



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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PTA Survey Supports Gym

If the results of a recent survey truly reflect the wishes of the town, Cornwall is overwhelmingly in favor of a new gym at CCS. The survey says: Yes—206; No—40.

Brian Kavanagh, chairman of the PTA Gymnasium Committee, states that the survey, mailed to every post office address and available in local stores, was responded to by 246 people. All indicated they were eligible voters; nearly half identified themselves as current CCS parents. Nearly all of the 206 positive respondents said they would attend a town meeting on the subject and support a Board of Education and town initiative to get the project underway.

Supportive comments on the bottom of the survey form tended to indicate that a new recreational facility was long overdue: "Build for the future." "Look at the whole picture this time." Negative comments, for the most part, concerned costs: "Do what you want, but don't raise my taxes!" —Bob Potter

Riverfront Land for Town?

The Town of Cornwall has formally expressed interest in purchasing three acres of land in the village of West Cornwall now owned by the Connecticut Light & Power Company (CL&P). The town's intention was conveyed to the company in an October 20

letter signed by First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. The land in question lies on the Housatonic River bank just south of the Hughes Memorial Library.

The move is in answer to the threat posed by complex recent state legislation de-regulating electric utilities. The new law provides financial incentives that may encourage CL&P to sell scenic land it owns along the Housatonic in Cornwall and other towns to the highest bidder.

In his letter to the power company, Ridgway explained what the town would use the land for: easing pressure on the Hughes Memorial Library, whose building lies within one foot of the property line; establishing a fire hydrant in the river; preserving river-bank access for emergency crews and the public; helping to improve West Cornwall's parking problems, and preserving "the green area of the village." Other uses, Ridgway says, might include a small sewage treatment plant.

Price and timing have to be worked out. The tract involved is a small fraction of the 40 acres of CL&P-owned land in Cornwall. But if the planned purchase goes through, Ridgway feels it would be "a real plus for West Cornwall."

—David Grossman and Charles Osborne

Cornwall's Foxy Pigs

When I read in this year's *Cornwall Report* that Rick Stone, Animal Control Officer, had responded to 24 pig calls, I telephoned him to ask about this statistic. "No, it wasn't 24 different pigs," he said. "It was the same pigs getting out all the time. It became an ongoing joke: three different pigs took turns trying to outfox me."

This revelation about the foxiness of pigs led to an investigation of Cornwall swine, foreign (Vietnamese Pot-Bellies) and domestic (Landrace, Hampshire, Duroc, Yorkshire, Tamworth and their hybrids). As this story goes to press—199 pigs.

Peter Russ raises domestic pigs. His barn on Town Street is dark even at noon, but three white sows in their farrowing crates loom large, and their 35 piglets about the size of small terriers—white, spotted, black-belted, brown—surge toward me in little waves. Suddenly startled, they ripple back into the shadows. After a few seconds, curious, they flow towards me again, and soon two, then five, then 15 of them cluster around my boots, nuzzling the toes, the laces, then up to my jeans. "Want to see the pigs down below?" asks Peter. My foot moves slightly, bursting the circle of piglets. We go down to see the Tamworths. (continued on page 2)

DECEMBER 1998

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 National Iron Bank Art Show Scott Zuckerman Paintings through December Skating Salisbury School Rink 6 to 7 P.M. Inland Wetlands Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall* Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. Town Office	2 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall Cub Scout Parent Meeting 7 P.M. UCC Day Room	3 Swing Dance Class 7 to 8:15 P.M. CCS	4 Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library Park & Rec. Potluck Supper and Dance 6 to 8:30 P.M. CCS Gym (p.4)	5 UCC Christmas Fair 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. Parish House (p.4) Beer & Wine Tasting Benefit Extras for Kids 5 to 7 P.M. 56 Essex Hill Rd. (p.4)
6 Hedgerows Upstairs Gallery, Danielle Mailer Paintings & Collages through December Opening 4 to 6 P.M.	7 Cornwall Library Art Show Creations of Handmade Paper through 1/9 (p.4) Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	8 Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library 	9 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall CCS PTA 7 P.M. CCS Library	10 Cornwall Housing Corp. 4:30 P.M. Kugeman Village Swing Dance Class 7 to 8:15 P.M. CCS Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	11 Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library Fun & Games 7 to 9 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse (p.4)	12
13 HANUKKAH BEGINS AT SUNDOWN Deadline for January Chronicle Copy Caroling and Tree Lighting 5 P.M. Town Hall (p.4)	14 HANUKKAH P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	15 Winter Concert Grades K through 4 1:30 P.M. CCS (p.4) 	16 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Winter Concert Grades 5 through 8 1:30 & 7 P.M. CCS (p.4) Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall	17 Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Lib. Swing Dance Class 7 to 8:15 P.M. CCS Bd. of Fin. 7:30 P.M. CCS Lib.	18 Cub Scout Pack 15 7 P.M. CCS	19 Cornwall Assn. 4 P.M. Town Hall Christmas Pageant 7:30 P.M. UCC
20 Audubon Bird Count (p.4)	21 Region 1 Bd. of Education 7 P.M. HVRHS Library	22 Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall 	23 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church School Half Day—Holiday Recess Begins at 1 P.M. Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall	24 Candlelight Services 5 and 8 P.M. North Cornwall Meetinghouse (p.4)	25 CHRISTMAS 	26 Reading by Tom Walker 4 P.M. North Cornwall Meetinghouse (p.4)
27	28 ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Office*	29 	30 Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Fire Dept. 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse	31	School Back in Session January 4, 1999	

* Check at Town Office

(continued from page 1)

In a corner of the lower barn, huddled against the granite foundation wall, 12 elegant red piglets stare out at us, ears erect, delicate snouts snuffling. (Four of these purebreds have gone to Scott Belter and John Horn of Stony Batter Farm, where they dine on corn and drink the milk of Jersey cows and Swiss Alpine goats.) Peter added pigs to his beef cattle so that he could "provide something different" for the market.

A sow becomes sexually mature at about seven months, or 250 pounds. She stays with a boar for about three weeks, letting him mount her until she's pregnant. After a four-month pregnancy and after the piglets are weaned at about eight weeks, she comes into heat again. Sows stay home, boars travel. These trysts may be dangerous. When Stephen Scoville's boar Gordon consorted at Hedgerows Farm with Gary Cruse's Hillary, she'd had five years of breeding and had started to get mean. "She'd throw you around," said Gary. "And when Gordon came to breed her, she broke his hip. I had to destroy him, unfortunately, and send them both to the slaughterhouse." However, Hillary's 600-pound grandchild, Monica (out of Chelsea), has a fine litter by Peter Russ's Tamworth boar, Steven. (Chelsea's father, Bill, is in the freezer.)

Stephen Scoville's pig-raising began when Peter paid him for some work around the farm with a purebred Landrace sow; Stephen has over 20 pigs now, and his younger brother Fred has three. "We just about break even. Pigs in the fall are half the price that they'll be in the spring, though the market gets better two weeks before Christmas," Stephen said.

One Cornwall pig who doesn't have to worry about market prices is Jane Prentice's Pot-Belly Norman, who greets visitors from his tether in the yard. "When Norman came three Christmases ago, he was the size of a meat loaf," Jane says. "He slept under the stove and used to go upstairs and shred blankets to make into nests. His pointy toes made holes in things, even in our wedding quilt, but I've forgiven him. He's over a hundred pounds now, and fights Jim for space near the stove, but he's house-trained and sleeps in his own bed of rags downstairs in the broom closet." When Jim and Jane got three eating pigs from Peter Russ, they found that the newcomers seemed smarter than Norman. "They'd play ball, had an intelligent look in their eyes. And they could feast extravagantly, particularly on all that melted ice cream after power outages. Norman has to watch his weight." He was never a friend of the three little pigs. "His only comment on them was to poop outside their pen, as if to say, 'You're in there and I'm out here.'" And of course, when the pigs reached market weight, Norman had the last word.

Few owners of Pot-Bellies are as kind as Jane. Amanda Perkins has saved 18 of them from slaughter, and seven still live in splendor at Cobble Hill Farm, each in its own stall with a shared bathroom and outdoor grazing

privileges. "Unscrupulous breeders showed customers cute piglets, called them 'pleasantly plump' and said they wouldn't get very big. Once people realized this wasn't true, the bottom fell out of the market," Amanda said. "I got involved with these pigs because they have individual personalities; they're comedians and drama queens. Look." Amanda gently strokes Anna, who whirls into a paroxysm of squeals.

"Definitely, pigs are individuals and they're smart," says Fred Scoville. "They can get out, sure, but they can find where they got out and get back in." "What a different kind of farm animal!" says Buddy Hurlburt. "The pigs have a huff if I feed the calves first. There's something about a pig. Maybe it's just the name."

"Well now," Stephen's grandfather Ralph Scoville tells me, "I remember one fall my father brought back a sow with nine piglets. One of them disappeared, couldn't find it anywhere. Then, come winter, a boy down at Cream Hill Lake saw a twirly tail coming up out of the ice. I guess that piglet wasn't too smart."

—Ella Clark

Taking a Hard Look at the School

"Oh, sure, I've heard of Cornwall. They have a real good school there, don't they?"

Like most of us, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway has heard a refrain like this more than once. Ridgway is also not alone in perceiving one major effect of Cornwall Consolidated School's reputation, a ballooning population. "Enrollment at the school," says Ridgway, "has grown during the last five years at the highest rate of any elementary school in the county." The increase, Ridgway feels, is likely to continue for the next several years. Moreover, because the school was last renovated a decade ago, the needs of the current school body may differ from those prevailing back then.

One answer, in Ridgway's view (supported by the heads of the Finance and Education Boards), is the creation of a new town advisory committee. The group, to be formed in the next month or two, would be made up of "townspeople with no particular personal agendas other than community service."

The group would study issues ranging from the school population and its present and future needs to the desirability of moving Cream Hill Road to make room for a new gym or classrooms. The committee would start at the beginning: Are the existing facilities being used efficiently? How many more students can the current building take care of?

Looking ahead, the committee would investigate the costs of new facilities and sources of funds to pay for them. One such expense might be the price of additional land purchased for the school.

To form the committee, the first selectman is looking for about ten people drawn from town boards and

from the community at large. The group would hold regular "very public" meetings and report back to the town as quickly as possible. Volunteers are urged to contact Gordon.

"Nothing is in crisis now," Ridgway says. "But we want to make sure we attend to things so there will be no crisis." —Charles Osborne

Parsing the Plan

Approximately 30 people attended the Planning and Zoning Commission's November 13 public hearing on the revised Town Plan. Chairman Bill Lyon first reviewed the process by which the revisions had been made, including mention of the initial forum and subsequent subcommittees in which citizens participated.

Four main themes that had concerned townspeople were identified: preservation of the environment and rural landscape; improvement of fiscal viability and local employment opportunities; maintenance of economic and social diversity; and strengthening volunteerism and sense of community. Tom McGowan, planning consultant for the commission, presented maps and explained the six sections of the Plan.

Several citizens had questions, such as, how easements work, and how the seemingly contradictory goals of conservation and economic opportunity work together, and most important—how recommendations of the Plan get implemented. McGowan stated that the Plan is strictly advisory, and that the commission must draw up specific regulations to achieve the aims of the Plan.

At its next meeting, the commission will review the comments and questions raised at the hearing and note items for future additions or revisions. If P&Z feels that there is general satisfaction with the Plan as presented, the commission will vote its acceptance. Legally, it does not need to go to Town Meeting; citizen input has already been obtained at the forum, the subcommittee meetings, and the public hearing.

—Ginny Potter

Welcome

Jacob Flasch to Rebecca and William Hurlburt
Zackary Theodore to Donna and Ted Larson
Morgan Faith to Elizabeth Tracy (Gold) and
Dane Sobek

Good-bye to Friends

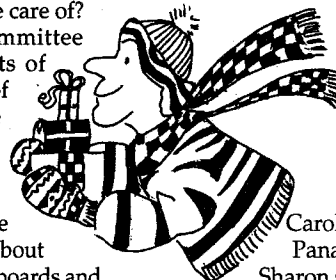
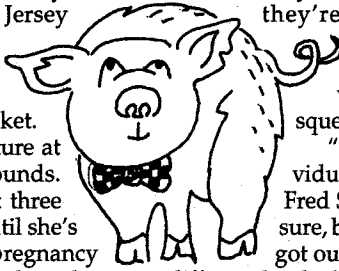
Richard K. Beebe
William Cogswell Clarke III
Douglas C. Gordon
Claribel S. Van Alstyne
Edwin H. Whitcomb
Stella S. White

Congratulations

Edward A. Schillinger to
Christine R. Shuler

Land Transfers

Carol S. Nelson to Jerold and Felicity
Panas, house and 11.5 acres at 332
Sharon Goshen Turnpike for \$525,000.



Our Beavers: A Primer

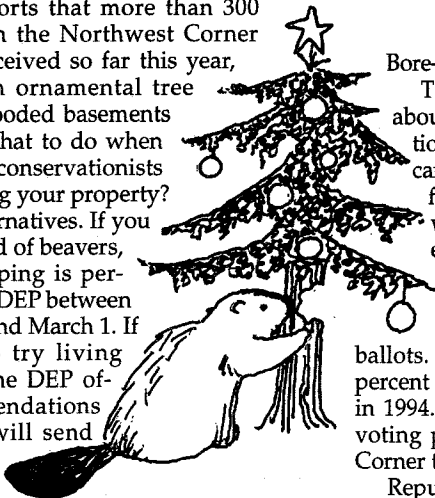
Beavers were reintroduced in Connecticut as recently as the 1920s, when several pairs were released in Yale Forest, Norfolk. Today, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) calculates that there are more than 30 colonies in Cornwall and four to six thousand statewide—and they are on the increase.

Most beaver colonies contain five or six individuals—12 is maximum—with the female usually selecting the home site and creating the social stability of the family unit. She produces one litter a year, usually two to four kits. Born in the spring, fully furred, they remain in the lodge for about six weeks until they are weaned. Young beavers stay around for at least two years, primarily to learn techniques of dam construction and tree felling. They don't mature sexually until age two, when they are either driven from the lodge by their parents or leave of their own accord. Beavers live from 10 to 15 years, a remarkably long time for a rodent.

The "chisel tooth," as the Canadian Indians say, has very powerful incisors that, like those of all rodents, will continue to get longer unless worn down by use. Beavers can also gnaw under water, because their lips close behind the cutting teeth. Awkward on land but at home in the water, they hold the wood with their front paws, paddle with their webbed hind feet and steer with their broad flat tails. At this time of year they are piling up trimmed branches and small logs in an underwater cache. As food is needed in the winter, they gnaw off a piece of wood and transport it to the lodge where the bark is eaten.

Busy as a beaver is a truism. No animal has increased the diversity of our plants and wildlife as much as this interesting rodent, second largest in the world. (The capybara is the largest.) The wetlands beavers create provide nesting and resting areas for waterfowl as well as habitat for fish and mammals. These open areas that beavers eventually abandon when the food supply is used up form rich meadows which support certain plants that depend on disturbance for their continued existence. In short, "chisel tooth" in the wild is an ideal conservationist.

But where man has settled, the work of busy beavers makes complications. A DEP biologist reports that more than 300 complaints in the Northwest Corner have been received so far this year, ranging from ornamental tree damage to flooded basements and roads. What to do when these rodent conservationists start damaging your property? There are alternatives. If you want to get rid of beavers, licensed trapping is permitted by the DEP between December 1 and March 1. If you want to try living with them, the DEP offers recommendations which they will send you at your request.



Letters to the Chronicle



A RIVER OF HOPE

In comparison with the ugly, saturated mess in the Housatonic River in Pittsfield and two miles south, Cornwall's section of the river suffers but little. There, upstream, the river moves dark and dying, but here in the down-flow we have a non-lethal case of the PCBs, non-lethal but bad enough so the fish are unsafe to eat and the water unfit for swimming. The local PCBs will not be mitigated at once by the recent negotiated settlement between the Environmental Protection Agency and General Electric. There will be continuous monitoring of local river flow and sediment to ensure upstream clean-up does not degrade downstream conditions. There will be a \$15 million compensatory damage settlement, most of which will be spent in Massachusetts. What trickles down from there will be administered by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

PCBs were legal and even required in transformers. They were used between the early 1930s and 1977, when the EPA (established in 1970) banned them when they showed up in the food chain. The combination of gradual discharges from GE—millions of gallons and occasional spills—polluted the Housatonic all the way to the Sound. Although floodplains and river properties are now polluted, the river is the major zone of contamination.

The clean-up begins immediately and will

take several years. This is clearly good news. GE and EPA played tag for 15 years, but strong civic leaders, dedicated environmental organizations and a public angered by corporate negligence and stalling prevailed. Cornwall might even someday get compensatory funds for the damage done here, but don't hold your breath—and don't eat the fish.

—Philip W. Hart,
Housatonic River Commission

PLAUDITS FOR CLLC

We are writing this letter to clarify an impression that may have been left by the Library Trustees' letter to the October Chronicle. It has never been the Trustees' position that the Cornwall Limited Liability Company should be blamed for the failure of negotiations to purchase Monroe-Bodkin to be used as the new library.

The Library Trustees respect and applaud, as do others in Cornwall, the intent of the CLLC to make parts of the former Marvelwood campus available for use by the town, the library or another public institution. This has not happened, but the public spirit and generosity of the intention is clear.

It is time to move ahead with the challenge ahead of us—to create a library for the community, to raise the funds to build it, and to open the doors wide to everyone.

—The Trustees of the Cornwall Library

Each time beavers plug up the outflow culverts on Ira Shapiro's land, he and his children unplug them until water escapes. Ira says, "Our pond stays alive with frogs and waterfowl, rather than becoming a mud pit, breeding mosquitoes."

Over the years Peg and Ken Keskinen have observed beavers come and go on their pond. One bitterly cold day when the pond was frozen solid, they saw steam coming out of a hole at the top of a lodge, the collective breaths of a beaver family snug and dry in their winter nest.

—Carla Bigelow

How We Voted

Bore—ing!

That sort of sums up my feelings about the state and Congressional elections held early last month. As far as I can tell not a single incumbent was defeated in Congressional and statewide contests. Life in 1998 is apparently just too damn good. No complaints. Exactly 625 out of Cornwall's 955 registered voters went to the polls or sent in absentee ballots. That means 65.4 percent voted, 12 percent fewer than in a similar election held in 1994. Even so Cornwall had the highest voting percentage of the seven Northwest Corner towns.

Republican Governor John Rowland car-

ried Cornwall over Democrat Barbara Kennelly 333 to 266, and Democratic Senator Chris Dodd outpolled Republican Gary Franks 387 to 192. Rowland and Dodd won overwhelmingly statewide. In the race for the Sixth Congressional District, Democrat Charlotte Koskoff edged Republican Nancy Johnson in Cornwall 300 to 297, though Johnson easily defeated her for the third straight time. Cornwall was the only town Koskoff carried in the Northwest Corner. Republican State Senator Del Eads easily defeated a weak opponent, Roderick Wyant III, but only took Cornwall 329 to 252. Eads carried the district as a whole better than 2 to 1. In the 64th Assembly District, Republican Andrew Roraback ran unopposed. And, finally, in some local non-contests, Margaret Cooley remains our esteemed Probate Judge and Jane Ridgway and Lisa Cruse our two fine Registrars of Voters.

—John Miller

Well Done!

Golden October sunlight poured through the windows of Cornubia Hall as the Cornwall Association held its annual meeting. As part of the ceremonies, the association made a joint presentation of its 1998 award to Scoville Soulé and Kay Fenn. (Scoville was on hand but Kay was unable to attend.)

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

Earl Brecher rose to render thanks to Scoville for his service as chairman of the relatively unsung committee set up as a bridge between the Library Trustees and the Board of Selectmen during the more contentious phases of the Library's decision to leave the Town Hall building. Soulé, said Brecher, was "agreed on as a person of respect and neutrality in what was an adversarial process...never losing patience...acting with quiet effectiveness."

In his tribute to Kay Fenn, paid during the week of her 85th birthday, Tim Prentice lauded her performance in "myriad functions" as she, in effect, ran the town and educated a generation of civic workers. Tim emphasized Kay's long-standing devotion to the Library; it was she who masterminded the establishment of its first formal card catalogue.

—Charles Osborne

Events & Announcements

Tom Walker Will Read once again in the candlelit North Cornwall Meetinghouse on Saturday, December 26, at 4 P.M. A 30-year veteran of the Living Theater in New York, Walker will read *The Hunting of the Snark* by Lewis Carroll and selections from Mark Twain. This holiday treat for young and old has been arranged by the Friends of the Cornwall Library. Free.

Storm Emergency Call List: The town is now updating the call list for use during severe winter storms. Last year a team of volunteers phoned and checked in on a number of our neighbors, and found some in need of deliveries or evacuation. If you would like to be listed—or know of someone who should be listed—please contact Jill Gibbons, Municipal Agent for the Elderly, P. O. Box 205, Cornwall, CT 06753, or the Selectmen's Office (672-4959).

Provide name, address, phone number, and a relative or friend to call if the listed person cannot be reached.

The Candlelight Services: On Christmas Eve, there will be two programs of carols and readings in the North Cornwall Meetinghouse, at 5 and 8 P.M.



Be an Angel

We're always stretching to make connections in this space, so when you stretch to crown your tree this year, remember that there are two kinds of angels: 1. the kind with wings, and 2. financial backers. You do get our drift, right? Many thanks and Merry Christmas!



Caroling and Tree Lighting with the Hot Chocolate Society will take place on Sunday, December 13, at 5 P.M. in front of the Town Hall. Refreshments will be served by Park & Rec. Wear warm clothes and expect a special visitor.

Christmas Fair: Saturday, December 5, from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. at the United Church of Christ. In the Parish House there will be crafts by local artists, evergreen wreaths and decorations, and rooms for children to make simple ornaments and to shop for and wrap presents for the family. A soup and sandwich lunch and holiday foods will be available in the Day Room of the church. To reserve a wreath, call Joan Edler at 672-6789.

Lovers of Skating are trying to build a safe, removable rink behind the West Cornwall Firehouse or on another appropriate site. Kids and adults are needed as volunteers to construct and maintain the surface, along with contributions. Call David Monagan, 672-4815.

Winter Tips—and Warnings: First Selectman Gordon Ridgway ventures no predictions about the coming winter, but declares that the town is ready. He suggests that drivers check their tires; to handle ice as well as snow, he recommends studded snow tires. In anticipation of power outages, Ridgway urges the laying in of emergency food and water, along with firewood where feasible.

An ordinance passed last year prohibits parking that would interfere with snow plowing. Vehicles must be parked at least six feet (ten is better) from the side of the road. Plowing can occur at any time and includes setback plowing in clear weather. State statutes empower the town to remove vehicles parked in violation of its regulations.

Cornwall Extras for Kids will host its sixth annual Beer and Wine Tasting on Saturday, December 5, from 5 to 7 P.M. at 56 Essex Hill Road (near Mohawk). The benefit is presented by the Cornwall Package Store and features lavish libations, honorable hors d'oeuvres, and music by Ram Miles. \$15 per person.

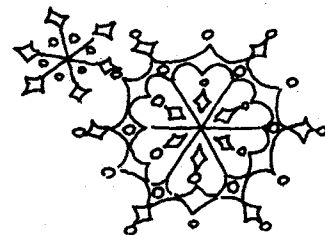
Art in Cornwall: At the National Iron Bank, Scott Zuckerman will be exhibiting paintings of wildlife beginning December 1. From December 7 to January 9, there will be a group show of handmade paper at the Cornwall Library, including works by Amy Buck, Nita Colgate, Jill Gibbons, and Gail Jacobson. Opening on December 6 at the Hedgerows upstairs gallery will be an exhibit of paintings and collages by Danielle Mailer.

Game Night at the West Cornwall Firehouse sponsored by Park & Rec. has been changed to Friday, December 11, from 7 to 9 P.M. Bring your favorite games or use ours. Refreshments. Call Skip Kosciusko (672-3169) if weather is threatening.

Wanted—Bird Counters: Sunday, December 20, is the day of the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count. Volunteers are needed to help find and count birds in the Cornwall area; to count feeder birds (it's quite simple and doesn't require watching the feeder all day); and to report on birds seen during the previous few days, and their whereabouts. If you would like to participate, please call Celia Senzer at 672-6898 or Carla Bigelow at 672-0283.

CCS Winter Concerts: The winter concert presented by grades K through 4 will be on Tuesday, December 15, at 1:30 P.M. Grades 5 through 8 will give two performances of band, chorus, and jazz band music on Wednesday, December 16, at 1:30 P.M. and at 7 P.M.

Holiday Potluck Supper & Dance sponsored by Park & Rec. will be held in the CCS gym on Friday, December 4, from 6 to 8:30 P.M. Music and entertainment by The Caribbean Beach Bums.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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