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The Brunswick News

CONSUMER NOTEBOOK

Japanese cars top efficiency ratings

Hybrid and economy-class vehicles built by Toyota Motor Corp. and Honda Motor Co. dominate the government's annual top-10 fuel economy list for 2007 vehicles.

The hybrid-electric Toyota Prius led the way with 60 miles per gallon in the city and 51 mpg on the highway, while the Honda Civic Hybrid was second with 49 mpg in the city and 51 mpg on the highway, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy said this week.

Honda and Toyota made seven of the 12 vehicles listed in the top 10. The new Toyota Camry Hybrid made its debut at No. 3, with 40 mpg in the city and 38 mpg on the highway.

Ford Motor Co. had the most fuel-efficient sport utility vehicle, the Escape Hybrid front-wheel drive, which was fourth with 36 mpg in the city and 31 mpg on the highway. The four-wheel drive version of the Escape Hybrid, along with the Mercury Mariner Hybrid four-wheel drive, were tied for 10th place with 32 mpg in the city and 29 mpg on the highway.

Six gas-only vehicles made the top 10: manual and automatic versions of the Toyota Yaris, the manual version of the Honda Fit, the manual Toyota Corolla and manual versions of the Hyundai Accent and Kia Rio.

Digital cameras on 'must have' list

Portable music players, cell phones and digital cameras are poised to be in hot demand this holiday season, according to a market survey by the Consumer Electronics Association.

Digital cameras topped the list as the most popular gizmo consumers intend to give this year, followed by a DVD player or recorder. But for the second year in a row, the most wished-for gadget – among adults and teens – was a portable digital music player.

After digital cameras and DVD devices, the top electronics gifts were a cell phone, portable music player, a video game system, a portable CD player, a carrying case for laptops or audio players, a television, a cordless phone, additional memory for a digital camera, a notebook computer, and a clock or tabletop radio.

– The Associated Press

One of the complaints people have about big cities is the driving time to get anyplace.



Victoria Logue/The Brunswick News

Kenn Hodge must leave his Camden County home before dawn to commute to north of Brunswick.

By VICTORIA LOGUE
The Brunswick News

Long commutes and traffic jams go hand in hand with big city living. Atlanta is infamous for its daily commute times. On the other hand, when you picture coastal Georgia with its open expanse of marshes, a long commute is not the first thing that comes to mind.

But, Southeast Georgia is seeing a growth in the work force and in traffic as more and more commuters hit the road.

A national study by the Transportation Research Board found that more Americans are leaving for work between 5 and 6:30 a.m. and commuting for longer periods of time – between 60 and 90 minutes. Americans are also leaving their home counties to work in another county.

That trend is as evident in Southeast Georgia as in a major metropolitan area.

Kenn Hodge lives in Browntown, in southwest Camden County, and commutes each workday to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, north of Brunswick in Glynn County.

"Generally I leave around 6:35 to 6:40 (a.m.), looking for a 7:30 a.m. arrival time," Hodge said. "I can usually arrive plus or minus five minutes of my goal."

"My trip home begins 4 to 4:30 p.m., arriving between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. It is a more relaxed trip home as I'm not rushing to be on time."

Hodge said he chose to commute because he found a job he likes.

"I was actually seeking the job I found, as I wanted a federal civil service job. I owned my property in Camden County (no rent or mortgage) because prior to retiring from the Navy I had worked hard at paying these and other bills off so during this transition from military to civilian employment, I wouldn't have to worry about having a place for

Taking the LONG WAY

my family."

Hodge said that he first sought work at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, in Camden County, but due to the current mode of contracting jobs off base, he was only able to find temporary work.

"I also worked short-term contracts at nuclear power plants in the eastern half of the country," he added, "but this involved working away from home. I would leave in late winter and return early summer and again late summer till mid fall, working from Texas to New York and points in between. I prefer commuting to Brunswick."

Mike Morris lives in St. Marys, in Camden County, and commutes across the state line to Jacksonville for his job.

"My job is 40 miles away and takes about 40 minutes if there are no delays due to traffic or construction," he said. "I leave between 5:45 and 6 a.m. Where I park requires me to take a shuttle to work, so I have to add time into my commute for waiting time on the shuttle."

Morris said that upon his retirement from the Navy, Jacksonville was where he could find a job he liked.

"We're happy with our home and church and didn't want to move closer to work, where houses cost more and commute times are still long," he added.

Mike Gross lives in Kingsland and commutes daily to Yulee, Fla.

"The main reason I chose to find work in another county is so that I can practice in one area and live in another," he said. "It was good advice a fellow health care practitioner gave to me. He lived in the small town where he practiced and his doorbell never stopped ringing, nor his phone. I guess it was more for privacy."

He said the commute to Yulee is only 20 minutes. "It is 14 miles one way and I leave at 6:30 a.m."

Cool is nice, but pets will need extra care

By KRISTA HARRIS
The Brunswick News

The nights are getting a little cooler and it won't be long before the days chill off. You don't want to be outside in the cold for hours, so why should you leave your pet out in the cold?

FREE Advice Marcia Stewart, director of Glynn County Animal Services, has a few tips to make sure your fluffy friend stays warm and cozy for the cooler months.

Pets are better off indoors, but make sure they have proper shelter if they have to be outside

Don't leave a dog or cat outside when the temperature drops to really cold, Stewart says. Cats and dogs are social creatures that love being around their owner.

If a dog is an outside dog, then make sure it has a dry, draft-free doghouse with a heat lamp. It needs to be big enough for the dog to lie or sit and small enough to hold in body heat.



The Brunswick News/File

Marcia Stewart, director of Glynn County Animal Services, recommends giving outdoor pets plastic water bowls in winter.

It's a good idea to raise a doghouse off the cold ground, Stewart said. Make sure it is turned away from any wind draft and that the door is covered with plas-

tic or burlap to keep the rain at bay.

"No matter what the temperature, wind-chill can threaten a pet's life," she warned.

Pay attention to a pet's diet

Just as humans burn more calories to stay warm, outside pets do, too. It takes energy to keep warm, so they need more food.

If the temperature drops below freezing, water will freeze in a water bowl. Check the water regularly to make sure it is not frozen.

"Use a plastic bowl rather than metal because your pet's tongue can stick and freeze to metal," Stewart warned.

Think about where a cat may go to stay warm

It's not uncommon for cats to crawl under the hoods of parked vehicles during winter to find warm and cozy places to sleep.

Bang on the hood, Stewart recommended, before starting a vehicle to startle a cat out of a dangerous comfort spot.

Aggravation is price of service and convenience

Life is wearing me out. Nothing is simple anymore. And despite what some may think, I am just a simple girl at heart.

Everything, it seems, takes so much effort, so much time. I seldom find anything that can be handled with one phone call or one request.

Take Aunt Cora for instance. She loves to help me and often calls and asks, "What can I do to help you?"

Occasionally, I'll take her up on the offer and say, "Well, you could do so-and-so."

Inevitably, she replies, "That's not what you need to do. What you oughta do is such-and-such."

I never want to do such-and-



Ronda Rich

such. I always want to do so-and-so. It then begins a huge, energy-depleting debate, which turns into an argument.

"Why that's the biggest non-sense I've ever heard," she'll huff indignantly. "You don't have a lick of sense."

I agree. I have lost most of it along the way with the countless problems I encounter.

"Aunt Cora, please just do what I ask you," I'll say, coming close to sounding suspi-

ciously like pleading.

And guess what? Without fail, she'll always do such-and-such and never so-and-so like I asked.

Now, Aunt Cora is only one source of aggravation. The other aggravations actually come from people or companies I am paying. You would think because the buck is rumored to stop with me that I could actually control those aggravations. Wrong.

I dream of the day when I don't have to repeatedly call companies, press numerous buttons to get to a person who then either doesn't know how to solve the problem, doesn't care how to fix it or, just as bad, promises anything to get

me off the phone. Then, of course, does nothing once I've hung up.

In addition to the appliance store manager who cussed at me when his people made a mistake and the propane company that refused to install a thermostat on a tankless hot water heater for which it is an authorized dealer, I have completely exhausted my patience with the telephone company.

Trust me, this is a saga you don't have time for and I don't have the inclination to relive. But I'll tell you this – it was ludicrous when phone company employees could not agree on whether DSL service was available at my new address. For a while, we were running 50/50

on their opinion. Isn't that funny? Their opinion! These people are giving me their opinion, not professional, decisive information.

Then, I had to argue against almost \$50 in overcharges, which took a hundred dollars of my time. This, though, was nothing compared to the blood pressure raising experiences of trying to get my old office phone number forwarded to my new office number. Ten days, nine people – including two supervisors – and several promises that it would be done "by midnight," resulted in nothing. Each morning the sun rose and my old office number was still ringing in the same place.

Phone services are not cheap

so I've paid this company a lot of money to aggravate me by giving me migraines, ill feelings and no customer service. For a company born and raised in the South, it isn't a very gracious way to act.

And, to be frank, my graciousness was about to be gone with the wind until the executive offices stepped in and rescued me.

But I'll be honest: It makes me appreciate Aunt Cora a lot more. After all, I don't have to pay her to aggravate me. She does it for free.

– Ronda Rich is the author of "What Southern Women Know (That Every Woman Should)" and "The Town That Came A-Courtin'."