

Frances Slocum Park is a Back Mountain gem

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Frances Slocum State Park in Kingston Township has been a haven for lovers of the outdoors since it was dedicated 26 years ago on Memorial Day weekend, 1968.

The 1,000 acre park offers visitors a varied menu of activities: several miles of hiking and nature trails ideal for bird watching and nature photography, a swimming pool, plenty of open space for picnicking and orienteering, boat rentals and a 165 acre lake team-

Kozlansky has also spearheaded a program to recycle aluminum cans, plastic and glass containers.

He knows every foot of the park's nearly two square miles, encompassing a variety of wildlife habitats - wetland, lake, forest and meadowland - great excuses for an environmental field trip or a pleasant afternoon hike.

Kozlansky offers programs for all ages and interests: photography hikes, canoe trips to the marsh, videos, bird walks, nature scavenger hunts, safe boating classes, Scout leader training

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Jerry Kozlansky
Park naturalist

ing with panfish, perch, muskies, catfish, pickerel, walleyes and bass.

In 1990 the campground opened, with 85 tent or RV sites, 15 primitive tent sites and a group camping area which accommodates up to 40 campers.

Polar bear types flock to the park's Mount Olivet Road and Carverton Road entrances during the winter for excellent ice fishing and cross-country skiing.

During the past five years, park naturalist Jerry Kozlansky has created many new weekend afternoon and evening programs for campground visitors and the public, ranging from the culture of the Native American tribes who once called the Back Mountain home to night hikes and workshops on basic fishing skills.

classes and opportunities for Eagle Scout and Girl Scout Gold Award candidates.

Teachers may earn graduate credits by taking environmental education courses at the park.

New programs include a basic fishing skills workshop, a presentation on deer ticks and a video and discussion on the black bear.

And it's all for free.

"Many people tell me that they never knew that the park was here, with so many different activities," Kozlansky said. "They just head for the pool and bypass the campground and visitors' center. Back Mountain residents have the wonders of nature right in their own backyard and don't know it."

The park is named for Frances Slocum, the heroine of a popular



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

SMART FISHING - Area youngsters took advantage of Frances Slocum State Park's Junior Naturalist and SMART fishing programs. Showing their catches to park naturalist Jerry Kozlansky are Dave Barnousky, Kris Nardi, Nichole Griffith and Lisa Haughwout.

local legend of a five-year-old Quaker girl reportedly abducted from her settler family's home in Wyoming Valley by a band of Native Americans in 1778.

The legend says that the band passed through the present park on its way back to its village, stopping for the night under a rock outcropping in the piney

woods overlooking the presnet lake.

Young Frances was adopted by a Lenni-Lenape chief and lived happily ever after as Mocanaquah, "Little Bear," the wife of a Miami chief and mother of four children.

Although her birth family eventually found her living in a Native

village in Indiana, she refused to leave her home, where she had become highly respected. She died there in 1838.

The area which would one day become a state park was settled by the descendants of Daniel Heft, who had come to the Back Mountain from Doylestown sometime

after 1808.

Hikers say that they have found old stone foundations which may be left over from early settlement of the area.

The historic old Heft mill and a stone arch bridge over Abraham's Creek were razed when construction of the dam and creation of the park's lake for recreation and flood control began in mid-1963.

According to news clippings on file at the park office, two workers dismantling the mill were crushed to death when one of its walls collapsed on them.

The park's rather inauspicious beginning continued with the nighttime bombing of construction equipment at the dam in July, 1964. Damage to three large bulldozers, two payloaders, a crane and an air compressor owned by Irving T. Miller Construction was estimated between \$100,000 and \$200,000, according to the news clippings.

Frances Slocum State Park was barely four years old when it became an emergency home to 500 victims of the 1972 Hurricane Agnes flood, when the federal government took it over for 18 months and set up an emergency mobile home village, complete with its own town council, security force and fire department.

Kozlansky said that he has seen the use of the park grow tremendously in the past five years.

"The word is getting around that we have quality nature programs here, tailored to each group's needs and interests, and access to environmental education specialists and other experts from anywhere in the state," he said. "It's a free service provided by the Commonwealth."

Named to U of Pitt Dean's Honor List

Karen M. Wisneski has been named to the Dean's Honor List for the spring term, 1994, at the University of Pittsburgh College of Arts and Sciences.

A student earns Honor List recognition for achieving a 3.7 or better grade point average on a 4.0 scale.

She also was named as a 1994 recipient of the Janice Merrick Memorial Scholarship as awarded through St. Therese's Church of Shavertown.

Karen, the daughter of Dan and Irene Wisneski, will enter her first year of study at the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy this fall.

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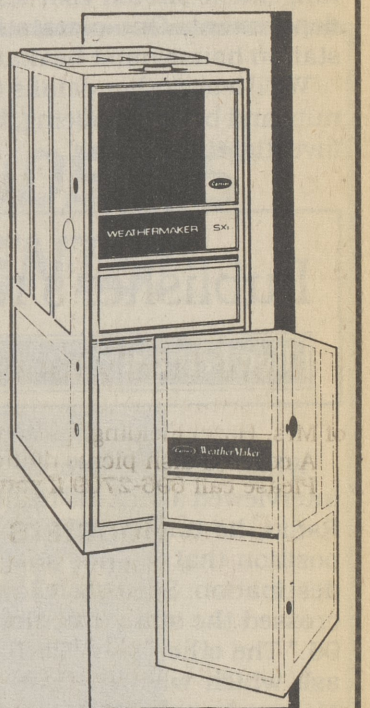
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