

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman: Teaching Skills and Building Confidence

by Laurel Garlicki

"I was interested in the program and curious about what went on there. I was a little apprehensive because I am not an angler or hunter, but I didn't feel out of place, intimidated or uncomfortable at any time during the BOW weekend," said Kelly, a first-timer.

This sentiment is not uncommon for Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) participants. It shows that the BOW program is meeting its goals of building confidence, teaching skills and providing an opportunity for like-minded women to spend a weekend together in the outdoors. The Commission's own Kim Gibson, Holly Whary and Kelly Wiley were among the 85 women experiencing BOW September 19-21, 2003, at Camp Saginaw in Chester County.

For the second year in a row, Commission female staff had an opportunity to participate in a drawing for a limited number of complimentary spots in the BOW weekend, courtesy of the PA Fish & Boat Commission and PA Game Commission. This year's lucky winners were from the Executive Office, and the offices of Fisheries Management and Federal Aid/Grants. This opportunity was offered as a training endeavor to help employees better understand the goals and initiatives of the Commission, and to relate better to customers. The three randomly selected women were required to attend at least one of the Commission-related sessions. All participants in the weekend program selected four sessions from more than 20 different offerings, including fly tying, fly fishing I and II, basic fishing, and canoeing.

Holly said, "It [BOW] made me realize that I really do enjoy the outdoors and that there are a lot of outdoor events that women can participate in just as much as men." When asked what advice she would offer other women about outdoor recreation and the BOW program, she said, "If they have a chance to attend a BOW program, they really should do it. They could learn about an outdoor activity that their children or husband enjoys and be able to join in, or they could sign up for a different class and perhaps find a new activity they enjoy. I thought it was a great experience and I'd encourage more women to try it."

Kelly adds, "It was a great learning experience for me and it gave me a whole new perspective about fishing. This is something that more women should consider participating in." Kim offered similar advice: "Do it! You'll wish you had done it sooner. I can't wait until next year—I'm going no matter what the cost."

The PA Game Commission hosted Pennsylvania's first

photo-Holly Whary



Kelly Wiley (left) rigs a fly rod during a fly fishing session. Kim Gibson (below left) shows some of the prizes she won during the event's raffle. Holly Whary (left in picture below) and Kelly Wiley take a break during a mountain biking session.



photo-Kelly Wiley



photo-Kelly Wiley

BOW program in September 1996. Since then, weekend-long events, one-day events and shorter half-day programs have been offered through the BOW program. The PA Fish & Boat Commission plays a large role in the annual fall workshop and other events by providing instructors for the fishing- and boating-related sessions, and by offering take-home materials, equipment, and items for raffles and silent auctions. This year's Commission staff instructors were Aquatic Resources Program Specialists Walt Dietz, Laurel Garlicki and Carl Haensel, and Aquatic Resources Education Manager Carl Richardson. Special thanks go to Commission-certified volunteer instructors Joanne Dietz and Cindy Haensel, who gave up their weekend to teach at the event.

To find out more about the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program, visit www.uwsp.edu/cnr/bow. ☐