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NEBRASKAN

June 2020

**Step Back in Time
at the Antelope
County Museum**



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RURAL ELECTRIC
NEBRASKAN

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Ten years ago, electric vehicles were a rare sight, but today, you see them on roadways all across the country. Advancements in battery technology have led to smaller, even more efficient batteries, which has opened the door to new forms of electric transportation.

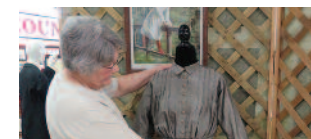


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Museum curator Pat Kenaston readjusts the skirt of a vintage dress, one of the numerous displays at the museum's main building. Photograph by LaRayne Topp





by Wayne Price

Low cost ways to boost your home's efficiency

My home has been transformed into an office and a school, as my family and I have been following Nebraska's stay-at-home guidelines. My wife has been using her time at home to sew masks for our church and community.

All this extra activity around the home got me thinking about ways that we could reduce our use of electricity, such as limiting the time that we spend watching Netflix or playing video games.

Here are some more low cost ways to increase your energy efficiency at home:

- Replace any incandescent light bulb with more efficient LED bulbs. A 9-watt LED produces the same 800 lumens of light as a 60-watt incandescent bulb, and uses about 80 percent less energy.

- Install a programmable thermostat to make automatic changes to your home's temperature. This type of thermostat allows settings for different periods each day. Some models can even handle a different schedule for each day of the week.

There might even be a rebate available from your electric utility for some models of smart or learning thermostats. This can help reduce the cost of purchasing a new thermostat.

- Replace the furnace filter in your heating and cooling (HVAC) system on a monthly basis. The whole reason you have an HVAC system is to keep comfortable inside. Dirty filters reduce airflow and the system's ability to condition the air in your home. According to the Department of Energy, a furnace or air conditioner with a clogged filter can use 15 percent more energy than one operating with a clean one.

- Caulk cracks between windows, doors and walls. How you seal these air leaks depends on their size and where gaps are. Caulk works best for cracks less than a quarter-inch wide. When purchasing caulk make sure they are recommended for the surface you are sealing. For larger cracks and gaps, expanding foam sealant is better as long as gaps and holes are protected from sunlight and moisture.

A low-cost, reliable supply of electricity is a blessing that is too often taken for granted. The simple act of turning on a light switch or charging a smartphone is made possible by the engineers, technicians, lineworkers, and support staff that comprise Nebraska's public power workforce. They do their jobs with care and professionalism, often at great personal sacrifice and risk.



**MONITOR
INCREASED
ENERGY USE** as
you spend more
time at home.



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Keeping the power on during a pandemic

Being prepared for an emergency is nothing new to the public power districts and electric cooperatives in Nebraska. From facing tornadoes to dealing with winter ice storms, the rural electric utilities are veterans when it comes to dealing with difficult situations.

They are facing the COVID-19 pandemic with the same toughness, even though the challenges are much different. The pandemic has changed the way the utilities conduct business but it hasn't changed their drive to keep providing power to their customers.

Chance Briscoe, general manager of Northwest Rural Public Power District in Hay Springs, Neb. said their employees are following an action plan developed for a pandemic outbreak. That includes assigning crews to work in two-man teams and to only work with their assigned crew member. Crews are expected to only

return to the main office to restock truck materials or retrieve equipment for current projects.

Most of the public power districts and electric cooperatives have closed their offices to the public. All customers, vendors, and sales people are not allowed into the offices. They are encouraging customers to utilize electronic forms of payment, and not come to the office to drop off a payment.

Mike Lammers, general manager of Cedar-Knox Public Power District in Hartington, Neb., said they have made many changes like fellow utilities, closed the office doors to walk in customers and made certain try to accommodate and offer all customers alternative ways for making payments and receiving customer service.

As the state began loosening restrictions, rural electric utilities began to implement plans to return to normal operations in phases.

“Starting May 4, we brought all employees back and created a stagger start schedule for the line crews at the operations center with different meeting and assembly areas to meet and get job briefings in the morning,” he said. “That includes making an entire second area for operation meetings, paperwork, office supplies, breaks, and separate restrooms. The theory is simple, have one crew start an hour earlier than the other so they can receive orders and get material loaded and be out the door by the time the next group arrives.”

Safety has always been a priority of rural electric utilities in Nebraska. Working with energized power lines and equipment can be dangerous if proper guidelines and procedures aren't followed. With the COVID-19 situation causing such a disruption to normal routines, there is a chance of creating an unsafe work environment. Rural electric utility leaders work to minimize distractions by their employees to keep safety in mind at all times by following workplace cleaning standards, distancing practices and a continual refinement of procedures.



NREA delivers hand sanitizer from Beatrice to Bayard

Thanks to donations from the Nebraska Renewable Fuels Association and the University of Nebraska, NREA was able to distribute 70 two-and-a-half gallon containers of hand sanitizer across the state to our member-systems in April. We hope each of our member-systems are able to put the hand sanitizer to use, are able to stay healthy and keep the lights on for rural Nebraskans during these tough times.

NREA staff has confirmed with the University of Nebraska Food Processing Center that the hand sanitizer satisfies the safety standards established by the Food and Drug Administration. For more information, please visit their website: <https://handsanitizer.unl.edu/>. In addition, the NREA donated \$500 to the University of Nebraska Foundation to aid in the production of the hand sanitizer.



From left: Lacey Gulbranson at Wheat Belt PPD and Colyn Suda at Southwest PPD receive the hand sanitizer delivery.



Step back into time at the Antelope County Museum

by LaRayne Topp

Each time visitors open a door to a building at the Antelope County Museum Complex, they are greeted with a treasure. It may be the giant, forest-green vanes of an 1880s, wooden windmill at the main museum. It may be the cozy furnishings of an early settler's cabin; or well-used school desks, topped with chalk and slate boards, and lined up in orderly rows at a one-room schoolhouse. Or perhaps the look of dark wooden pews, their rich patina buffed by prayerful worshippers who sat each Sunday in their favorite spot at the museum's pioneer church.

Visitors come from all parts of the country to this historical haven, chronicling the story of Antelope County and beyond. Transcribing this narrative is curator Pat Kenaston who along with LeRoy Clarkson keeps the museum items catalogued, nicely arranged, well-labeled and tidy. It's their work that keeps the Antelope County Museum among the top five to ten percent of county museums in the state, believes Lavern Hauptmann who has been volunteering at the museum for the past 60 years.

Another volunteer, Gloria Christiansen, agrees. "The leadership and organization of the Antelope County Museum has been remarkable."

Although the museum is located in Neligh, the county seat of Antelope County, the attractions in it aren't limited to Neligh. The museum depends upon all of the county's

communities to capture the area's history, in and outside of the museum. For example, Oakdale's community leaders worked with its older residents in the recent past, driving them up and down city streets to record what they recalled at each location. A vintage rural schoolhouse is available for viewing at Orchard, and Tilden has a number of Native American items on display at its new library. And Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park northwest of Royal is advertised as the only known site in the world where entire three-dimensional skeletons of ancient animals are preserved.

The visitors who stop at Ashfall each year are among the tourists that the Antelope County Museum staff and Antelope County Historical Society directors hope to attract. Plus those who come to Neligh see how grains were once transformed into flour at the water-powered Neligh Mills. Or those who view the Pierson Museum Wildlife Learning Center, exhibiting trophies of the Big Five (the African cape buffalo, elephant, leopard, lion and rhino) and the Grand Slam (various species of the bighorn sheep family). And those who settle in for a movie at one of the few outdoor drive-in theaters left in the country, also located at Neligh.

In addition, campers setting up tents at the Missouri

More on Page 8



Top left: Museum curator Pat Kenaston cranks up an old-time record player.

Top right: The pioneer cabin is filled with furnishings of the time.

Center: Volunteers Gloria Christiansen, left, and Lavern Hauptmann, right, assist museum curator Pat Kenaston, center and LeRoy Clarkson (not pictured) in keeping museum items catalogued, interestingly arranged and well-labeled. They are shown with one of the museum's favorite displays, that of White Buffalo Girl.

Left: Volunteer Lavern Hauptmann points out a photograph of Captain John Hatfield, a Civil War soldier who had lunch with President Abraham Lincoln.

Antelope County Museum From page 6

River near Yankton are oftentimes looking for something different to do for the day. They head to Neligh to check out the museum and other area attractions.

They also come on July 3rd of each year. That's when Neligh celebrates the Fourth of July in a big way, with a parade and giant, screaming, blaring, shining, sparkling, noisy fireworks, and in a small but lighthearted way, with turtle races, a fishing derby, and ice cream social with homemade pie. People come back to see their families at this time, and make a stop at the museum which is always open after the parade.

"We stress that this is a county museum," Kenaston said.

At the July celebrations, a different town from Antelope County is represented each year, with displays specific to that town. In addition, Evenings at the Museum features the towns as well. It began by spotlighting Neligh, but since then it has also put Oakdale and Clearwater in the limelight. Future Evenings at the Museum will include the other towns in the county: Brunswick, Elgin, Tilden, Royal and Orchard.

Those visiting the complex spend much of their time at

the main building, viewing the carvings of the late Harold Ritter, for example, in a gallery named in his honor. He also donated early wood-working tools, plus a replica of his mother's spinning wheel with blueprints for it drawn by his brother.

Some museum displays are arranged by subject, such as school days, military items, photography and music. Others are particularly unique to Antelope County, such as a display about Shade On, a trotting horse which raced in the early 1900s, and Gates Academy, a college predating Neligh High School.

Another exhibition tells of Captain John Hatfield, a Civil War soldier imprisoned at Libby Prison, a Confederate penitentiary at Richmond, Virginia. Following his escape, covered in mud and dirt, Hatfield stole to the White House where he met and had lunch with President Lincoln. As the story goes, Mary Lincoln was brought in to decide which of the two men was uglier.

There's Thomas Marwood's extensive collection of arrowheads, and a display on A.J. Leach. The 1870 Antelope County settler wore many hats in his time, including treasurer, superintendent, appraiser and surveyor, all at the county level. He was among the first to pay taxes in the county, and also organized the county's first 16 schools. His handwritten notes give an accurate accounting of his work.

One of the main attractions, however, is the White Buffalo Girl exhibit, illustrating the impassioned clash of cultures played out during the settlement of the country. A young Ponca girl, White Buffalo Girl, was camping with her family at the mouth of what's now known as the Neligh City Park during the tribe's forced relocation in 1877 to Indian Territory, today known as Oklahoma. The 1½-year old daughter of the Ponca couple Black Elk and Moon Hawk, the little girl died on a cold and rainy night. At the Ponca nation's request, White Buffalo Girl was buried at the Neligh Cemetery. Since that time the residents of Neligh have cared for White Buffalo Girl's gravesite.

Today, Kenaston said the grave of White Buffalo Girl has been the most decorated grave in the Neligh Cemetery, with visitors leaving flowers and other symbols of



remembrance, although no one knows for sure who the visitors have been who've left commemorations through the years.

"Everybody, somebody, was doing it," Christiansen said. "Some schoolchildren, a women's group from Tilden, Girl Scouts, families."

Author Joe Starita wrote about the relocation of the Poncas in his book, "I am a Man: Chief Standing Bear's Journey for Justice," and often gives presentations about the U.S. Government's treatment of the Ponca nation. On the evening Starita came to speak at the church at the Antelope County Museum, he packed the place.

The museum's main building opened in 2015. It was built as a grocery store, then used as a dollar store before its purchase for museum use. Before being moved to their spacious new location, exhibits were housed in the city's former jail.

Moving museum artifacts required a city-wide effort. A moving company was hired to move the big items, but smaller items were transported to the new building by a variety of volunteers, including Scouts, members of civic groups and the fire department, along with prisoners from the county jail.

But the main building isn't all there is to see at the museum complex. A replica of a pioneer log cabin with furnishings of the time is just a few steps away from a country school house. Formed in 1884 and closed in 1975, the original District 70 school building was moved to the museum complex in 2013. The schoolhouse, which Christiansen describes as "magnificently built," was relocated, set on a basement, and refurbished through a \$125,000 project.

Built in 1915, more than 100 years ago, the building contains the original floors, wainscoting and library cabinetry. As to its furnishings, Christiansen, a former teacher at Clearwater Schools, has spent the last 50 years collecting educational memorabilia in hopes of having such a school to display it one day.

The facility's artifacts give a panoramic view of country school life from Pioneer days through the 1980s, beginning with the green charts of the Palmer method of penmanship

posted ovetop a long line of blackboard, plus the maps and books reminiscent of the day.

Christiansen is currently devising a heritage curriculum such that youngsters, particularly fourth graders from throughout the area, will be invited to spend a portion of a day experiencing country school life.

Finally, visitors will want to step back into another part of the county's history, the museum's Pioneer Church. Built in 1887, the church is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Intricate stained glass windows along the exterior walls invite in streams of pastel light. A triangle-shaped window near the ceiling was designed in memory of one of the county's children by his parents. Freddie Giesecker was born in November of 1889 and died only ten days later. The colorful memorial is one of two triangular-shaped windows in the church which retains its original statuary, artwork and furniture, and is the location where the museum's various programs are held.

To learn more about these programs or the museum itself, check in at the website www.AntelopeCountyMuseum.org, or contact museum staff at (402) 887-5010 or stealthecourthouse@gmail.com. Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. during the summer, or Wednesday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. during the winter. The Antelope County Museum may also be viewed by appointment.



Left: Museum displays are arranged by subject, such as household items, school days, military articles, photography and music.

Center: Built in 1887, the museum's Pioneer Church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Right: An 1880s Fairbanks Morse Windmill greets visitors to the Antelope County Museum complex.



Nebraska Extension works to provide mental health resources for rural Nebraskans



For many farmers and ranchers across the state, the past few years have not been easy.

First, there was the drought in 2012. A few years later, commodity prices began to decline. Then, 2019 brought historic flooding in eastern and central parts of the state at the same time a blizzard ravaged the west. Now, COVID-19 is creating new challenges for producers while also physically separating rural Nebraskans from friends, neighbors and other support systems.

Challenging times can bring struggles with emotional and mental well-being, said Chuck Hibberd, dean and director of Nebraska Extension.

“You put all of that together, and you have a sector that is really at risk,” Hibberd said.

Nebraska Extension is working to provide resources for rural Nebraskans struggling with mental health issues and, at the same time, to remove the stigma of discussing mental health or receiving mental health services, such as counseling.

While most extension educators are not mental health practitioners, they are trusted resources in rural counties, Hibberd said.

“We are the people who are trying to help people build awareness,” he said.

Extension educators from across Nebraska have compiled a variety of resources for rural Nebraskans at <https://ruralwellness.unl.edu>. These

include information on managing COVID-19-related stress; University of Nebraska Medical Center COVID-19 resources and guidelines; online mental health screenings; and videos, podcasts and other resources to aid Nebraskans in helping their children complete their schoolwork and learning at home.

Additionally, the site includes the numbers for two important hotlines: the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), and the Nebraska Rural Response Hotline, 1-800-464-0258. The Rural Response Hotline can connect farmers and ranchers and their families with attorneys, financial counselors, mediators and other farmers, offering no-cost vouchers for counseling to eligible rural Nebraskans, among other services.

The site also includes resources and coping strategies for Nebraskans who experienced damage or loss as a result of the 2019 flood and bomb cyclone. The anniversary of those events was just last month, and anniversaries can trigger painful memories, grief and sadness.

“In many parts of the state, Nebraskans are dealing with a double impact,” said Susan Harris, an extension educator based in Minden.

Harris, part of a team of extension educators focused on rural well-being, said she and her colleagues were planning events to help build

local support networks in areas hit hard by the flood. One such example is the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program, which Buffalo County Extension Educator Kerry Elsen helped launch in 2019. Last winter, the program held events in several Buffalo County communities that combined the food and social fun of a game-day tailgate with opportunities for area residents to connect with nearby mental health service providers, as well as with each other.

Another series of tailgates is planned for this fall, provided it is safe to gather by then, Elsen said. In the meantime, though, she is looking at how to restructure the program to align with social distancing recommendations. She and others are also working to broaden the scope of the program to reach Nebraskans affected by COVID-19, in addition to the flood and bomb cyclone. The Neighbor-to-Neighbor program has partnered with the Buffalo County Suicide Prevention Coalition to reach more rural Nebraskans who might be struggling.

For more information, visit <https://ruralwellness.unl.edu>. The Nebraska Children and Families Foundation website offers additional resources online at www.nebraskachildren.org.

Photograph by Craig Chandler / University Communication

Keep yourself from having to dig out of trouble

If you had a new fence to install at home, you would likely research property lines, ordinances, and fence types. Then you would get to the point of purchasing, prepping, and assembling materials to get work started. However, you would still not be ready to dig. There is a very important step missing—calling 811.

811 is a free service that will have buried public utilities marked on your property so that you can safely dig around them. Just call 811, or submit an online request at call811.com at least a few business days before you plan to dig.

Digging without having utility lines marked can result in damage to gas, electric, communications, water, and sewer systems. Checking the safety of a location before you begin digging is important for both professionals and homeowners. It helps prevent accidents on projects

of all sizes and scopes.

When contacting 811, make sure that you have clearly identified your planned digging area and outline it in white paint if possible. The service uses ground-penetrating radar to search for and locate the buried public utility lines that are on your property. Lines will be marked with flags or paint. The color indicates the type of utility located. After the area has been marked, the CGA reports that you have less than 1 percent chance of causing damage if you respect the markings.

Even if you have had an area marked before, call to have the area checked again. Natural changes to the soil, such as erosion or root growth, can alter the depth and location of buried lines.

Keep yourself from having to dig out of trouble, and call 811 before your digging project begins. For more safety information, visit SafeElectricity.org.



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Stay safe while spending time at home

Each year, electrical malfunctions account for thousands of home fires, injuries, death and property damage. The average American home was built in 1977, and many existing homes simply can't handle the demands of today's electrical appliances and devices. Keep safety in mind with these helpful tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

Learn the warning signs of an overloaded electrical system:

- Frequent tripping of circuit breakers or blowing of fuses
- Dimming of lights when other devices are turned on
- Buzzing sound from switches or outlets
- Discolored outlets
- Appliances that seem underpowered

How to avoid overloading circuits:

- Label your circuit breakers to understand the different circuits in your home.
- Have your home inspected by a qualified electrician if older than 40 years or if you've had a major


appliance installed.

- Have a qualified electrician install new circuits for high energy use devices.


- Reduce your electrical load by using energy efficient appliances and lighting.

Source: *ESFI.org*


! Learn the warning signs of an overloaded electrical system:




Frequent tripping of circuit breakers or blowing of fuses




Dimming of lights when other devices are turned on



Buzzing sound from switches or outlets




Discolored outlets




Appliances that seem underpowered


⚡ How to avoid overloading circuits:




Label your circuit breakers to understand the different circuits in your home




Have your home inspected by a qualified electrician if it's older than 40 years or has had a major appliance installed



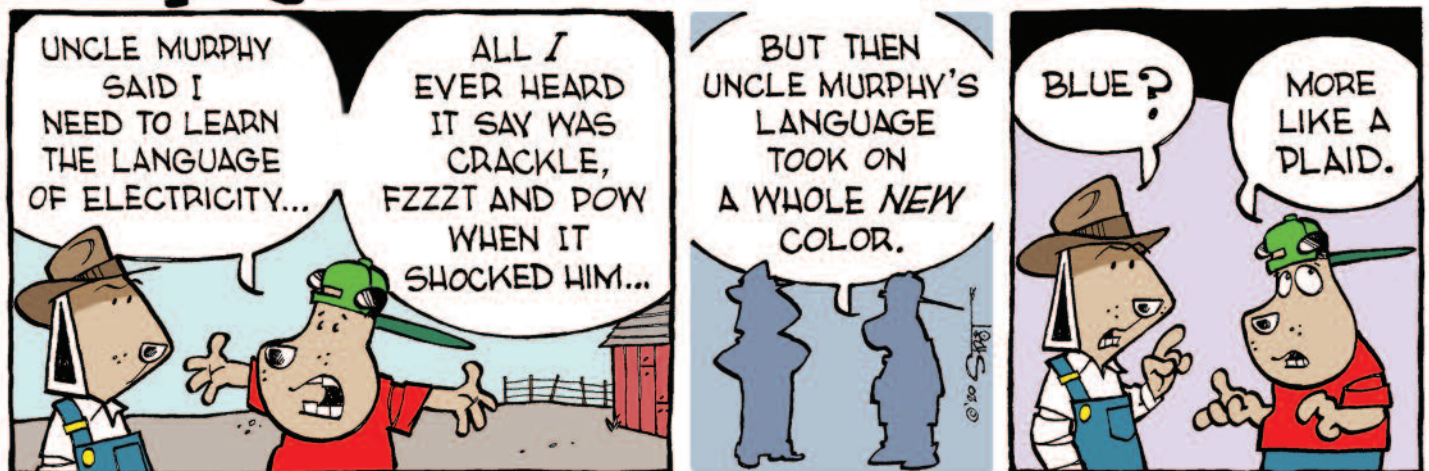
Have a qualified electrician install new circuits for high energy use devices



Reduce your electrical load by using energy-efficient appliances and lighting


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Murphy



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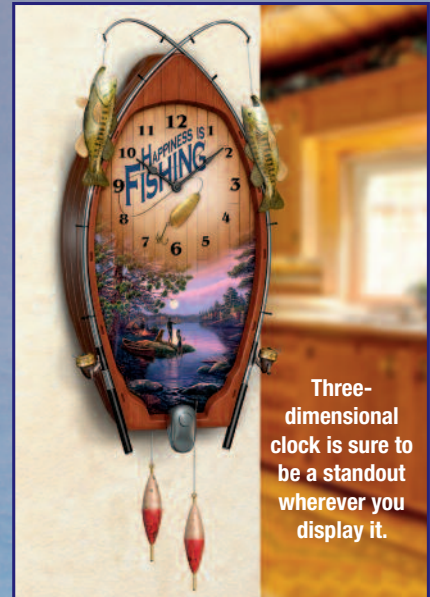
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01-29896-001-E66201

by Maria Kanevsky

Today's Novel Modes of **E-TRANSPORTATION**



For those with the need for speed, electric motorcycles offer many benefits when compared to their gas-powered counterparts. Photo by Zero Motorcycles

SPORTATION

Ten years ago, electric vehicles were a rare sight, but today, you see them on roadways all across the country. Advancements in battery technology have led to smaller, even more efficient batteries, which has opened the door to new forms of electric transportation, or e-transportation. Let's take a look at some of today's novel modes of e-transportation.

One of the newer forms of electric transportation is the electric scooter. They're relatively easy to use, inexpensive and some versions are even foldable, making it compact and easy to carry and store. There are also several electric scooter rental companies that offer their services in many major cities, making it especially easy to find a nearby scooter to use for a limited time. However, something to consider is that electric scooters' small wheels are only meant to be ridden on paved surfaces like sidewalks. Electric scooters' limited range and speed also make them unsuitable for long distance travel.

Another newer form of electric transportation is the electric bicycle. These modern versions of the familiar bicycle offer the same ease of use while requiring much less physical exertion. Travelers can ride longer distances without being as fatigued and they can be parked easily at bike racks.

Some of these electric forms of transportation can be used for

recreation in addition to everyday use. For example, the electric skateboard has additional power that a normal skateboard does not have, and the user can still perform tricks while riding it. Another example are electric roller skates which are just as entertaining as normal roller skates, and users can maintain fast speeds without the effort. While these electric modes of transportation are fun, their faster speeds can also make them more dangerous, which makes wearing helmets and knee pads especially important.

For those looking for more exciting forms of e-transportation, there are many innovative options being developed. One of these is the electric unicycle, which is a self-



Above: Electric scooters are relatively easy to use, inexpensive and some versions are even foldable, making it compact and easy to carry and store. Photo by Boosted

balancing device. You can speed up and slow down the device by simply leaning forwards or backwards. The electric unicycle is easy to store or carry around, and because of its large wheel, it can drive on a variety of terrain like grass, gravel, curbs and potholes. The major drawback is that it's relatively difficult to learn how to ride the electric unicycle, so be prepared to spend a few hours just to learn how it works.

For even faster speeds, there is the electric motorcycle. This mode of transportation has many benefits when compared to gas-powered motorcycles, such as increased performance, less maintenance and lower fuel costs. Although, a couple of major differences between the electric motorcycle and gas-powered motorcycles is that electric motorcycles cannot drive as far and are much quieter, which may be less appealing for long-distance road trips.

Since these technologies are relatively new and more complex, price tags for all of these modes of transportation will be higher than their conventional counterparts. Each mode includes a variety of features, so it's important to consider all options. Before purchasing any of these newer forms of e-transportation, make sure you do the research to find the mode of transportation that best matches your needs.

The kind of audit you actually want

by Pat Keegan

Q : I need to reduce my energy costs and don't know where to start. You often recommend a home energy audit. What will an audit tell me?

A : You've nailed it! A home energy audit is the perfect place to start if you want to reduce your energy bills or make your home more comfortable. An audit can also help you decide whether to invest in a new energy source like a solar array, or a new heating and cooling system like a heat pump, or whether it's time to upgrade your current system.

It's possible to conduct your own energy audit using a website or app. Online and app audits are great tools you can use to learn about energy use and potential efficiency upgrades. But an in-person, comprehensive energy audit provides much more information.

When things are back to normal and it's safe to have visitors in your home, there are typically two options for an in-home energy audit.

The least expensive is a home energy survey, sometimes referred to as a "walk-through" audit that is essentially a visual inspection. If you have modest goals about what you want to learn from an energy audit, and if you are fortunate enough to find an experienced and knowledgeable professional, this type of audit might meet your needs.

The second, more comprehensive energy audit requires more time and utilizes several diagnostic tools. The average cost for this type of audit is about \$400. Check with your local electric cooperative to see if they offer energy audits or provide a discount or rebate.

A comprehensive energy audit will look at four main areas. The first is the envelope of your home, which includes all the places where the exterior and interior meet—roof, walls, doors, windows and foundation. A critical tool for testing the envelope is a blower door test, which has a powerful fan that is mounted in an exterior door frame and used to de-pressurize the home.



An auditor inspects insulation in the attic of a single family home. Photograph by Andy Harper, 60iMedia Productions

The auditor can then identify how well-sealed your home is and locate any air leaks. Some auditors will work with you to seal leaks and continue to take blower door readings as the home is tightened up. One advantage of this approach is avoiding excessive air sealing. It's possible, in some homes, to tighten the home too much, so the energy auditor can determine when to stop sealing leaks so that a healthy supply of air infiltration is maintained.

Another tool auditors will use to look at your building envelope is a thermal imaging camera, which shows hot and cold spots that pinpoint exactly where insulation is

needed on walls and ceilings. The camera works best when the exterior temperature is much colder or much warmer than the interior temperature.

The second focus of the audit is your home's HVAC (furnace/AC unit) system and water heater to see how energy efficient they are and whether they should be replaced. If your home has air ducts, the auditor can conduct a duct blaster test to see if your ducts are properly sealed. Ducts located in unheated areas are often a major source of energy loss.

The third area the auditor will review includes other energy end use, such as lighting, appliances and other "plugged-in" devices. The auditor may also suggest steps like energy efficient lighting or a smart thermostat.

The fourth area included in a comprehensive energy audit is health and safety. Does your home have the correct number and placement of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors? Should your basement be tested for radon emissions? Make sure you get answers to these questions.

Some audits include a sophisticated energy analysis of your home using energy modeling software. These analyses can rank the different energy efficiency opportunities in your home from most- to least cost-effective. This will tell you how much you can save if you invest in all the cost-effective upgrades.

After the energy audit is complete, the auditor should sit down with you and explain the findings in detail. This conversation should include a discussion of ways to operate your home to achieve more energy savings and more comfort.

A home energy audit may seem like an unnecessary expense, but it truly can save you a money in the long run because it helps to ensure every dollar you put into energy efficiency pays for itself.



ELECTRICAL SAFETY

While Working From Home



Do you have a **home office** or **work from home**? Follow these **electrical safety tips** to keep you and your home safe from electrical hazards.



1 Avoid **overloading outlets**.



2 **Unplug appliances** when not in use to save energy and minimize the risk of shock and fire.



3 **Regularly inspect** electrical cords and extension cords for damage.



4 Extension cords should only be used on a **temporary basis**.



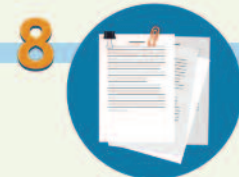
5 Never plug a space heater or fan into an **extension cord** or **power strip**.



6 Never run cords under **rugs / carpets, doors, or windows**.



7 **Plug in smartly**. Make sure cords do not become tripping hazards.



8 Keep papers and other potential combustibles at least **three feet away** from space heaters and other heat sources.



9 Make sure you use **proper wattage** for lamps / lighting.



10 Make sure your home has **smoke alarms**. Test them monthly, change batteries yearly, and replace the unit every 10 years.

Wherever you work, it's always important to be safe.



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WALLEYE

Setting sights on a popular, hard-to-catch game fish

by Justin Haag

The walleye may be Nebraska's most popular, albeit often hard-to-catch, game fish. It is known for not only having great-tasting fillets, but also for growing big and providing anglers a fishing challenge.

Despite its reputation for being hard to catch, at certain times of the year walleyes can be taken by both boat and bank anglers with average skills.

Joe Rydell, a fisheries biologist for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's northwest district, said we are in the midst of one time to target walleyes.

"The best month to catch them in is probably going to be toward the end of May and into June, when these fish are coming off of spawning. They've had ample time to rest and, at that time of year, they're really concentrating on feeding," Rydell said.

Especially for anglers seeking big walleyes, fall also can be good fishing for the species.

As with most fish and game, knowing what those toothy walleyes want lends clues to when and where you will find them.

"They're a predator fish. So, first of

all, before you figure out what kind of habitat you're going to search, you've got to figure out what they're going to be eating in that water body," Rydell said. "They'll be hanging around that food source. In some lakes, that may entail a good rock bottom, or rock structures. In other lakes that are more vegetated, they may be along the weedline. In lakes that have a combination of both, it could be some woody debris or rock structures that are intermixed among those weed beds. At certain times of the year, even though they're big fish, they may be concentrating on a bug hatch."

Daryl Bauer, Game and Parks

waters," Bauer said. "However, I would tell you that more walleyes have been caught from Nebraska waters drifting or trolling a bottom-bouncer and live-bait rig of some type, usually a spinner and nightcrawler, than any other presentation."

Anglers should consider the species' name when choosing a time of day to fish. The walleye is so named for its pearlescent eye that features a reflective layer of pigment to seek prey in low light or murky water conditions.

"Fishing more of the crepuscular period, your sunrise and sunset, are better times to catch them," Rydell said. "Maybe even fishing in the dark a little bit."

Bauer said the time of day should dictate your approach.

"Walleye anglers spend so much time trying to finesse walleyes, often small walleyes, into nibbling on some live-bait presentation because they are fishing for relatively inactive fish during bright midday conditions," he said.

"If you fish during low-light periods, early and late in the day, after dark, cloudy, gloomy days, or when the wind blows, you will find an entirely different fish — a fish that is the apex, top-of-the-food-chain predator that they really are. They have a mouth full of sharp teeth for a



The walleye's vision is specially suited to excel in finding prey in low light and murky waters. (Nebraskaland / Ken Bouc)

fisheries outreach manager, said a variety of artificial and live baits are effective.

"Casting jigs and crankbaits, still-fishing or drifting live bait rigs, and trolling crankbaits or live-bait rigs can all be successful techniques for catching walleyes from Nebraska

reason, and during prime times they are mobile, agile and hostile.”

In Nebraska, serious walleye anglers often look to the west and central parts of the state.

“The best habitats for walleyes are large bodies of water, large rivers, large natural lakes and large reservoirs,” Bauer said. “In Nebraska, that means our large reservoirs, primarily irrigation reservoirs in the central and western parts of the state, are our best walleye habitats. Walleyes are a cool-water fish, a predator, primarily an open-water predator. They thrive in those larger water bodies that have an abundance of open-water baitfish.”

Rydell said surveys show Winters Creek Lake on the North Platte National Wildlife Refuge near Scottsbluff to have the highest density of walleyes in Game and Parks’ northwestern district with a substantial population of fish between 17-19 inches. Nearby Lake Minatare is down a little from previous years, but still has a sizable population of 17- to 20-inch fish.

Those seeking big walleyes in the west, Rydell said, should look to Whitney Reservoir in Dawes County and Merritt Reservoir near Valentine.

Box Butte Reservoir, another Dawes County destination, is also on Rydell’s list of solid opportunities.

“Box Butte is kind of coming on with a nice walleye population,” he said. “We have a year-class that, last year, was about 13 1/2 inches that should be about 15 this year. With pike numbers down in that lake, and that year class coming on, it will be one that should produce some nice walleye fishing in the future.”

Nebraska’s walleye population gets

considerable help from the Game and Parks’ fisheries staff, who collect eggs and milt from walleyes early in the year at Merritt Reservoir, Sherman Reservoir and sometimes Lake McConaughy. Fertilized eggs are taken to Nebraska State Fish Hatcheries, usually Calamus and North Platte, for hatching and rearing. It’s a much more effective approach to growing walleye populations than what happens naturally.

How long the fish stay in the hatchery depends on the habitat and other factors of their destination. They can be released as 4-day-old fry, fingerlings, or 8-inch advanced

sometimes fingerlings.

“Depending on the water body, all of those walleye stocking strategies have proven successful in Nebraska waters,” Bauer said. “In some waters fry stocking is successful and very inexpensive. In other waters fingerling stockings are most successful. The advanced fingerling stockings are most intensive and most expensive but have been relatively successful in smaller water bodies that are too small to be ideal walleye habitats. In those smaller water bodies the advanced fingerling stockings offer anglers an opportunity to catch a walleye or two from those waters once in a while.”

The minimum requirement for walleyes in Nebraska’s lakes is 15 inches and only one over 22 may be kept. Special regulations exist at Merritt, Sherman, Calamus, Elwood, Harlan County and Branched Oak.

Whatever the approach, as long as anglers are mindful of regulations and recommendations regarding the coronavirus issue, it may be time to target Nebraska’s big tasty, toothy predator fish of the dark.



Kim and Ladell Earney of Chadron pose with a walleye Ladell caught on a late March evening at Whitney Reservoir in Dawes County. (Nebraskaland/Justin Haag)

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Nomader Collapsible Water Bottles retail for \$24.95 (including a lifetime warranty), available in a variety of colors at www.nomader.com and www.amazon.com/nomader

Meals made easy with household essentials

Constantly seeking out recipe-specific ingredients that may only be used once or twice can be a burden. Instead, keep your home stocked with necessities to simplify dinner prep with dishes made using common household staples.

One perfect example: pastas. These recipes for Minestrone Pasta Saute with Ricotta and Creamy One-Pot Spaghetti include easily recognizable seasonings and canned goods for simple dinner solutions. Plus, they all include dairy, an irreplaceable part of a balanced diet as a source of essential nutrients.

Another way to scale back on unnecessary grocery purchases is to give yourself permission to modify. Many recipes can be tweaked for personal preferences, such as using black beans rather than kidney beans or adjusting the amount of a spice used based on your family's tastes.

For more ideas to simplify family meals, visit milkmeansmore.org.

Stock your pantry and refrigerator with versatile ingredients like these:

- Canned tomatoes
- Canned beans
- Quick-cook rice
- Small whole-grain pasta
- Stock, like vegetable, chicken or beef
- Fluid milk
- Shredded cheese
- Plain Greek yogurt



Minestrone Pasta Saute with Ricotta

- 8 ounces ditalini pasta
- 1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 carrots, finely diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 bunch kale, thinly sliced
- 1/2 pound green beans, trimmed and halved
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 pound lean ground beef (optional)
- 1 can (15 ounces) kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 jar (24 ounces) marinara sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup Ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

In large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta according to package instructions. Reserve 1/4 cup pasta cooking water then drain pasta.

In large skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil. Add carrots, garlic and onion; cook 3 minutes, or until vegetables start to soften, stirring occasionally. Add kale and green beans; cook 3 minutes, or until green beans are tender-crisp, stirring occasionally.

Add wine to skillet; cook 2 minutes, or until most liquid has evaporated. Transfer vegetables to medium bowl. If including meat, return skillet to medium-high heat. Add ground beef; cook 6-8 minutes, or until meat is cooked through, breaking up with side of spoon. Spoon off excess fat.

Reduce heat to medium-low. Add kidney beans, marinara sauce, salt, pepper, pasta, reserved pasta cooking water and cooked vegetable mixture to skillet with beef, if using. Cook 2 minutes, or until warmed through, stirring occasionally. Divide pasta between four pasta bowls or plates and top with Ricotta and Parmesan cheeses.

Creamy One-Pot Spaghetti

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 pound lean ground turkey or lean ground beef
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 1/2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth or reduced-sodium beef broth
- 2 cups marinara sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed fennel seeds
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 8 ounces spaghetti noodles, broken into 3-4-inch pieces
- 1 package (8 ounces) reduced-fat cream cheese, cubed
- 1 1/3 cups shredded cheddar cheese, divided
- chopped fresh basil or parsley (optional)

Using saute function of pressure cooker, heat oil until hot. Add meat and onion. Cook, uncovered, about 5 minutes, or until meat is browned, stirring to break up. Press cancel.

Stir broth, marinara sauce, fennel seeds and cayenne pepper into meat. Stir in spaghetti, making sure noodle pieces are covered by liquid. Secure lid and set pressure release to sealing function. Select high pressure and cook 5 minutes. Press cancel.

Allow pressure to release naturally 2 minutes. Move pressure release to venting function to release remaining steam. Remove lid.

Stir spaghetti mixture. Stir in cream cheese and 1 cup cheddar cheese until melted. Ladle into bowls to serve. Sprinkle with remaining cheddar cheese. Garnish with chopped fresh basil or parsley, if desired.

Philly Cheese Steak Sloppy Joes

- 1 lb. lean ground hamburger
- 2 Tbls. butter
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 small green pepper, diced
- 8 oz. minced mushrooms
- 2 Tbls. ketchup
- 1 Tbls. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 Tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 cup beef broth
- 8 oz. provolone cheese
- 6 Brioche hamburger buns

Brown beef – remove from pan. Add butter, onion, green pepper and mushrooms. Brown for four minutes and then add beef back to pan. Mix beef broth and cornstarch in a cup. Then add broth, ketchup, Worcestershire, salt and pepper to pan and cook for five minutes. Turn off heat and add provolone cheese, then serve on toasted buns.

Meribeth Kelsey, North Platte, Nebraska

Rhubarb Juice

- 8 lbs. rhubarb, diced
- 8 quarts water
- 2 46 oz. cans pineapple juice
- 4 cups sugar
- 2 3 oz. boxes strawberry Jello

Combine rhubarb and water and cook until rhubarb is soft. Drain, discarding rhubarb and add the rest of the ingredients to the juice. Stir until sugar is dissolved. Put hot juice in jars, seal and cold pack for five minutes.

Sue Killinger, Wolbach, Nebraska

Fried Ice Cream Dessert

- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1 1/2 cups brown sugar
- 4 cups crushed cornflakes
- 1 2 quart container of vanilla ice cream
- 8 oz. frozen whipped topping
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Melt butter in skillet, add cornflakes and sugar. Fry about 3 – 5 minutes, watch carefully, stir constantly. Pat 1/2 to 2/3 in 9" X 13" pan. Soften ice cream for 1/2 hour. Mix softened ice cream, thawed whipped topping and 1 teaspoon cinnamon. Spread over crust. Top with remaining crumbs. Sprinkle with a mixture of cinnamon and sugar. Freeze. We drizzle with chocolate syrup or honey to serve.

Nancy Tomjack, O'Neill, Nebraska

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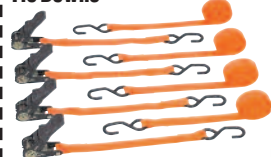
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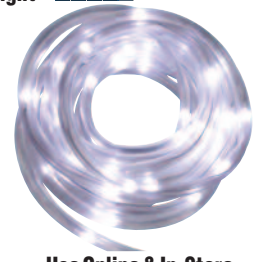
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— CONCERN FOR —
COMMUNITY

If you're familiar with electric cooperatives and public power districts you know this is one of the guiding principles in our not-for-profit business model. It's part of who we are proud to be. During these challenging times, our cooperative family is here for you. We are responsibly doing our part to help power you through the unknown. There are a million things on your mind, making sure the lights stay on, shouldn't be one of them. Because whatever the future holds, we'll power it.



TRI-STATE

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