



Summer People

Aaron Stander

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READ THE NEWEST IN THE RAY ELKINS SERIES: **DEATH IN A SUMMER COLONY**.
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It is late June in Michigan's gold coast resort area. The summer residents are settling in for the season and the tourists are beginning to flood the highways and beaches. But the idyllic vision of a summer at the shore is suddenly shattered by a gangland-style shooting. This murder is quickly followed by the deaths of three more summer residents, each taking place under suspicious circumstances. At times hindered by local politics and the proverbial tension between the summer people and the natives, Sheriff Ray Elkins searches for the possible links between the four victims. As he probes into their tangled lives and dark histories, he finds both the motive and the possible murderer.

Summer People Details

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Elizabeth says

Anyone who has ever lived in a north woods tourist area knows about summer people. This book is set in the area just south of Traverse City, MI: the Glen Lake and Sleeping Bear National Sand Dunes area. The area is referred to as the gold coast of MI due to monied status of most of the summer residents. My husband spent all his summers with his grandparents in the town of Empire. We, in turn, went up there for the first 8 summers after we married. It's a beautiful area. This is the story of 4 different summer people who are murdered, starting with the gangland style shooting of one of the summer people. Three other deaths soon follow, each man dying by a different means. Sheriff Ray Elkins, who's up for re-election in the Fall, needs to solve these cases. Is there a connection between the victims? Can the crimes be solved?

I enjoyed the book, as much for being taken back to the small towns, the river we canoed on, and the back roads we travelled on as for the story itself. The ending is most unusual.

Casandra says

I enjoyed this book. It is slower paced than a more typical thriller mystery, and the method is more cerebral. Instead of a great deal of action, there is a great deal of circumspection, as we enter the process with Sheriff Ray. I agree that his character is not fully developed at the end of this novel. I have read three of the series, and I feel like I'm only now getting a real sense of Ray's character. As one person put it in the third in the series, Deer Season, "what is the other Ray - the one not absorbed in a case - like?" This is what we are discovering as the series progresses.

The author does bog down at times in his descriptions, but I confess, it is not a huge distraction for me. Because of Ray's history as a college professor, I see much of his thought process as one shaped by academe. The methodical way he approaches his cases is quite similar to the methods espoused by scholarly research. Others have complained about the "lack of ending" of the book. On the contrary, I believe the book drew to a natural conclusion that is, unfortunately, characteristic of police work. At times, there are no tidy solutions to the situations that they face. Many times, there is a certainty in the gut that *this* is what happened, but it is not possible to prove it, legally. The way the deaths were linked was not the result of an "out of the blue" hunch; rather, it was a follow-up of suggestions from several different characters that this person might have known that person, and this other person was friends with the two men involved back in high school, and that sort of thing. Sheriff Ray took those nuggets of information from different sources and took his investigation in that direction. I enjoyed the way he approached older residents of the area for insight. At the end of the book, even though the mystery is not officially "solved," there is enough information to come to a conclusion about what has happened, and I was left with the overwhelming feeling that sometimes life just sucks, and sometimes you get your own justice.

I hope to continue the series, as I have enjoyed getting to know the citizens of this sleepy little Michigan town.

Scott K says

I read 'Deer Season (#3)' through a free BookBub offer and enjoyed enough to to check out the series

(figures day after I bought #1, BookBub offered it free next day).

This one as not as enjoyable, a quick and easy read but it was missing something from #3 perhaps it was the lead character was more developed. The end was kind of a disappointment, sensed a bias towards a political ideology, but maybe just me and it wasn't too bad

End of the book thoughts; I'm still wanting to read the next in the series "Color Tour"

Zane says

Quiet and Steady

The Ray Elkins thriller was a study of quiet, peaceful murder. You find yourself enjoying the calmness of the book with its pleasing dialogue as it meanders through the story.

Louise says

This really didn't feel like it was going anywhere...there were quite a few deaths very close together, then the sheriff Sat around and chatted to his old friend (and the old friends new chick, already acting like an old married couple) did a bit of asking around, and then decided something might have happened to someone twenty years ago, and they were now getting their revenge.

It wasn't clear if this was actually the case, or just coincidence.

Not great.

Kathy says

well...having decided to circle back after reading Shelf Ice I started with the first Ray Elkins. I will probably read more in the series as they are quick reads and available through Kindle Unlimited, a service I subscribe to. If I had read this first I might not revisit. Although I enjoy lake adventures, the first one is rather packed with best school and suburb name dropping for Chicago audiences. It is saved by some comic relief with outlandish shenanigans and murder justification by the bombastic leader of a fundamentalist "Christian" church group.

As the count goes up, Ray decides there could be a connection between the four men in their 40's getting killed in various ways. And then there's the consensus opinion - they had it coming to them.

"We got a whole summer's worth of death and destruction in a week. I hope this is the end of it, but you summer people just keep things hopping."

Sally Beauden says

Aspects of this book appealed to me. I liked the setting and some of the writer's descriptions were well done. I do remember one paragraph that gave a much too detailed description of how a car is pulled out of a swamp. (Do I really need to know how the wrecker hooks up the axle to get the job done?) The characters

were interesting. I liked the ending, because it allows the reader to make inferences about what really happened.

Scott Rhee says

I wholeheartedly support authors who self-publish, and I enjoy buying books by regional authors in little bookstores in towns whose names I can't remember. I think anyone and everyone should be able to have their stories published and read. This is not to say, of course, that they are worth reading or that I actually have to like them.

Recently, during a week vacation in northern Michigan, I stumbled upon this book, "Summer People", by Aaron Stander, a local writer who has a series of self-published books featuring his detective, Ray Elkins.

It's not a great book. It's merely okay, in my humble opinion, and that's being generous. Mainly because the protagonist, a sheriff of a small resort town, is barely given any chance to develop as a character. All the reader knows about him is that he was married, his wife died of cancer, he was a college professor at one point, and he "fell into" his job of sheriff. Indeed, Elkins is one of the most wooden, two-dimensional characters I have ever read in a mystery.

The story itself isn't that interesting. It starts with the murder of an unlikable Wall Streeter vacationing with his new trophy wife. Later, a local drunk is found dead after his car crashes into a lake, which may or may not have been the result of foul play. A fire on the docks results in another death. Elkins manages to suspect (based on little evidence that I could see) that they are somehow related.

The dialogue is stilted and unnatural at times. Characters come and go without any real purpose or relevance to the story. Worst of all, the book ends abruptly, without any real closure and without the mystery actually being technically solved.

There are some things that I will forgive in a mystery, but the few things I have just mentioned are kind of unacceptable, in my opinion.

Standar apparently has five or six more books in his "Ray Elkins thriller" series, which either tells me that his writing hopefully improved enough that he garnered a larger fan base or that he is independently wealthy enough to put his disposable income into continuously publishing this rubbish. I'm enough of an optimist to give the former theory some credence, which is why I'm not opposed to giving Standar a second glance next time I visit that little bookstore in that town whose name I can't remember.

Denise Zendel says

Sheriff Ray Elkins has to tackle a gangland style shooting, followed by the suspicious deaths of three more summer residents in his resort town on Michigan's gold coast, all while running for re-election. The past and the present collide in surprising ways and friendships are put to the test.

I really like this series. Elkins is an average. Solid, real kind of guy. He likes classical music, loves his job and his town, and is unswervingly dedicated to justice. He's able to skillfully navigate the gulf between the

“fudgies” (the summer people), and the year round residents. He will follow the truth wherever it leads, without regard to personal cost. He reminds me a bit of Craig Johnson’s Walt Longmire.

The supporting characters are multi-dimensional and interesting, and are able to exist outside of their relationship to Elkins. The settings are well-described – I felt like I could smell the lake air and feel temperature as Elkins cleared his mind at the lake, or feel the damp from the heavy rain and fog. Elkins is someone I’d like to know more about. And there are seven more books to go in the series, which gladdens me. If you like traditional mysteries with good character development, give this one a go.

Joan says

I ended up a little confused with the plot, not really understanding who or why, and I couldn't be bothered to go back and check details, The story is okay, but the characters are 2 dimensional and some of the writing is very suspect. This phrase cropped up more than once :

There was so little affect. (which I really do not understand - affection? love? - What does the noun 'affect' mean?)

and there was this:

They both gave a negative nod.

That actually made my brain hurt.

David says

Picked this up because the story takes place in an area I love - northwest lower Michigan. Other than dropping some place names and poking fun at the summer people, Stander's really disappointing story could have taken place anywhere. The mystery is poor, the characters are stock and the ending is awful. I should have put this one down after the first chapter. Ever hopeful...

Linda Grischy says

I love reading books that take place in Michigan - and love mysteries! An adventurous, cozy mystery in northern Michigan. Fun read---

Patti says

I enjoyed this book very much. Hope to read more by this author

Brianna says

Bored. To. Tears.

The truth is, I didn't even finish this book. I thought the characters were shallow, primarily because the author never really went into detail about their thoughts or feelings. The characters I was supposed to like I didn't... the characters I was supposed to feel icky about I ended up being interested in, only to have them die.

Not impressed. Got through half the book before I called it quits. Which is kind of depressing because I can count on one hand how many books I haven't finished.

Sara says

Quick read- the first in the Ray Elkins series , a sheriff in a small Northwestern, coastal Michigan town south of a traverse City.
