

Bonita & Collier

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Koreshan welcomes canine campers now

Park in Estero, one of 32 in state permitting pets

By **ANDREA STETSON**
The News-Press

ESTERO — Mirinka enjoys walking along the paths at Koreshan State Historic Site, but she's not the typical park camper.

Mirinka, 14, is one of the first dogs allowed at the park. Beginning Dec. 1, 32 state parks began letting dogs in campgrounds, including Koreshan in Lee County and Collier-Seminole State Park in Collier County.

"I was very happy to see 32 state parks allowing dogs," said Mirinka's owner, Sandy Brugos. "We circled every one of them. At her age, we can't put her in a kennel."

When Brugos and her husband, Dave, arrived in Florida from Melford, Conn., on Nov. 28, they had to stay in a private campground that allowed dogs. Three days later, their



MARC BEAUDIN/The News-Press

Dave and Sandy Brugos and their 14-year-old dog, Mirinka, at their camp site at Koreshan State Historic Site.

DOGS ALLOWED

State Park campgrounds in Lee and Collier that began allowing dogs Dec. 1.

■ Koreshan State Historic Site is on U.S. 41 at Corkscrew Road in

Estero. Call 992-0311 for more information.

■ Collier-Seminole park is on U.S. 41, 17 miles south of Naples. Call 394-3397 for more information.

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dogs got the green light to camp with them in state parks.

"We like the state parks better because it's more private," Dave Briggs said. "There's more woods. You don't feel like you're in a used car lot."

Fred Mutter of Ohio is camping next door to the Briggs.

"The park is set up so nice that you can hardly tell there's a pet next door," he said. "I see people walking their pets, but it doesn't bother me. I haven't noticed a bit of difference."

But it's not an easy romp in the park. There are rules, and there have been problems. Pet owners must pay \$2 a day for each pet. They must show proof that their dog has been vaccinated against rabies. In the park, dogs always must be on a leash no longer than 6 feet and cannot be unattended for more than 30 minutes.

"The first dog broke the rules," said

Annette Craig, a park volunteer. "The dog was sitting in the middle of the road without a leash and without an owner. It was chasing our bikes."

Amy Kolb, a park ranger and owner of four dogs, said people who break the rules will be asked to leave.

"As long as they are playing by the rules, it will work," she said. "I want it to work."

Kolb said the reason the state parks department decided to let dogs camp in many parks is because there were so many requests from the public.

"They just had so many people wanting to camp with their pets who got turned away," Kolb said.

Korean park manager Jeanne Parks said dogs were not allowed in the parks before because the public didn't want dogs there.

"Now we've gone full circle," Parks said. "Now people want the dogs in the parks." Parks said their insurance would

cover any problems, such as a dog bite. Park rangers say the \$2 charge covers the cost of additional patrols needed to monitor pet owners and pays for the "mud-mat" bags provided at many parks for campers to pick up after their dogs.

Nicky Makruski, assistant park manager at Collier-Seminole State Park, said more than two dozen dogs have stayed at the park since Dec. 1.

"We haven't had any major problems," Makruski said. "The only problems are people who let their dogs off their leashes. I'm most concerned with a dog running at a kid."

Still, she's glad pets are allowed.

"I'm happy with it because before we had to turn people away who had pets," Makruski said. "I think it's a good thing for the park. It will bring more revenue in. It will allow more people to camp who couldn't camp before."

—Andrea Stinson can be reached at 992-1345.

STATE PARKS ALLOWING DOGS

State Park campgrounds in Lee and Collier that began allowing dogs Dec. 1

- Korean State Historic Site is on U.S. 41 at Corkscrew Road in Estero. Call 992-0317 for more information.
- Collier-Seminole park is on U.S. 41, 17 miles south of Naples. Call 994-3977 for more information.

Other state parks that now allow dogs:

- Anastasia (St. Augustine)
- Big Lagoon (Pensacola)
- Blackwater River (Holts in northwest Florida)
- Blue Spring (Orange City)
- Dead Lakes (Wewahatcha in northwest Florida)

- Falling Waters (Chapley in northwest Florida)
- Florida Caverns (Marrama in northwest Florida)
- Fort Clinch (Fernandina Beach)
- Gambia-Rogers (Fragler Beach)
- Gold Head Branch (Keystone Heights in northeast Florida)
- Highlands Hammock (Sabring)
- Hillsborough River (Thorofossassa, west Florida)
- Jonathan Dickinson (Hobe Sound)
- Lake Griffin (Fruitland Park in central Florida)
- Lake Manatee (Bradenton)
- Little Manatee River (Wimbourne in west Florida)
- Little Talbot Island (Fort George in northeast Florida)
- Manatee Springs (Chieftand in

- northeast Florida)
- Ochlocknee River (Sopchoppy in northwest Florida)
- Oscar Scherer (Osprey)
- Rainbow Springs (Dunnellon)
- Rocky Bayou (Niceville, northwest Florida)
- Sebastian Inlet (Melbourne Beach)
- St. George's Island (St. George Island in northwest Florida)
- Stephen Foster (White Springs in northeast Florida)
- Suwannee River (Live Oak in northeast Florida)
- Three Rivers (Sneads in northwest Florida)
- Three Rivers (Sneads in northwest Florida)
- Tomoka (Ormond Beach in central Florida)
- Topsail Hill RV Resort (Santa Rosa in northwest Florida)
- Wakiva Springs (Apopka)