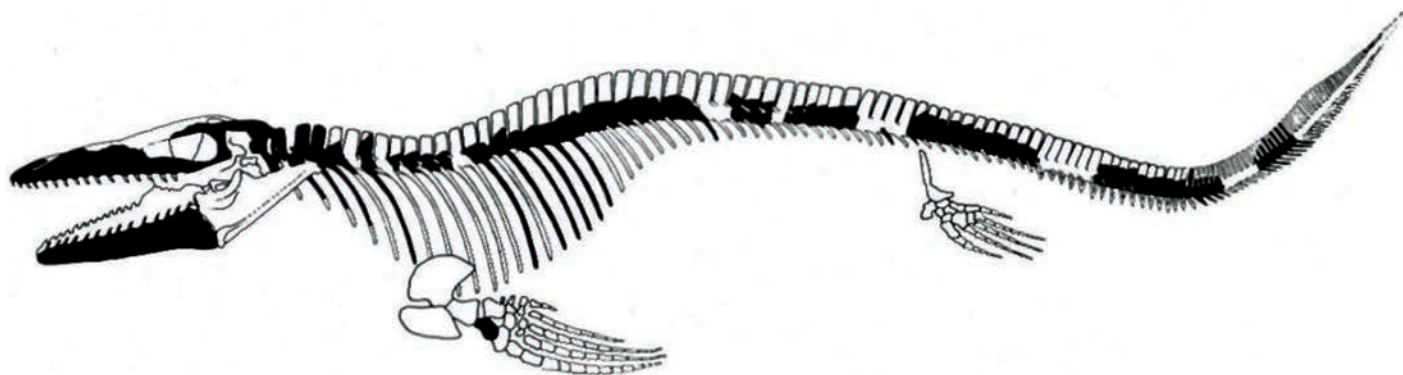


The museum temporarily closed to the public in March 2022 because of a staff shortage.

However, with university support and fundraising efforts, staff are renovating the museum to open in stages, beginning in September.

The Onion Creek Mosasaur will be on display — from a distance — when the museum reopens, but visitors will not be able to get close to it until the second phase of reopening in spring of 2024. The museum is at 2400 Trinity St. in Austin.

— Denise Gamino



This drawing, from 'The Onion Creek Mosasaur,' a study written by University of Texas paleontologist Wann Langston, Jr., shows the left side of the mosasaur, with shaded parts indicating actual bones recovered. Parts not shaded were restored in plaster. Different fossil parts were recovered from the mosasaur's opposite side, which helped in reconstruction. *Courtesy Texas Memorial Museum*

ganza to celebrate the 1936 Texas Centennial. They also hoped the mosasaur would bring public and scientific enthusiasm for the Texas Memorial Museum, then in the planning stages. It would open in 1939.

UT's 1936 Centennial Exposition featured an array of Texas natural science exhibits — such as dinosaur tracks and anthropology dioramas — that drew visitors from all over Texas as well as every other state and 39 countries. The expo ran from June through November 1936, and then cleared out for UT basketball season. It was so popular that visiting hours had to be extended to accommodate the crowds, who could watch the mosasaur bones (except for the skull) being cleaned, preserved and readied for display.

The Onion Creek Mosasaur skeleton “is a particularly lucky find because the specimen is perfect,” noted the late H.B. Stenzel, a geologist who directed the 1936 excavation for UT's Bureau of Economic Geology, the university's oldest research unit. His comments were included in a June 7, 1936, UT press release about the Centennial Expo. “With careful supervision, we will have the most perfect specimen of mosasaur yet found in the world.”

Unfortunately, a calamity at the end of the expo delayed the mosasaur's full public debut at the Texas Memorial Museum for several decades. Workers moving the mosasaur skeleton dropped it, and the bones shattered into many pieces and small fragments. “It remained in this condition for years and years,” Ikins wrote in his mid-1960s letter to the Texas Memorial Museum. “I think the only part of the skeleton that remained in any recognizable form was the head.”

The mosasaur remained asunder until the 1960s, when notable paleontologist Wann Langston, Jr. arrived at UT. He began a two-year process of reassembling the mosasaur skeleton and reconstructing some missing parts so the entire thing could finally be put on public display.

“The paleontologist and preparator reassembled all parts of the skeleton in a natural (swimming) position,” Langston

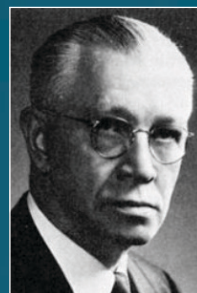
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From fossils to fossil-fuel careers

Three UT geology students who found the Onion Creek Mosasaur fossils decades ago went on to outstanding careers in the oil business:

L. T. 'SLIM' BARROW

Barrow, who spotted some of the Onion Creek Mosasaur bones in 1923 or 1924, was a native of Manor and played football and basketball for the Longhorns while studying geology. Humble Oil and Refining Company (now Exxon) hired him as a field geologist for surface geologic mapping in Caldwell and Guadalupe counties, where Humble discovered the Salt Flat and Darst Creek oilfields, according to the Texas State Historical Association. He became Humble's chief geologist in 1929 and rose to chairman of the oil company's board in 1948. He helped establish a memorial endowment to UT's Geology Foundation in the late 1950s, in honor of one of his former professors. Barrow died in 1978.



W. CLYDE IKINS

One of two UT geology students who found the nearly complete skeleton in 1935, Ikins studied chemistry, botany and geology at UT, earning a doctoral degree in geology. He began his geology career with the Black Mesa Mining Company exploring for brilliant red cinnabar (mercury ore) in Terlingua, near today's Big Bend National Park. He became chief geologist for Dow Chemical, and later president and CEO of Hondo Petroleum. His botany interests were focused on waterlilies, irises, cacti and succulents. In 1981, he donated his sweeping cacti and succulent collection gathered from around the world to his botanist friend, Dr. Barton Warnock, for a botanical garden in the Big Bend area. Ikins became one of the world's foremost experts on water lilies and irises. He died in 2005, but today, the peony-like “Nymphaea Clyde Ikins” water lily is still available for sale.



JOHN PETER 'PETE' SMITH

Smith, along with Ikins, found the nearly complete skeleton in 1935. He went on to become the exploration manager for Esso (Standard) oil's Libya division and was based in Tripoli. Esso was owned by Standard Oil and became Exxon in 1972. Esso was famous for an ad that encouraged drivers to “put a tiger in your tank” with Esso Extra premium gasoline. Smith retired from Standard Oil in 1967.

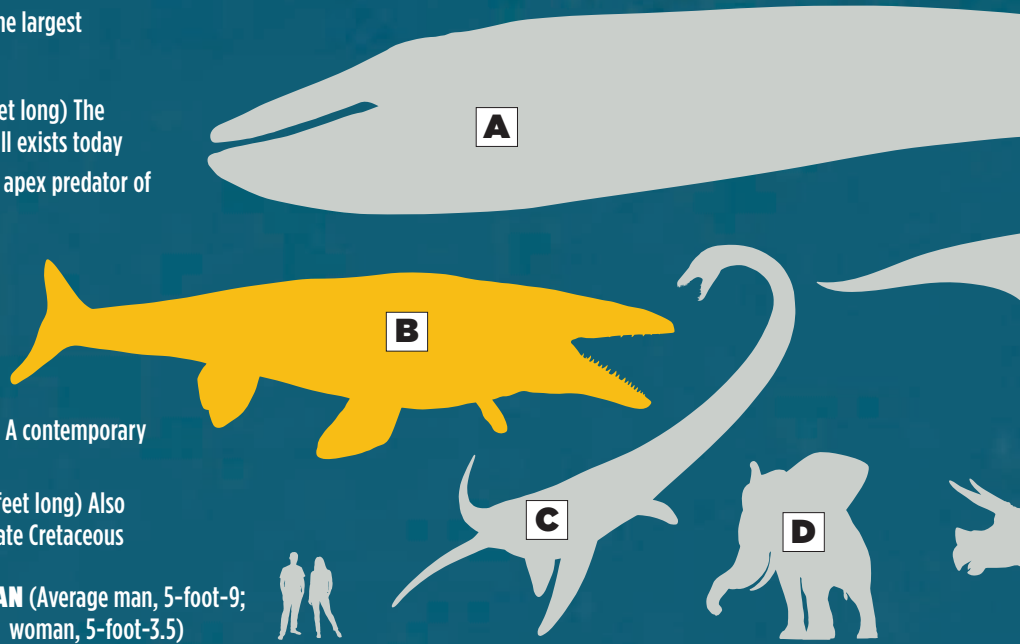


Size is relative: How the mosasaur stacks up against creatures prehistoric and current

Shown in their relative sizes, some of the largest creatures to ever exist include:

- A: GREAT BLUE WHALE** (up to 100 feet long) The largest creature to ever live on Earth still exists today
- B: MOSASAUR** (up to 50 feet long) An apex predator of the Cretaceous Period
- C: PLESIOSAUR** (up to 40 feet long) A contemporary of the mosasaur in the Late Cretaceous seas
- D: AFRICAN ELEPHANT** (up to 24 feet long) Largest living land animal
- E: TRICERATOPS**: (up to 30 feet long) A contemporary of the T. rex and the mosasaur
- F: TYRANNOSAURUS REX** (up to 40 feet long) Also contemporary to the mosasaur in the Late Cretaceous

HUMAN (Average man, 5-foot-9; woman, 5-foot-3.5)



Continued from previous page

wrote about the mosasaur in a 1966 detailed scholarly study for the Texas Memorial Museum. “As is usual with fossils, some parts of the Onion Creek Mosasaur had been lost before the skeleton was buried and some bones were destroyed by weathering before the discovery was made,” Langston wrote.

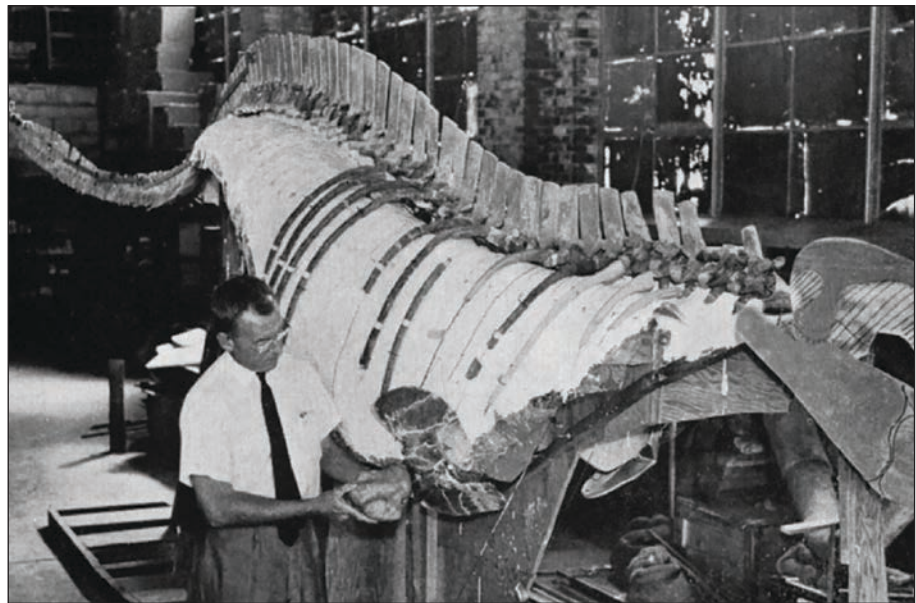
“Missing parts were molded in plaster and assembled in their appropriate places among the original bones. These included most of the paddle bones, some vertebrae, ribs, and various parts of the skull and jaws.”

The mosasaur quickly became the museum’s top exhibit when it went on display in the mid-1960s. Ten years later, UT learned that the university’s connection to the mosasaur was older than previously thought.

In 1975, former UT geology student L.T. “Slim” Barrow, the retired board chairman of Humble Oil and Refining Co. (later to become Exxon), sent a letter of congratulations to UT for, among other things, “the perfect job” of reassembling the mosasaur. He said he had been among a group of UT geology students in 1923 or 1924 who had seen some of the mosasaur’s vertebrae at Onion Creek. The students began to dig, Barrow wrote, but “we realized it was too big a job for us and quit before we had done any damage.” Twelve years later, Ikins and Smith found the nearly complete skeleton.

The Onion Creek Mosasaur was far from the only mosasaur that swam the Cretaceous waters that covered much of what is now Texas, while dinosaurs roamed on land.

“Fossilized parts of several mosasaur species have been collected from roughly 100 spots in Texas,” said paleontologist and geologist Chris Sagebiel, the current collections man-



Paleontologist Wann Langston, Jr. painstakingly reconstructed the Onion Creek Mosasaur over a 2-year period in the 1960s. *Courtesy Texas Memorial Museum*

ager of UT’s Texas Vertebrate Paleontology Collections. “However, most sites produce only one tooth, or only a bone or two.”

Western Kansas is a hot spot for mosasaur fossils, ranging from single bones to nearly complete skeletons. In Texas, similar “chalk deposits and associated limestone and shale are exposed in a narrow band extending from northeastern Texas (Red River and Bowie counties) southwestward to San Antonio, and westward toward the Big Bend,” Langston wrote in 1966.

“Dallas, Waco, and Austin are all built on these rocks, and mosasaur bones have been found in them, especially in Dallas,

McLennan, Williamson, Travis, and Hays counties.”

In 2022, an amateur fossil hunter discovered part of a mosasaur skeleton in the streambed of the North Sulphur River 80 miles northeast of Dallas. Paleontologists from the Perot Museum of Nature and Science in Dallas excavated parts of the fossilized skull, lower jawbone and vertebrae, and plan to continue excavation work.

The exact location of most fossil sites is protected information, and is even exempt from freedom of information laws to preserve them from commercial hunters or vandals, UT’s Sagebiel said. However, the location

Hey, kids!

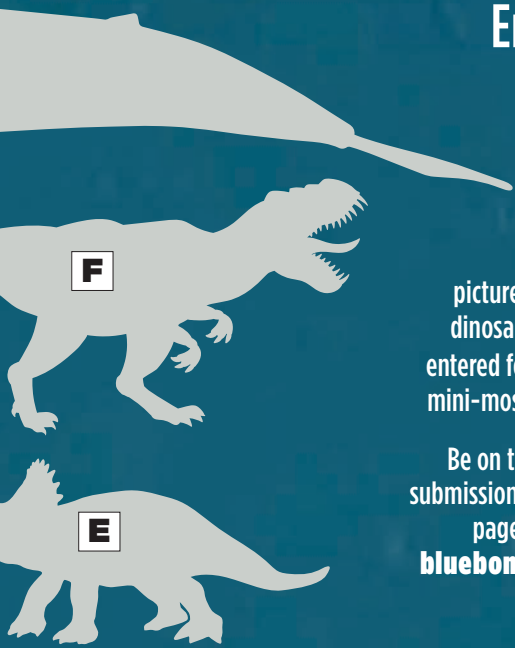
Enter for a chance to win a toy mosasaur.

Do you have a budding young artist or a collector of prehistoric beings? Scan the QR code at right with your phone, or visit Bluebonnet's Facebook page to upload pictures of your children's dinosaur collection or their dinosaur drawings. They will be entered for a chance to win a mini-mosasaur of their own.

Be on the lookout for your submissions on our social media pages and website, bluebonnet.coop, through February.



SCAN WITH A SMARTPHONE



where the Onion Creek Mosasaur was found is no longer secret because it has been destroyed over the decades by construction on the Texas 71 bridge over Onion Creek. "I believe that the actual (mosasaur fossil) site has since been thoroughly excavated, demolished and concreted over," he said.

Even with the Onion Creek Mosasaur's last resting place no longer accessible, Texas still has plenty of ancient creature fossils yet to be found. In fact, the "most fossiliferous site in Texas" is in another part of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's service area, according to the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. That is a spot along the Brazos River in Burleson County, where a huge deposit of marine fossils includes the remains of snails, oysters, clams and shark teeth.

Collectors have hunted for centuries at that fossil site, under the Texas 21 bridge northeast of Caldwell. Texas A&M University students and science groups still make regular field trips there.

The Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History in Bryan features fossils from the Museum of the A&M College of Texas, which closed in 1965. The Brazos Valley Museum's collection includes ice age and dinosaur age and casts, including skulls of a mastodon, a triceratops and a Tyrannosaurus rex.

But Texas' biggest paleontology finds have been made in the Big Bend area of far West Texas. A Texas Pterosaur, with a wingspan of almost 40 feet, was found in that region. You will be able to see its reconstructed skeleton soar in the Great Hall of the Texas Memorial Museum when it reopens in the fall. ■



Courtesy Witte Museum



Courtesy Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History

Prehistoric sites in Texas

Many other prehistoric creatures lived in the waters and on the land that later became Texas. You can see footprints and remains of other prehistoric creatures in parks, natural areas and museums around the state. Places to visit include the Witte Museum in San Antonio, above, which displays fossils, skeletons and footprints of creatures that walked, swam and flew 110 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period. The fossilized remains of a mastodon skull, at left, are among the prehistoric displays at the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History in Bryan. Their collection includes the remains of a mammoth skull and a cast of a triceratops skull. Read more about these and other dinosaur sites at bluebonnet.coop/dino-texas.

SPEND A DAY IN *Giddings*

By Alyssa Meinke

THE HEART of Giddings, home of the high school Buffaloes sports teams, is at the intersection of busy U.S. highways 290 and 77 in Lee County. The town is 55 miles east of Austin and 107 miles west of Houston. It was founded in 1871, after brothers J.D. and DeWitt Giddings financed the Houston & Texas Central Railway, which transported cotton from Houston to Dallas and fueled an economic engine for the region. Giddings was incorporated in 1913, with 2,000 residents, and a 1980s oil boom brought growth. Today Giddings has more than 5,000 residents.

WHAT TO DO

Altman Plants, 1180 Private Road 2906, 3½ miles west of downtown off U.S. 290, is the largest commercial nursery in Texas. You can stop and browse through the assortment of discounted plants for sale to the public from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, and 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturdays. While you're there, admire its more than 50 acres of massive greenhouses.

Check out one of the state's largest privately collected arrowhead displays at the **Giddings Public Library and Cultural Center**, 276 N. Orange St., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturdays.

Also worth a stop is the historic 1879 **Schubert-Fletcher Home** housing the **Lee County Museum**, 183 E. Hempstead St., 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday. Although construction partially blocks the view, stop to admire the architecture of the **Lee County Courthouse**, built in 1899, 200 S. Main St., and the many murals around the city, particularly the historic Depression-era mural inside the post office, called "Cowboys Receiving the Mail," 279 E. Austin St., which is also U.S. 290. Get more information at co.lee.tx.us and giddingstx.com.

Looking for live music or a screen to watch sports? Check out **Giddings Brewhaus**, 199 N. Burlison St., from 3-11 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday, and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sundays. Home of the "Zoch Bock," Brewhaus serves craft beers, wines and food, from pizza and hot wings to German specialties like schnitzel.

Before you strike out for home, hit one of the 16 lanes at **Leisure Lanes** bowling alley, 2249 W. U.S. 290, from 6 p.m.-midnight, Fridays and Saturdays.

GRAB A BITE

Reba's Pizza & Deli, 208 E. Austin St., 10 a.m.-9 p.m. daily, is a good spot to stop for lunch. It serves homestyle soups, wraps, salads, quiche, specialty pizza and more. Save room for homemade fudge or a scoop of Blue Bell ice cream.

Other dining options ranked in Trip Advisor's top restaurants in Giddings are:

Los Patrones Mexican Grill, 2880 E. Austin St., 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday-Sunday.

Continued on next page



Among the sights in Giddings, from top: The Lee County Courthouse, with a bell tower that is the highest point in the county; Reba's Pizza & Deli, which serves popular Dublin soda and homemade fudge, among other offerings; the post office's Depression-era mural; and Altman Plants, the largest commercial nursery in the state. *Photos by Sarah Beal and Alyssa Meinke*

Continued from previous page

Taqueria Chihuahua, 1865 E. Austin St., 5:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Saturday.

City Meat Market, 101 W. Austin St., 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday, and 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Saturdays.

STOP AND SHOP

Giddings has several boutiques and gift shops run by local entrepreneurs. Here are three located close together:

Ashley's Attic, 687 E. Austin St., is a one-stop eclectic shop for gifts, clothes, accessories and Kendra Scott jewelry; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and noon-5 p.m. Sundays.

Gourmet Divas, at 721 E. Austin St., is a local favorite for cookware, bakeware, spices and kitchen gadgets; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays. Divas hosts cooking classes periodically; get information at facebook.com/gourmetdivastx.

The Grapevine, 790 E. Austin St., sells gifts, apparel, footwear, home and seasonal decor, plus bags and purses, including those by Consuela; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and noon-5 p.m. Sundays.

Some other shopping options:

For quilters, **All Around the Block Quilt Shop**, 979 N. Leon St., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays, is a haven for fabric and sewing supplies.

For antiques, stop by **Whistle Stop Antiques**, 1122 E. Austin St., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, or **Roadhouse Antiques**, 791 E. Austin St., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily.

Rejuvenation Thrift Store, 179 S. Main St., 9:30 a.m.-1 pm. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays; benefits local residents in need.

TIPS FROM LOCALS

If a train is chugging through town, traffic can back up on either side of the tracks on U.S. 290. If you're headed west, take a left turn on East Hempstead Street and drive parallel to U.S. 290 to avoid traffic in town.

Take an Instagrammable cruise through town by following the map from the Giddings Chamber of Commerce's driving tour; get information at bit.ly/3t7Na6X.

This is the first in a series of guides on spending a day in one of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's service area communities.



Grant for community playground

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative and the Lower Colorado River Authority recently provided a grant to St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Winchester in Fayette County as part of LCRA's Community Development Partnership Program to give back to the communities it serves. Bluebonnet is one of LCRA's wholesale electric customers and a partner in the grant program. A \$14,953 grant will allow the church to replace outdated playground equipment and improve the facility at the Winchester Community Park. The church provided \$4,100 in matching funds. Pictured, from left, are Kate Ramzinski, LCRA regional affairs representative; Sherry Murphy, Bluebonnet's Giddings-area community representative; Mirlyn Griffin, park board member and St. Michael's Lutheran Church member; Rev. Nate Hill, pastor; Marceil Prestridge, church president; Mikey Adams, church member; Margaret D. 'Meg' Voelter, LCRA board member; Russell Jurk, Bluebonnet director; Bill Karisch, park board and church member; Darline Kaiser, church member; and Ron Kaiser, church president-elect. *LCRA photo*

Bluebonnet receives safety award

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative has received a Platinum Safety Partner award from Texas Mutual Insurance Company. Safety and serving its members with reliable electric service are top

priorities for Bluebonnet. Texas Mutual is a workers' compensation company, and the award recognizes its policyholders that practice top-quality workplace safety. Only 200 of Texas Mutual's more than 74,000 policyholders are recognized with the distinction annually. The award is given to those that excel at protecting workers and providing safety resources. Pictured in the photo, from left, are Eric Kocian, Bluebonnet's chief engineer/system operations officer; Heath Siegmund, Bluebonnet's manager of safety service and compliance; Rachel Ellis, Bluebonnet's chief administrative officer; and Erika Carral, Texas Mutual's safety services associate. *Sarah Beal photo*



Your co-op, your vote

One of the benefits of being a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member is voting to elect the cooperative's Board of Directors. You can cast your ballot in two ways: by submitting your proxy voting form by May 2, 2023, or by attending the Annual Meeting in person on May 9, 2023. Keep an eye on your mailbox, because your proxy voting form will arrive in March. Learn more about the process at bluebonnet.coop/vote.

OFFICE CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Feb. 20 for Presidents Day. If you have a power outage, you can report it by texting OUT to 85700 (to register, text BBOUTAGE to that number), online at bluebonnet.coop, via our MyBluebonnet mobile app or by calling 800-949-4414.

Clogged, Backed—up Septic System... Can anything Restore It?

DEAR DARRYL: My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



Dear
Darryl

My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

Clogged and Smelly – Lewisville, TX

DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY: As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unplug the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unplug and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at www.septicleanse.com or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "TXS18", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.



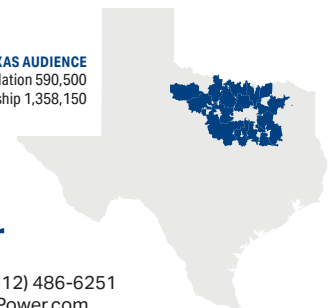
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Full tang stainless steel blade with natural bone handle —now **ONLY \$79!**

The very best hunting knives possess a perfect balance of form and function. They're carefully constructed from fine materials, but also have that little something extra to connect the owner with nature.

If you're on the hunt for a knife that combines impeccable craftsmanship with a sense of wonder, the **\$79 Huntsman Blade** is the trophy you're looking for.

The blade is full tang, meaning it doesn't stop at the handle but extends to the length of the grip for the ultimate in strength. The blade is made from 420 surgical steel, famed for its sharpness and its resistance to corrosion.

The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

But we don't stop there. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99, 8x21 power compact, binoculars *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the **Huntsman Blade**.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

Limited Reserves. A deal like this won't last long. We have only 1120 **Huntsman Blades** for this ad only. Don't let this beauty slip through your fingers. Call today!

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A squad leader of the highly decorated 442nd patrols the front lines in France.

TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



can forces tried pounding the German lines with their artillery, but the forest was so thick they weren't having much effect. Two infantry battalions tried to break through the German lines, but each was repelled by hailstorms of bullets.

This is when the 442nd, which had joined with the 100th, was called in. Battle-hardened, they had a reputation for succeeding in just these situations. It took them five days of brutal, close-quarters combat on muddy terrain in bone-chilling weather to reach the Texans. The 442nd suffered hundreds of casualties to save 211 soldiers of the Lost Battalion's original 275.

After almost a week, they were freed from the German onslaught.

What makes this story especially significant: The 442nd was a Nisei regiment, composed of second-generation Japanese Americans. Most of them, along with their families, had been detained in camps operated by the War Relocation Authority at the beginning of the war. These men, however, asked if they could fight rather than sit out the war.

And they were extraordinary fighters. The 442nd was called the Purple Heart Battalion because they received more Purple Hearts than any other unit their size in World War II.

When the 442nd returned from Europe, President Harry Truman said, "You have fought not only the enemy, but you have fought prejudice—and you have won."

For Connally, making them all honorary Texans was his way of demonstrating to these soldiers, and their descendants, the solemn gratitude of Texas. ■

Rescue of the Lost Battalion

How Japanese American units saved Texans in World War II

BY W.F. STRONG

THERE'S A LONG LIST of honorary Texans. John Wayne is one. No surprise there. Chuck Norris, born in Oklahoma, was made an honorary Texan in 2017, and Gov. Allan Shivers extended the honor to Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

But one case that stands out is when Gov. John Connally awarded honorary Texan status to hundreds of men simultaneously in 1962. He made the entire 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion of the U.S. Army honorary Texans after World War II.

The story begins with the Alamo Regiment, a Texas National Guard unit that

in October 1944 found itself cut off and surrounded behind enemy lines in the mountains of southern France.

The Texans were on top of a mountain and had the advantage of high ground, but they were still pounded by German artillery. It was foggy, rainy and very cold. They quickly dug fighting positions in the wet, muddy soil and covered themselves with tree limbs, rocks and dirt. The Lost Battalion, as it was known, was also running out of food and water.

The U.S. Army redirected its push toward the Rhine River to focus on saving the battalion from the Germans. Ameri-

Cupcakes

One might not be enough when serving these delightful treats

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Cupcakes are riding waves of trendiness, but for us they're classic. There's just something about a plate of cupcakes that brings a smile to your face, whether you're celebrating a birthday, graduation or holiday. These cupcakes, inspired by the classic confection, are my favorite Valentine's Day treat, but they're great for any special day.



Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Cupcakes

CUPCAKES

8 ounces strawberries, divided use
2½ cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup (1 stick) butter
1½ cups sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
⅔ cup milk

ICING

¾ cup heavy cream
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

- 1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line muffin pans with 18 paper liners.
- 2.** Stem, halve and purée half the strawberries to yield about ½ cup of strawberry purée. Set aside.
- 3.** In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Set aside.
- 4.** In a large bowl, cream together butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time, then mix in vanilla and strawberry purée until blended and smooth.
- 5.** Alternately add the flour mixture and milk, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Scrape down the sides of the bowl between additions and make sure everything is incorporated before the next addition. Beat batter until smooth.
- 6.** Divide batter among prepared cups. Bake 20–25 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool completely on a wire rack.
- 7. ICING** Heat heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium-high. Add the chocolate chips to a bowl. Once cream is lightly bubbling, remove from heat and pour over the chocolate. Whisk to melt until completely smooth. Let cool until slightly thickened.
- 8.** Holding a cupcake upside down, lower it into the chocolate, twisting to evenly coat. Lift and let excess drip back into the bowl, then flip and place on rack to set. Repeat with remaining cupcakes.
- 9.** Slice remaining strawberries into halves and place one half on top of each cupcake. Let cupcakes rest until chocolate is firm.

MAKES 18 CUPCAKES

TCP Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Hummingbird Cupcakes.



Cookie Butter Spice Cupcakes

AUTUMN PRINCE
WISE EC

COOK'S TIP Cookie butter spread can be found in the peanut butter aisle. It's also available online.

CUPCAKES

- ½ cup sugar**
- ¼ cup crunchy cookie butter**
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, softened**
- 1 egg**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**
- ¾ cup flour**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons milk**

ICING

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, softened**
- 2 tablespoons crunchy cookie butter**
- ¾ cup powdered sugar**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- Biscoff cookies (optional)**

- 1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line a muffin pan with 6–8 paper liners.
- 2.** In a bowl, cream together sugar, cookie butter and butter until fluffy. Beat in egg, vanilla, nutmeg and cloves until smooth.
- 3.** Add flour, baking powder and salt until just combined. Scrape down sides, then beat in milk until batter is smooth.
- 4.** Divide batter among prepared liners. Bake 20–22 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean and tops are firm. Let cool completely on a wire rack.

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

OJCs (Orange Juice Cupcakes)

CHUCK BURGESS
HEART OF TEXAS EC



These delightful cupcakes are full of orange flavor, especially from the orange-flecked icing. Take the time to grate fresh orange zest—it's worth it.

MAKES 24 CUPCAKES

CUPCAKES

- 1½ cups sugar**
- ¼ cup brown sugar**
- 2½ cups flour**
- 2½ teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 2 eggs**
- ⅔ cup milk**
- ⅔ cup orange juice**
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter, melted and cooled, divided use**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

ICING

- 3 cups powdered sugar**
- 2 large oranges**

- 1. CUPCAKES** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line muffin pans with 24 paper liners.
- 2.** In a large bowl, mix together sugar, brown sugar, flour, baking powder and salt. Beat in eggs, milk, orange juice, ½ cup melted butter and vanilla until smooth.
- 3.** Divide batter among prepared liners, filling about halfway. Bake 25–30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan 10 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.
- 4. ICING** Place the powdered sugar in a bowl. Zest the oranges and add to the sugar. Halve the oranges and juice to get ¼ to ⅓ cup juice, removing seeds. Add juice and remaining ¼ cup melted butter to the sugar and whisk ingredients until completely blended and smooth. Dip cupcakes in icing and return to wire rack until set.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

GARDEN BOUNTY DUE FEBRUARY 10

What grows in your garden? Share your favorite recipes for making the most of summer produce. Submit them on our website by February 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

5. ICING Cream together butter and cookie butter. Add powdered sugar ¼ cup at a time until completely blended. Add vanilla and salt and beat until light and fluffy. Ice cupcakes and decorate with half a Biscoff cookie or cookie crumbs, if desired.

MAKES 6-8 CUPCAKES

Mint Chocolate Cupcakes

SUSAN PRAUSE
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

CUPCAKES

- 1 cup flour**
- ¾ cup cocoa powder**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- ½ teaspoon baking soda**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- 1¼ cups sugar**
- ½ cup vegetable oil**
- 3 eggs**
- 3 tablespoons sour cream or plain yogurt**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ¾ cup buttermilk**



FROSTING

- 1¼ cups (2½ sticks) unsalted butter**
- 4-5 cups powdered sugar**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- ¼ cup heavy cream**
- 1-1½ teaspoons mint extract**
- Green food coloring (optional)**
- Mini mint or chocolate chips (optional)**

1. CUPCAKES Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line muffin pans with 18-24 paper liners. In a bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

2. In a large bowl, beat together sugar, vegetable oil, eggs, sour cream and vanilla until smooth. Slowly beat in half the flour mixture, then half the buttermilk, completely mixing in before adding the remaining flour mixture and buttermilk. Scrape down sides and beat until smooth.

3. Divide batter among prepared cups. Bake 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool completely on a wire rack.

4. FROSTING Beat butter with a stand mixer or hand mixer until fluffy. Turn to low speed and add powdered sugar ½ cup at a time until desired sweetness is reached.

5. Once the sugar is fully incorporated, turn the mixer to high and beat 5-10 seconds. Beat in heavy cream 1 tablespoon at a time until desired consistency. Beat in mint extract a little at a time, tasting until desired flavor is achieved, then add food coloring (if using). Frost cooled cupcakes and decorate with mint or chocolate chips, if desired.

MAKES 18-24 CUPCAKES



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SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our *Sedona Turquoise Collection*. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for just \$99.



C.

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A.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Important Entry

After hurricanes, little remains of the once-bustling city of Indianola

BY CHET GARNER

ASK SOMEONE to name the largest cities in Texas, and you'll probably get the correct answers. But rewind the clock to the mid-1800s and you'll find that some of Texas' biggest cities were much lesser-known locales, including one that was practically wiped off the map. With my history books in hand, I drove south to explore the disappearance of Indianola.

I started at the Calhoun County Museum in Port Lavaca, a great place to get some perspective with numerous exhibits, paintings and models of the once-bustling city, which had been a camping site for Karankawa natives. It's likely Germans were the first Europeans to arrive, in 1844, and two years later, Indianola was on its way to becoming one of the new state's major ports of entry.

The town grew to more than 5,000 residents as European families immigrated through Indianola to begin their new lives. Indianola grew in influence until 1875, when a terrible hurricane decimated the town and killed hundreds. The city rebuilt on a smaller scale, only to be leveled by a second hurricane in 1886. Within a year the townsite was abandoned.

I followed the edge of Matagorda Bay about 12 miles south, where very little evidence remains of Indianola's former glory. The smattering of residents there are Victoria Electric Cooperative members. I read the historic markers and found remnants of old foundations, including the original courthouse, which sits submerged in the bay as erosion has moved the waterfront.

In the old cemetery, home to more than 2,000 graves, only a few dozen tombstones remain. It is fascinating and sobering to think that a town so vibrant could be almost completely lost. But as long as we keep telling the story of Indianola, it will never truly disappear. ■

ABOVE Chet stands on all that remains of a statue of French explorer René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle.

TCP Chet visits the sparse remains of Indianola. Check out the video on our website and see all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

FEBRUARY

09

Bellville Chocolate Walk, discoverbellville.com

Bandera [9-11] Cowboy Mardi Gras, (830) 796-4849, facebook.com/11thstreetcowboybar

10

Fredericksburg [10-11] Hug-In, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Clute [10-12, 17-19] Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express, (979) 265-7661, bcfas.org

Victoria [10-12, 16-19] Always ... Patsy Cline, (361) 576-6277, theatrevictoria.org

Galveston [10-12, 17-19, 21] Mardi Gras! Galveston, info@yagasevents.com, mardigrasgalveston.com

Fredericksburg [10-12, 17-19, 24-26] Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

Matagorda [10-11, 17-19, 25-March 4] County Fair, (979) 245-2454, matagordacountyfair.com

11

Amarillo Los Tigres del Norte, (806) 378-3096, amarillociviccenter.com

Brenham Sweet Valentine With Sweet Baby James, (979) 337-7240, visitbrenhamtexas.com

La Grange Uncorked, (979) 968-3017, visitlagrangetx.com

Nocona [11-18] Mardi Gras Nocona Style,
(940) 825-3526, nocona.org

16

Tyler Joel McHale,
(903) 566-7424,
cowancenter.org

Beaumont [16-19] Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas,
(409) 721-8717,
mardigrastx.com

17

Laredo [17-18] Washington's Birthday Celebration Association Jalapeño Festival, (956) 722-0589,
wbcalarado.org

Fredericksburg [17-19] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094,
fbgradedays.com

Los Fresnos [17-19] Rodeo,
(855) 537-6336, lfrodeo.com

18

Buda The Steeldrivers,
(512) 312-9456,
bucksbackyard.com

Stephenville Cowgirl Crop, (254) 434-1512,
scrapbookcowgirl.com

Belton [18-19] Mother Earth News Fair, 1-800-234-3368,
motherearthnewsfair.com

19

Fredericksburg Emily James Oskins,
fredericksburgmusicclub.com

Huntsville Shake Rattle & Roll, (936) 293-8681,
oldtowntheatre-huntsville.org

Texarkana Run the Line Half Marathon, runsignup.com/
runthelinehalfmarathon

20

Brenham [20-25] Fort-nightly Club Used Book Sale, (979) 525-7414,
booksalefinder.com

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EARL NOTTINGHAM | TPWD

Pick of the Month

Black History Month Hike

Karnack, February 11
(903) 679-3351
tpwd.texas.gov

In honor of the historic contributions
of Black Americans, Caddo Lake State
Park hosts a history hike that teaches
about the Buffalo Soldiers and Black
conservationists, scientists and envi-
ronmentalists.

FEBRUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

21

**Abilene [21–22] Texas
Farm, Ranch and Wildlife
Expo.** (325) 677-7241,
abilenechamber.com

22

**Huntsville [22–25]
Prison City Film Festival,**
info@prisoncityfilmfestival.com,
prisoncityfilmfestival.com

23

**Big Spring Tate's Place
Western Night Benefit,**
[tatesplaceservingothers
@gmail.com](mailto:tatesplaceservingothers@gmail.com),
tatesplace.com

**Junction Astronomy With
Buddy,** (325) 446-3994,
tpwd.texas.gov

**Port Aransas [23–26]
Whooping Crane Festival,**
(361) 749-5919,
portaransas.org

**San Antonio [23–March 6],
Remember the Battle of
the Alamo,** (210) 225-1391,
thealamo.org

24

**Boerne Royal National
Dance Company: Fire of
Georgia,** (830) 331-9079,
boerneperformingarts.com

25

**Amarillo [24–25] Star Wars
and Beyond: An Evening
of John Williams,**
(806) 376-8782,
amarillosymphony.org

**La Grange [24–25] The
Best Little Quilt Show
in Texas,** (979) 236-4298,
coloradovalleyqq.com

**Brenham The Jersey
Tenors,** (979) 337-7240,
thebarnhillcenter.com

**Granbury Paluxy River
Children's Advocacy
Center Gala,** (817) 573-0292,
paluxyrivercac.org

Greenville The Everly Set,
[greenvilleentertainment
series.com](http://greenvilleentertainmentseries.com)

**Washington [25–26] Texas
Independence Day Cele-
bration,** (936) 878-2214,
wheretexasbecametexas.org

28

**Midland The Power of
One: Luncheon and
Children's Style Show,**
(512) 635-4152,
casawtx.org

**Houston [28–March 19]
Livestock Show and
Rodeo,** (832) 667-1000,
rodeohouston.com

MARCH

02

**Bastrop The Farm Street
Opry,** (512) 332-8981,
farmstreetopry.com

**Tyler Trinity Irish Dance
Company,** (903) 566-7424,
cowancenter.org

03

**Lufkin Dragons and
Mythical Beasts,**
(936) 633-5454,
angelinaarts.org

04

**Kerrville Classical Music
Festival,** (830) 321-0303,
hillcountrychorale.org

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1

1 DEBRA CHANDLER
LIGHTHOUSE EC

Plainview firefighters search through rubble after a downtown building fire.

2 JACK GOUGE
TRINITY VALLEY EC

Trinity Valley EC lineworkers make repairs after a large oak tree toppled onto power lines and a garage in Eustace. "They were our heroes on a hot Texas July night."

3 KELLY KOENIG
PEDERNALES EC

A Killeen Fire Department training exercise.

4 WENDY ALLEY MLADENKA
SAN BERNARD EC

Mladenka, a captain with the Columbus Police Department, captures game wardens launching a rescue boat after Hurricane Harvey in 2017.



2



3



4

Upcoming Contests

- DUE FEB 10 **Dad**
- DUE MAR 10 **Waterfalls**
- DUE APR 10 **Hoof and Horn**



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for more First Responders photos from readers.



T-Shirt Weather

Commemorating those days that leave a lasting impression on a kid

BY LORI GROSSMAN
ILLUSTRATION BY MITCH BLUNT

THE WEATHER was the last thing on my mind when I got home from school on January 11, 1985. Mom was waiting for me at the door, and she seemed agitated about something. We have to get groceries, she said. Right away.

Snowfall was predicted—light at first, then heavy. It could be heavy enough to prevent us from going anywhere.

Snow? I'm a native San Antonian, and here, snowfall—any amount—is rare. When my brother and I were growing up, snow flurries were cause for celebration. Several inches almost brought life to a screeching halt.

Mom and I were lucky to beat the rush to the stores that day. Texans know to stock up on the essentials—milk, bread, eggs, toilet paper and beer. By the time we got home, I was excited. Bring it on!

Mother Nature did just that. A band of heavy snow started south of Del Rio and gradually moved north and east toward Bexar County. The frozen precipitation didn't stop until two days later. I couldn't believe my eyes. The views from our windows reminded me of vintage Christmas card scenes (without ice skaters, unfortunately). Dad found a yardstick, and I went out to measure the depth. Thirteen inches!

San Antonio closed down. The city had no snowplows, of course. Kids and a few hardy adults went out to play, but most citizens were stuck indoors until it melted. The official total of 13.5 inches dwarfed the previous record of 6.4 inches in January 1926. I doubt that the new record will ever be broken. It was such a big deal that someone made and sold T-shirts that boasted, "I Survived Winter '85 San Antonio, TX."

A few years later, my family moved to Dallas, where I looked forward to seeing snow more often. The thought of possible bone-chilling cold never crossed my mind. The coldest temperature I remembered in San Antonio was in the low teens.

That personal record was shattered December 23, 1989, when the thermometer plunged to minus 1 degree.

I had to experience it to believe it. Leaving my coat inside, I walked out on our front porch. No snow this time—just cold. I didn't know what to expect. Would I freeze solid?

I don't remember any wind. I actually felt comfortable for a few minutes. Truthfully, I wasn't that impressed.

Still, it made me think somebody should print up T-shirts.

No, better make it sweatshirts. ■

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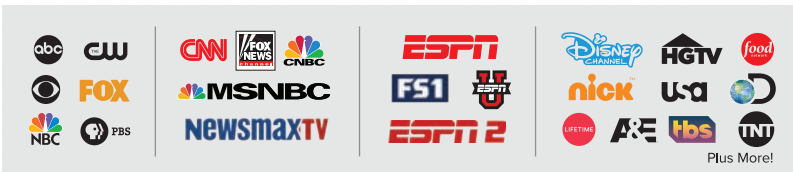
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