

HILLTOPPER

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Please send your news, views and photos to rphprkns@yahoo.com or to mailbox #1.
Thanks, Steve Solomon, for the page 2 photo.

COMING EVENTS

EVENTS ARE ON HOLD – Due to COVID 19 concerns, the schedule of monthly social events planned by the House Committee is on hold for now. Watch for notices on the Hilltop House bulletin board and in mail cubbies for any change in plans.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

FULL (BY APPOINTMENT ONLY)

VNA FLU SHOT CLINIC - This is a reminder to those who made appointments. If you missed this opportunity, contact the VNA (526-4077) for information about their other clinics.



"Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside a dog, it's too dark to read."

Groucho Marx

See Book Buzz, page 2.



Harvest Season

The Hilltop Community Garden is mostly "put to bed", and harvest continues in our neighborhood. Spring Ledge workers are shown above, picking squash and greens at the 22-acre field along Little Sunapee Road that is part of the historic Jacob Messer Farm. Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust's current major project is to raise funds to preserve this field and adjacent woodlands (122 acres in all) for growing local produce, providing a vast network of recreational footpaths and preserving the magnificent views of Mount Kearsarge and the town's steeped skyline. For more information, look on the ASLPT website: ausbonsargent.org.

Back in Action While life in New London is certainly not back to normal, some activities and services have resumed. The Council on Aging (COA) has resumed offering rides to medical appointments and other services to the extent possible while observing safety guidelines. Call 526-6368 to learn more.

Tracy Library is open for business, offering contact-free "porch pick-up" of books selected online (tracylibrary.org) or by telephone (526-4656)

New London 2020 Election Update Town Clerk Will Kidder says that the New London Post Office "is doing a stupendous job" with mail-in absentee ballots. He advises absentee voters to bring ballots directly to the Post Office window or to scheduled drop-off events that Will will advertise in The Kearsarge Shopper.

Ralph's Field Notes: Murder, Mayhem and More

Now that summer is officially over, here's my attempt at a "summer summary." I wouldn't be surprised if any Hilltop resident couldn't tell me of some other interesting ones (hint).

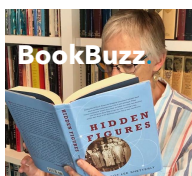
I imagine that readers might remember my recent hummingbirds vs. wasps rant. Update: like clockwork, the hummers conceded the battle by flying south the day after Labor Day. Too bad for them, because the wasp numbers have been steadily dropping with the temperature. First frost here was 9/21, beating fall by a day.

As I noted last year, most of the geese around here don't migrate; they really just commute between the lakes west of Hilltop and the fields just east of us. The only difference this year is that most - I didn't say all! - geese didn't stop to graze on the large lawn by the Big House due to the noisy and busy construction staging area this year. As the water ices in they'll disappear, maybe to the seacoast.

We had several milkweeds this year and in mid- to late summer watched monarch butterflies laying eggs on them. Alas, the caterpillars didn't usually last long due to the incessant and careful gleaning of each leaf by yellow jackets and other wasps.

I'm afraid the ant lions are gone for good, as there haven't been any in the three summers since the paving job shrank the narrow, sandy crack they lived in and directed more runoff into it. Adios! But I've gotta admit, the new surface is easier for walking and driving.

Due to the bears, we took our bird feeders down, except for the thistle (or nyjer) seed. There are advisories- but no proof- to take down all feeders, and there are advisories that bears are not attracted to nyjer. That's been my observation. Chickadees - rather than finches - entirely stopped taking the thistle seeds for about three months but returned in August. My guess is they were supplying more protein-rich food to their young.



Are you stuck in a rut, finding yourself reading the same type of book all the time? Not Lyman Smith. When asked what books he read during the shelter-at-home period, his report included:

classic mystery - **The Lighthouse** by P.D. James; nonfiction humor - **A Walk in the Woods** by Bill Bryson; and political nonfiction - **The Amateur**, a critique of the Obama administration by Edward Klein. And none of these belong to the category he claims is his favorite - military history.

"I'm a bit of a history buff and not much on fiction," he said. "Perhaps being a third generation to make a living at sea, although the only one of my family to serve in the military, I tend to read history to try to understand why nations with the means to destroy mankind continue to threaten to go nuclear."

On his bookshelf now is **The Splendid and the Vile**, Erik Larson's book about Winston Churchill and the Blitz.

This spring we were overrun with chipmunks. Then a funny thing happened: absolutely all the chipmunks disappeared for most of the summer, to be replaced by meadow voles. I saw more voles than I have in my entire previous life. It got so that we saw one almost every time we stepped outside. Then, the voles disappeared and the chipmunks were back. The only clue I saw was the body of one vole, beaten up but uneaten, lying on my sidewalk. Murder at Hilltop?

Our flowering cherry tree was bare of leaves last year, and we feared it was a goner. However, both its leaves and its cherries are back as usual.

For the first time, I saw no lightning bugs at Hilltop this year. Why? I have my hunches, e.g. it was a dry spring, or I looked on the wrong nights.

What are your summer stories?

