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Thursday	8:00pm - 8:45pm	9:00pm - 9:00pm	Elks-BVCASA
Friday	8:00pm - 7:15pm	9:00pm - 9:00pm	LVA-Elks
Saturday	8:00pm - 8:45pm	9:00pm - 9:00pm	BVCASA/LVA
Sunday	8:00pm - 8:00pm	9:00pm - 9:00pm	School Children

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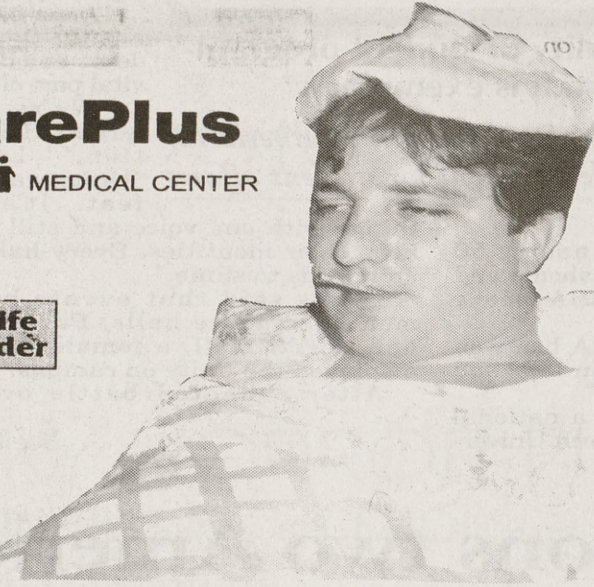


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Researchers probe into function of internal clock, seek to enhance areas of agriculture, medicine

Scientists study circadian rhythms of plants and animals in hopes of finding ways to manipulate them.

By Brad Dressler THE BATTALION

Determining how organisms' internal clocks work and interact with life functions may hold benefits for many areas, including medicine and agriculture.

Most known organisms, from bacteria to humans, have an internal biological clock that regulates many life processes. The clock, often referred to as circadian rhythms, influences digestion, hormones, alertness and other biological functions.

Most organisms have a biological clock that resets itself every 24 hours.

Biological clocks are influenced by bright light, particularly sunlight. The presence or absence of light can determine when the clock will reset itself. Mutants who either lack a biological clock or have clocks that run more or less than 24 hours do exist.

Nicholas Tsinoremas, a post-doctoral research scientist in molecular biology, said

that studying a simple organism is one of the most logical ways to determine specific details about how a biological clock works.

Texas A&M has been a leader in the studies of bacteria in relation to biological clocks for more than two years. The projects generally study cyanobacteria, commonly known as blue-green algae.

"We have isolated a few genes in the mutant cyanobacteria," Tsinoremas said. "We hope to be able to track the abnormal genes back to the original source, the main component of the biological clock."

Since all normal organisms have similar biological clocks, scientists hope that studies of bacteria will teach them about other organisms' internal clocks.

Paul Hardin, an assistant professor in biology, studies biological clocks in *Drosophila melanogaster*, common fruit flies.

Fruit fly studies generally deal with the study of genes.

"We can get much further, more quickly, with the study of lower organisms in which we can manipulate the genetics," Hardin said.

Studies have uncovered a period gene that regulates the fruit fly's biological clock.

"We hope to eventually find out how the gene is regulated," Hardin said. "Why is there an approximately 24-hour time period?"

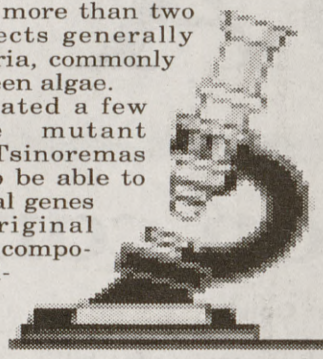
Dr. Vincent Casson, a professor in biology, has been studying biological clocks in higher organisms such as birds and mammals. He said that people can benefit greatly from understanding more about how things influence the biological clock.

Currently, experiments are done using the drug melatonin to influence a part of the clock in birds.

When more details are learned from the studies, they might benefit the agriculture industry.

Influencing plants' biological clock could increase crops' outputs. By manipulating insects, many pests might be eliminated, he said.

Studies can also benefit medicine. Doctors could gain a great deal of knowledge by understanding the biological clock and how it interacts with humans' life processes, he said.



Engineering department accelerates into action to construct ideal electric motor automobile

Faculty and students collaborate their efforts to design a car for national competition.

By Brad Dressler THE BATTALION

Texas A&M University faculty and students are putting their skills and knowledge to use by designing a hybrid electric vehicle for a national competition.

A hybrid electric vehicle combines different technologies and power sources to make a more fuel efficient car that emits fewer exhaust fumes.

Texas A&M is one of 12 schools nationwide competing in the hybrid electric vehicle competition sponsored by the Chrysler Corporation.

Faculty and students from the departments of electrical engineering, engineering technology, nuclear engineering, mechanical

engineering and management have been working together to design and build the vehicle, the Electrically Peaking Hybrid.

The ELPH combines the advantages of an individual conventional engine and an electric engine. The electric motor is used for quicker, more efficient acceleration. The conventional engine has two purposes, cruising and recharging the batteries.

Dr. Mehrdad Ehsani, a professor in electrical engineering, is the director of the ELPH project. Ehsani said the students involved gain practical experience while working toward their goals.

"The students gain much in working toward their goals," he said. "We all work together and hope to develop a new technology for conventional automobiles."

Lewis Callaway, a graduate student in electrical engineering, is the student coordinator of the ELPH project. He said the project has taught him and others

much about the world outside of the university.

"I have learned that you just need to determine what to know, learn it and apply that knowledge," he said. "But, you must always keep in mind that how it

the coordinator of the project. The competition is unique, said, because an innovative design could lead to changes in the automobile industry.

"A hybrid electric vehicle, particularly Texas A&M's Electrically Peaking Hybrid, could feasibly be mass produced. This competition could have an impact on the automobile industry as we know it."

-Dr. Tim Coppinger, professor in engineering technology

works on paper is not always how it works out." The national competition will be held in early April in Detroit, Michigan.

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Parking News:

March 28 - A portion of the University Center will be reserved for conferences during the day.

March 30 - Beginning at 3:30 p.m. the University Center Garage will be reserved for OPAS.

Shuttle Bus News:

One-ride bus coupons may be purchased from our cashiers at the Koldus Building in Room 118, or purchase coupons with your Aggie Bucks at the new ticket dispenser at the Gig'em bus stop by the Psychology Building. This is a great way to get to and from campus!

Bus operations will be accepting new driver applications March 27 - March 31.

Applications are available at the Bus Ops facility on Agronomy Rd.

Watch for PTTS updates in the Battalion, each Monday and Thursday! We're doing our best to keep you informed of activities and events that could impact your parking and transportation needs. For more information, call our parking counselors at 862-PARK or Shuttle Bus Operators at 845-1971.

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THE BATTALION

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