

# HILLTOPPER

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## COMING EVENTS

**ALL EVENTS AND GROUP ACTIVITIES  
ARE POSTPONED INDEFINITELY.**

The Spring Luncheon and other scheduled events and regular activities (craft, games, book discussion) are on hold as Hilltop complies with the Governor's Stay at Home Order.

The Greenhouse will open as planned on April 1, says J.L. Tonner: "We Hilltoppers can manage this." Each gardener will be expected to tend to their own flats of seeds and plants there alone, respecting the needs of others to do the same. Call J.L. at 526-6858 for information.



In Elkins, after the March snowstorm, a family was seen building two snowmen on opposite sides of Lake Shore Drive. The mother said she wanted to demonstrate social distancing to her kids.



## Staying Social...at a Distance

Just when we got used to elbow bumping, even that's too darn close. Even Hilltop business is conducted outdoors, at a distance (see Pat Rodgers, Jean Molloy and Ellen Mann, above). How are Hilltoppers coping with the requirements to stay six or more feet from friends and neighbors and to avoid groups?

Doreen Gareau thinks she should be spring cleaning; she's walking instead, plus visiting by phone with the folks she's used to meeting for coffee every morning at Dunkin Donuts. She really misses being out with friends and enjoys talking to other Hilltop walkers along the way.

Delia Anderson is sewing protective masks for Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. She needs more elastic, if you have any, plus she can provide directions if you want to make some yourself.

Brian Stillson took advantage of the late snowstorm to cross-country ski, inspiring Alice Hill who donned her skis for the first time in several years to follow in his tracks. Kay and Ron Clark are walking and working out at home. Barbara Williams was seen raking her yard, Karen Cooper working in her gardens.

Jan Hostage and Elizabeth Stevens are reading books, streaming movies and trying to figure out ways to help local businesses stay afloat (buying gift certificates from the bookstore, ordering takeout restaurant meals).

Joan Ward has been watching a mother bear and her year-old cub who appear early evenings outside her window. Ruth White and George Green have been birdwatching and taking photos of signs of spring.

When asked what he's doing, Ed Olney said, "Not enough!" Only playing his new keyboard, practicing his guitar, doing crosswords and riding his stationary bicycle.

## Ralph's Field Notes:

### A Mystery in Stripes

There are roughly a zillion signs of approaching spring. I've seen skunk cabbages sprouting as early as December, chickadees spring calling on New Year's Day in New London, and wood frogs crawling across the ice in March. More problematic is the chipmunk.

This ground squirrel is sometimes listed as one of NH's hibernators, as its heartbeat and body temperature decrease radically. However, it awakens every few weeks and may even venture outside in warm weather. This winter I saw the chipmunk and/or its trails all around our unit at Hilltop.

It spends each late summer and fall storing acorns, nuts, cherry pits and other seeds in its underground larder, sometimes stuffing its cheek pouches so full of seeds that its face is distorted to three times its normal size. The chipmunk's insatiable desire for seeds can cause a lot of trouble for the gardener. One spring, Joan planted flower seeds in each of several pots and set them in a row upon a bench. About an hour later, she found each pot with a crater and no seeds; a sassy chipmunk sat nearby, apparently waiting for seconds. Over the next six weeks, I trapped just around our house and barn 59 chipmunks. Chipmunks are supposedly solitary and territorial (with some exceptions), with a density 2 to 4 per acre. Go figure. Breeding twice a year at most, and with 3 to 5 young each time, it just never made sense to me.

Since then I've observed this mystery elsewhere. For example, I had trapped 20 red squirrels from around my house one winter, when I saw #21 chasing #22 into my yard.



While she specializes in watercolor, she has also enjoyed using oils, pen & ink and pastels.

A Connecticut native, Audrey has enjoyed art since childhood, when she painted and drew alongside her grandmother. Since she retired to NH, her work has been seen in a number of exhibitions, including the "Regional Selections 2000" at Newport's Library Arts Center.



### Art Exhibit Continues

Art by Hilltop's Audrey Monroe will remain at Hilltop House for you to view after the Stay at Home period. Two of her original watercolors are shown here, left and right.

### Let's Take a Walk...

The favorite Hilltop activity during our Stay at Home period is enjoyed by Nina Rogers and Barbara & Lyman Smith.



According to all the guidebooks, reds are solitary and don't breed in winter.

I earlier described chipmunks' love of seed. It doesn't stop there. When internet browsing for a new trail camera once, I stumbled on a photo of a nest that showed a chipmunk eating the baby birds!

Besides excellent eyesight, chipmunks have, as would be expected of animals living underground, a great sense of touch and of smell. My next-door neighbors had a pet chipmunk which was blinded when struck by a car. They kept it for years in a large bird cage, where it never had any trouble finding food or anything else. Also, this neighbor tried to remove the outside chipmunks from his garden with a sure-fire solution he had heard of - mothballs. According to him, the chipmunks apparently invited all their friends over for a bowling tournament.

