

Stories | Recipes | Events | People | Places | Things | Local News

October 2020

# Alabama Living

Electric  
COOPERATIVES  
of ALABAMA

Mayberry  
memories

Flavors of the  
Black Belt





# Electric COOPERATIVES of ALABAMA

**ALABAMA LIVING** is delivered to some 420,000 Alabama families and businesses, which are members of 22 not-for-profit, consumer-owned, locally directed and taxpaying electric cooperatives. Subscriptions are \$12 a year for individuals not subscribing through participating Alabama electric cooperatives. Alabama Living (USPS 025-920) is published monthly by the Alabama Rural Electric Association of Cooperatives. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, Alabama, and at additional mailing office.

**POSTMASTER** send forms 3579 to: Alabama Living, P.O. Box 244014 Montgomery, Alabama 36124-4014.

ALABAMA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION  
**AREA President**  
Fred Braswell

**Editor**  
Lenore Vickrey

**Managing Editor**  
Allison Law

**Creative Director**  
Mark Stephenson

**Art Director**  
Danny Weston

**Advertising Director**  
Jacob Johnson

**Graphic Designer/Ad Coordinator**  
Brooke Echols

**Digital Media/Graphic Designer**  
Michaela McMeans

ADVERTISING & EDITORIAL OFFICES:  
340 TechnaCenter Drive  
Montgomery, Alabama 36117-6031  
1-800-410-2737

**For advertising, email:**  
advertising@areapower.com  
**For editorial inquiries, email:**  
contact@alabamaliving.coop

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE:  
American MainStreet Publications  
611 South Congress Ave., Suite 504  
Austin, Texas 78704  
1-800-626-1181  
www.AMP.coop  
www.alabamaliving.coop



USPS 029-920 • ISSN 1047-C311

MPA THE ASSOCIATION OF  
MAGAZINE MEDIA

Look for this logo  
to see more  
content online!

Printed in America  
from American materials



# 28

## Whistling ducks

Common south of the Rio Grande, black-bellied whistling ducks greatly expanded their breeding range northward and eastward in recent years. Now many of them breed in the United States, including parts of Alabama.

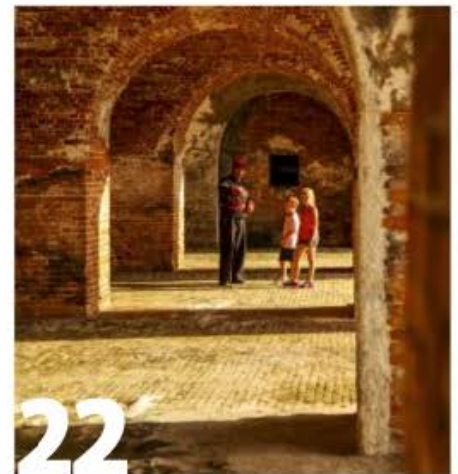
VOL. 73 NO. 10 ■ OCTOBER 2020

## FEATURES

**9 Fall foliage**  
The rich colors of fall leaves are spotlighted in this month's reader snapshots.

**16 Black Belt tastes**  
"Flavors of the Black Belt" Trail will help you eat your way through the locally produced food products of Alabama's Black Belt counties.

**22 Haunted fort?**  
A ghost story in time for Halloween: Did you know Fort Morgan on our Gulf Coast is considered one of the most haunted places in Alabama?



## DEPARTMENTS

- 11 Spotlight
- 28 Outdoors
- 29 Fish & Game Forecast
- 30 Cook of the Month
- 38 Hardy Jackson's Alabama
- ONLINE:** alabamaliving.coop

### ON THE COVER

At first glance, you might think that's Floyd Lawson, the barber on "The Andy Griffith Show" on our cover. And that's OK with Alan Newsome, who's been portraying Floyd at Mayberry fan events since 1994. Story, Page 12.

**PHOTO:** Richard Mink



### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**ONLINE:** www.alabamaliving.coop  
**EMAIL:** letters@alabamaliving.coop  
**MAIL:** Alabama Living  
340 TechnaCenter Drive  
Montgomery, AL 36117

Get our **FREE** monthly email newsletter!  
Sign up at alabamaliving.coop





# Feed your need for adventure in the Black Belt

By Jennifer Kornegay

**A**labama's Black Belt region is so named for the fertile soil blanketing its gentle hills and flatlands, earth that yields bountiful crop harvests and abundant outdoor pursuits. But the people here are as productive as the land; their creative talents and hard work have thrived for generations and resulted in a wealth of handmade and handcrafted delights. Now, everyone can explore the area thanks to the recently created "Flavors of the Black Belt" Trail.

The Trail helps people take a self-directed trip to basically eat their way through the Black Belt, with a booklet highlighting restaurants, cafes and shops that sell locally made food products. It is an initiative of Black Belt Adventures, a tourism marketing organization that works to bring more visitors to the area, and director Pam Swanner explained how the Trail developed from a board member's observation.

"Board member Dexter McLendon, mayor of Greenville, noted that there are many small-batch, hand-crafted foodstuffs and drinks created by the locals throughout the region that deserve recognition," she says. That sparked the idea for the Trail and its focus on the region's resourcefulness in the form of the flavors it has fostered. Black Belt Adventures, as well as the multiple restaurants, shops and makers included on the Trail, hope it will entice people to go get a taste of the area – and spend money.

Amber Anderson, owner of and baker/cook at FPH Bakery in Union Springs, has already seen some traffic from the Trail. "I have reopened (after COVID-19 mandated closings), and things are getting somewhat back to normal," she says. "I've had more and more people from out of town who've not been here before, and I think some of that is due to the Trail."

The bakery and other stops on the Trail have booklets for customers to grab, and Anderson says they're flying out the door, noting that almost everyone coming in is taking one when they



PHOTO COURTESY ALABAMA BLACK BELT ADVENTURES.

The "Flavors of the Black Belt" Trail has a handy guide booklet that features a smorgasbord of things to see, do and, of course, eat. And it's not just restaurants featured. The Trail places equal emphasis on the region's bakers, brewers, coffee roasters, sauce makers, candy creators and more, plus the markets and shops that sell their wares. There's never been a better time to take a backroads trip and discover some of the region's culinary and cultural character. Here are a few highlights from the Trail to help you find your favorite flavor.

## **FPH Bakery, Union Springs**

This café in downtown Union Springs is beloved for a bevy of baked goods made by owner and self-taught baker and cook, Amber Anderson. Her homey offerings like chicken salad, a variety of soothing soups and comforting casseroles draw hungry diners come lunchtime.



leave. Swanner echoed Anderson. "We've already had to replenish the Flavors Trail booklet in several of the retail locations," she says.

Anderson is thrilled FPH Bakery was included. "I think the Trail is a great thing; I think it encourages people to get out and about in the area, and it helps small businesses like us that are off the beaten path a bit," she said.

Another stop on the Trail, Jefferson Country Store in Marengo County, definitely falls into the "off the beaten path" category, and owner Betsy Compton Luker is also proud to be a part of the Trail. "We love that we're included, and so do our customers," Luker says. "It's fun because it is validating to them. They say, 'Hey. This place we love is as great as we think it is.'"

Chef David Bancroft, who owns barbecue joint Bow & Arrow plus the fine-dining institution Acre, both in Auburn, praised the Trail and Black Belt Adventures' overall mission and efforts. "I think it's a great idea and believe it can help businesses, which need help especially now," he says. "I love the organization and all that they do. I'm such a big believer in getting outdoors, connecting with that

heritage and discovering all of the Black Belt's great resources."

While the initial launch of the trail was delayed due to COVID-19, Black Belt Adventures is turning the pandemic-related travel restrictions to its advantage, promoting the Trail as a "back-road" trip that offers a safer alternative to some other types of travel. "Road trips have regained popularity, and the Black Belt region is the perfect destination to fulfill that demand," Swanner says.

It won't cure COVID, but simply wandering is a pastime Bancroft believes can address a lot of what ails society today. "So many people think the world is what exists on that little screen in their hand," he says. "But it's not. The world is down that dirt path, along that trail, waiting at that little farm stand."

Everyone hopes the virus won't forever dictate our future, and Luker is optimistic, sharing encouragement to fellow business owners whenever she can. "I know it's been hard for people in our business, but I just want to tell others to keep going, keep digging down to find your strength," she says. "There are so many great flavors in our area and in our state to experience, and the more we focus on that, I think we can make it." ■



PHOTO BY LANA POUNCEY.

### **Bates House of Turkey, Greenville**

This spot is the restaurant arm of Bates Turkey Farm. Opened in 1969, as its name suggests, this eatery focuses on the farm's fowl, its menu stacked heavy with gobble, gobble good selections like smoked turkey sandwiches and turkey salad.

### **Gaines Ridge Dinner Club, Camden**

A historic setting and historically delicious food await diners at this Black Belt institution. Housed in a circa 1827 home, the Gaines Ridge Dinner Club has been serving up simple yet special fine-dining dishes since 1985.

### **Mel's Dairy Dream, Monroeville**

Not far from the old courthouse so tied to one of our state's most iconic books, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Mel's Dairy Dream sits on another site of heritage, the spot where the childhood home of *Mockingbird* author Harper Lee once stood.

### **Doughnut King, Eufaula**

There's nothing fancy here, but the variety of glazed, iced and filled snacks you'll find in this east Alabama favorite are definitely fit for royalty.

### **Jefferson Country Store, Marengo County**

The small white wooden building on a rural highway has been meeting the needs of its community for more than 50 years, and today, Betsy Compton Luker and her husband Tony are at the helm, still providing everyday essentials (bread, milk, hoop cheese, snacks) as well as local products like honey and more.

### **Priester's Pecans, Fort Deposit**

Pop into the Priester's Pecans shop and go nuts. You can buy raw and roasted pecans, chocolate-covered pecans, pralines, pecan brittle, pecan logs, pecan-studded divinity and more.

### **Black Belt Treasures, Camden**

Find a bevy of Black-Belt-made items all in one place at this charming store. Stock up on homemade jellies and sauces as well as rich cheese straws.

### **SweetCreek Farm Market, Pike Road**

Find the tasty fruits (and veggies) of area farmers' labors and love at this bustling farm stand: fat scarlet tomatoes; pale yellow squashes; fuzzy, fragrant peaches; and sweet, seedy muscadines.

Download a copy of the "Flavors of the Black Belt" Trail brochure at [alabamablackbeltadventures.org/flavors/](http://alabamablackbeltadventures.org/flavors/)