

Shopping lately is 'for the birds'

A few months ago, we bought a metal vase doohicky for no good reason other than we liked it and thought it would look nice hanging on our front porch next to the door. We figured it needed some flowers or something to dress it up a bit, but we hadn't decided on anything.

That's one of the joys of shopping — you buy something you don't need to give yourself something else to look for that you also don't need. It's the thrill of the hunt,

I suppose.

Well, we waited too long, and a neighborhood dove decided that what it needed was a nest. It's not a horrible idea as it's sheltered from the rain and the wind. Now we have two little baby birds in it.

When the mother dove first started nesting there, she would get startled and fly out when we came outside. In the animal world, I suppose that would divert a predator's attention toward the bird and away from the nest.

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



It doesn't work that way with humans 'cause we're smart. It tells us to peek inside to see what she's hiding.

She doesn't fly out anymore even when I'm standing right in front of her, watering the flowers. I guess we've proven

to her that we're not a threat.

I'm not crazy about the birds in the yard. They cackle all morning, drive me out of my hammock, and they don't clean up after themselves. But, as far as humans go, I'm not too smart because I bought a couple of bird feeders for the yard. They're not exactly bird deterrents, are they.

The feeders also need to be replenished frequently since the millions of birds they attract clean them out in half a day. But that gives me some-

thing else to shop for that I don't need.

It's funny how shopping works. Buying essentials like food and gas and toilet paper can be laborious. But shopping for stuff you don't need is fun. Adventuresome, even.

It's like, "ugh, we're out of TP; we have to go shopping" versus, "hey, I'm not busy today; let's go shopping!" The trick is to time your trips so you can pick up the essentials

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Between last year's drought and the extreme swings in temperature over the winter, a lot of my plants - wildflowers, mostly - perished. Some may have become diseased, and were unable to fight back due to the stress. Boohoo. Just some of one man's gardening efforts coming to nought, no great shakes.

But across the Great Plains, the drought and wildly gyrating winter temperatures have greatly reduced the winter wheat crop. This year's harvest, beginning in Texas around now and moving north until it is finished in July, will be 25% lower

than last year. The harvest of hard red winter wheat will be the lowest since 1957. So, our daily bread may be in short supply next year.

Besides the weather, farmers are facing other challenges which are the direct result of policy decisions of the Administration. Our war with Iran has caused fuel prices to jump. It has also caused the price of nitrogen-based fertilizers to jump. These prices won't come back down until commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz returns to pre-war levels, with a realistic prospect of

staying there for some time.

Meanwhile, the price of phosphate fertilizer, which largely comes from Canada, is artificially high due to tariffs imposed by the 45th Administration, and which are likely to go even higher during the current Administration. As one Texas wheat farmer put it, "There's fuel, there's drought, there's fertilizer. I've got three strikes. Am I out?" At this point, many farmers would spend much more money harvesting than they could ever get for their crops. The best they can hope for is to have their winter wheat crops declared a total loss.

Drawing down the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to 1982 levels hasn't helped. Suspending the motor fuel tax wouldn't help much, either. It's about 18 cents a gallon for gasoline, 24 cents a gallon for diesel.

And it doesn't apply to fuels used by farmers. Suspending the tax would, however, mean less money to fix highways.

Floating the prospect of producing more fertilizer domestically - someday - isn't going to affect decisions our farmers have to make for the next few years at least. And I doubt we could ever compete on price with nitrogen fertilizer produced in the Middle East. A principal raw material for producing nitrogen-based fertilizers is natural gas. The Middle East has the largest producing gas fields on the planet. The US produces a lot of natural gas, it is true. But we are already using it for home heating and generating electricity, or exporting it.

Allowing year 'round sale of E15 (15% ethanol) would mean a larger domestic market for corn, courtesy of taxpayers. That might help some of our corn growers, but really

wouldn't help the fuel situation. Turning corn into ethanol burns a lot of fuel. And there are a lot of engines in use (e.g. the one on my lawnmower) that won't take anything more than E10. And even for engines designed to burn anything from pure gasoline to pure ethanol, there's a price to pay. Burning a gallon of ethanol produces only about 2/3 as much energy as burning a gallon of gasoline. So the higher the E number, the lower your miles per gallon will be. The E85 currently being touted will reduce your mpg by nearly 30 percent compared to pure gasoline.

On the bright side, this year, my wildflowers are coming back. The hummingbirds are going for my Penstemons. So are the bees, which are also going for the white clover which started blooming a month early. And also for the Common

Milkweed, which is just starting to bloom. The Butterfly Weed is very close to opening. My other prairie plants and Western wildflowers are on the way. And sunflowers. And ornamental annuals like Zinnias and Cosmos.

All those happy little pollinators play a vital role in producing fruit, nuts, and vegetables. And with the precipitous decline in commercial honeybee colonies, and the impending closure of USDA's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, including the nation's longest-operating bee lab, our non-native honeybees may become unable to get the job done. One way to mitigate the disaster is to support our beleaguered native bees. Hopefully, my efforts are helping. Maybe others will want to help, too.

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Summer Reading has bloomed at the Tolono Library

You are officially invited to the Tolono Public Library's Summer Reading Program Kickoff Party on Saturday, May 30 from 11:30-1:30. Our theme this year is Plant a Seed, Read! This theme is rooted in the concept of farm-to-table. A farm grows food that nourishes our bodies; a library grows ideas that nourish our minds. Both food and stories connect us to our family, culture, economy, and ecology. This summer, explore culture, history, science, health, and human connection with the Tolono Public Library District. While you do not need to be present at the party to sign up to participate in the Summer Reading Program (which you can through the Beanstack app at any time), if you come on kickoff day, you will be immersed in a flurry of celebration that comes with the freedom of sum-

mer and an opportunity to try your hand at several new crafts and activities!

Anyone who signs up for the Summer Reading Program (which runs until August 1st) will receive a sign-up prize, but the first one-hundred people to sign up and attend the kickoff party will receive a scoop of ice cream from the Main Scoop Ice Cream truck which will be onsite that day courtesy of the Friends of the Tolono Library. Once you're signed up and have your treat, you can choose your own adventure. We will be making Bean Art and Bead Plants in the meeting room. Face painting and flower petal decorating will be taking place near the circulation desk. There will be photo backdrop with balloon arch for pictures, and once all of that is done, grab a booklet to complete the specially made scavenger hunt.

Don't forget to step outside to see our newly planted Community Garden! The Friends of the Tolono Library will also be at the kickoff party selling mini planters in their continued effort to raise funds for the library so

that we may continue putting on fun programs such as this one!

For more information on our Summer Reading Program along with a link to Beanstack and a list of prizes that can be won throughout

the challenge, visit our website <https://tolonolibrary.org/srp>.

We also still have several other programs happening this week at the library as well! Including, Gardening for Kids, LKBC, Cuddle

& Connect, and Coffee Talk with Heather Roberts from Ameren on Severe Weather Preparedness. For information on all of these and more, visit <https://tolonolibrary.org/events#/events/> or stop in a grab a calendar.

Philo Library weekly news

Did you have a good Memorial Day weekend? We sure hope you did and that the kids are not yet bored. I asked one of the after-school kids last Thursday when their school let out and was told Friday. Guess it's time for us to shift gears to summer mode.

A reminder that Tuesday night, June 2, is BYOB Book Club from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Everyone is invited to come and talk about books.

Our summer programs start next week. Tuesday,

June 2 from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. come and Read with the Dogs. Actual reading is for K-4/5th grades. Younger kids, are welcome to sit near the dogs and listen to stories. I hope we have a great turnout - these dogs look adorable. June 3 is the first Champaign County Forest Preserve presentation at 1:30-2:30 p.m. It's open to everyone, come and see what interactive nature program they have put together;

Most of the new books I received this past week are

large print They are: "Easter Egg Murder" by Leslie Meier, Jane Harper's "Last One Out" takes place in an old mining town in New South Wales, Australia, "The Mountains We Call Home, The Book Woman's Legacy" is set in Kentucky, it's infused with hope, spirit and courage" and a book well worth reading and Mary Alice Monroe is our Southern Writer for today - "Where the Rivers Merge" spans generations of a family in South Carolina from 1908 to 1988 it's a story of a wom-

an determined to persevere. One more large print is "The Midnight Train" which is an adventure through time, a novel of wonder and transformation, a story of love and second chances, and, in regular print, Nora Robert's "Final Target" is a chilling tale.

Hope you'll check back next week we'll have more books, information on programs for the week of June 7-14 and other news. Until then, thanks for reading.

Southern Champaign County
TODAY

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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Area Church Services

<p>IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH 390 CR 2400E, Broadlands (217) 834-3289</p> <p>Pastor Rev. John Sharp Sunday Schedule Service - 9 a.m. Sunday school and Bible classes - 10:15 a.m. (Aug. - June) Adult Bible Study Wednesdays - 9 a.m. (Aug. - June) Men's Bible Breakfast - 7:30 a.m. Second and Fourth Saturdays (Lincoln Street Lounge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Group • Sewing Circle • Men's Club • <p>Call the church office for more information.</p>	<p>FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Non-Denominational) "Come Rejoice With Us" 701 N. Sycamore Street Villa Grove, Illinois Phone (217) 832-5231 Fax (217) 832-9348 website: www.fccvg.com e-mail: fccvg@frontier.com Minister—Mike Zylstra e-mail: fccvgmin@frontier.com Open communion observed weekly Morning Worship Service: 9:30 a.m. Sunday School (all ages) 10:45 a.m. Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group 1st & 3rd Sundays 6:00 p.m. Wednesday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>COUNTRYSIDE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 1807 County Road 1000N, Urbana Between Sidney and Philo Rev. Jeff Stahl E-mail: cumc.office99@gmail.com www.countrysidemethodist.com Worship Coffee Hour- 8:30 a.m. Worship-9:00 a.m. Nursery Available during worship Wednesday Wednesday's Bible Study 1:30pm Facebook Devotionals on Thursdays - 1:30 Crossroads Youth Group meets on the last Sunday of the Month from 5-6:30pm; dinner is provided. (Ages 7 & up) Please contact the office for more information 217-688-2422 "Love God; Love Each Other"</p>
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To add your church to the directory, email:
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