

Environment counts at Weis

by Eric Englund
RINGWOOD — In an age when people are becoming more conscious of environmental issues, places like the Weis Ecology Center flourish.

Located in a heavily-wooded 120 acre tract here, the center has been going strong for seven years. Stephen Tarnell, executive director, declares the center's main goal is to present ecological issues to the public sector.

"We try to provide a good format for people to think about and investigate issues pertaining to environment. However, we are not political," he said.

Tarnell noted that the center is a private, non-profit organization — which has its advantages, particularly in developing programs.

"Your state and county parks often deal directly with the government as far as programs. But we have the advantage of developing and working out our own."

Although the center is open seven days a week during the fall and summer, it draws most attention on weekends, when special programs are given.

During the July 4 weekend, the center will celebrate the nation's 204th birthday with various mini-workshops on pioneer life. On Saturday, July 12, 10 a.m. there will be a program on organic gardening. A nature art workshop will be held on Saturday, July 19, 10 a.m.

Throughout the week, people are free to walk on its nature trails. When the weather is warm enough, tourists can enjoy a refreshing swim in the lake. Picnic facilities are also available.

Tarnell said the next main step for the center is to remain open all year. Part of that proposal would be a new nature museum, containing various exhibits.

"We feel there's enough environmental interest to stay open throughout the year. One thing which makes people in this area more conscious about ecology is that this is a large, very heavily wooded area. In this kind of atmosphere, people appreciate unspoiled life and it makes them more sensitive to the abuses of ecology."

The center is open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Rates are \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. Special programs cost adults \$1 and children 50 cents. For further information, call the center 835-2160.



Seven-year-old Christopher DeGroat of Ringwood enjoys a refreshing swim at Weis Ecology Center.

Water-watch may take effect

RIDGEWOOD — The department of water supply which serves Glen Rock, Midland Park and Wyckoff, as well as the village, may face a water shortage this summer if some precautionary measures are not followed. This was one of the statements made to the village council by the Water Supply Education Committee, which is composed of two representatives from each community.

Although each town is considering the adoption of its own water-saving resolutions for emergency peak water-usage periods, the village council introduced an ordinance to amend the village code for water shortage emergencies at the June 24 meeting.

The amendment's purpose is to limit and restrict the use of water by customers during periods of emergency and to prevent the waste of water at all times.

Village Manager John Paulus will have the responsibility of adopting rules and regulation at his discretion to declare the existence of an emergency during any period of water shortage or potential water shortage.

In the event that the village wells begin to drop capacity, the regulations will become effective immediately with public notice and publication in the village's legal newspaper.

According to the ordinance, it will also be unlawful for any water customer to intentionally waste water or to maintain any plumbing fixture which needs repair.

Violation of the water restrictions will result in a written notification from the village Department of Water Supply stating the nature of the violation and providing a reasonable time limit (not less than 10 days) for correction of the

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Friday June 21, 1980 Record - Passaic section
dangled from a 10th-floor window.

Where nature reigns

By Christopher Brimer
Staff Writer

A visitor walking quietly beneath the pines and oaks of the Weiss Ecology Center in Ringwood is as likely to encounter a band of browsing white-tailed deer as another human being. If you are lucky, the deer might continue grazing. Or they might take a few tentative steps before bounding off to the surrounding forest.

Deer feeding only a few feet from modest bungalows are part of a unique balance of Man with nature, which the center's owners have sought throughout its 60-year history. Visitors are welcome, but they're asked to behave.

"People are encouraged to come here, but they are discouraged from running around with beer and radios," said director Steven Tarnell. "There's this emphasis here, 'listen to nature.' Mother Nature doesn't boogie."

Guided tours and lectures

On Saturdays, staff members conduct walking tours of the surrounding forest. The lectures, which cover subjects ranging from wild flowers to edible mushrooms, are loosely structured to leave room for questions and sidetrips if the interest arises, said Tarnell. But the lectures and tours are laced with a generous dose of the camp's environmental philosophy of peaceful and productive coexistence with nature.

"The idea is to increase the understanding and appreciation of the environment," said Tarnell. "Our whole emphasis is to get people up here to have a good time and enjoy themselves and slip them a little something extra."

Lean and bejeaned, Tarnell is typical of

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PASSAIC

Ecology center: a place where Man and nature meet

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the college-educated, back-to-nature enthusiast the center attracts. Earlier this year, he left a high-pressure job to move his wife and child into one of the small frame bungalows that ring the large clearing, which is the only developed land at the 120-acre center. Walking over the grassy pasture, stooping occasionally to pick up a stray cigarette butt or a gum wrapper, Tarnell speaks easily of his plans for the center. Within the next year he hopes to expand the camp's dormitory facilities and clean up the glacial pond, which has become filled with tires and other debris over the years. But most of all he wants to spread the word about the center's natural setting, environmental mission, and low-cost family entertainment.

"In a few years, I really think this place is going to be famous," he says.

Founded in 1920

The camp was founded in 1920, when a group of Eastern European immigrants, the Nature Friends, bought the land from farmers. The Nature Friends eschewed the nudity their name might imply, preferring to hike and fill their lungs with the Ramapo Mountain air. Over the years, they carved out trails and built the center's principal buildings. They also

rerouted a mountain stream down a rocky stone ledge to fill a swimming pool, which later became the state's first racially integrated pool. The center passed through other hands before becoming a nonprofit organization in the mid-Sixties.

Today, what the camp lacks in glamour it makes up for in programming and practicality. Located at 150 Snake Den Road, on the northern edge of Morvin Green State Forest, it makes a good jumping-off point for hikers who can spend the night there for as little as \$7.50 before starting off on daylong jaunts.

Accommodations aren't fancy. Rooms in the main brick building for singles as well as for families contain little more than a bed and a dresser.

"They're all spartan and simple," said Tarnell. "They're designed for people who are more interested in being outdoors."

With the payment of the \$2 adult general admission and \$1 child's admission to the center, lecture tours are half price. Or a visitor can pay \$1 for adults and 75¢ for children for the tours alone. Reduced prices are available for Ringwood residents and for senior citizens.

The general admission price entitles a visitor to use the swimming pool, forest trails, baseball field and playground equipment.