

**W**oodlands provide many benefits to their owners as well as society. Those benefits include income opportunities from the sale of timber or other non-timber forest products, but that is not the only way woodland owners receive benefits from their woodlands. Another benefit woodland owners can receive from their property is derived from the recreational activities conducted in the woodlands. Although fun may not be the first thing you think of when it comes to woodlands, it is important to remember that woodlands can support a wide variety of recreational activities while at the same time producing quality timber and critical wildlife habitat.

Recreational activities by necessity increase the time an owner spends in the woods, producing several important outcomes. The owner is more aware and familiar with their woodlands, helping them recognize change. These changes include issues of trespass or natural occurrences, such as insects and diseases. Functionally, increased time in the woods improves monitoring of the woodlands. Ultimately,

### Mixing Woodland Recreation and Management

Recreation is typically considered any activity that is done for enjoyment when you are not working. But woodland owners can make their woodland recreational activities productive as well by paying attention to what is going on in the woodland. Owners who spend time in their woodlands as indicated previously will be more attuned to growing conditions and threats such as invasive plants or trespass that pose a risk to their woodland. This type of observational monitoring is important. Many issues are best dealt with when caught at an early stage, invasive plants being one. But other issues such as trespass, dumping, etc. can be addressed more effectively if caught early. Monitoring is a valuable means of helping with these issues.

If woodland recreation is an important consideration for you and your family, one way to help ensure that recreation is incorporated into your woodland management activities is to make sure it is part of your management objectives.

# Woodland Recreation

by Billy Thomas

*“Perhaps the rebuilding of the body and spirit is the greatest service derivable from our forests, for what worth are material things if we lose the character and quality of people that are the soul of America.”*  
 -- Arthur Carhart, U.S. Forest Service Landscape Architect, 1919

recreational time serves to increase an overall interest and awareness of the importance of caring for your woodlands. This time can be especially important when trying to establish strong connections to your woodlands and your heirs.

### Woodland Recreation Benefits and Examples

Woodland recreational activities can take many forms depending on the attributes of the property (ex. access, steepness, location, etc.), interests and constraints (ex. legal, financial) of the owner, and the type and size of woodland property. Some of the more obvious woodland recreational activities include: hiking, wildlife viewing, hunting, camping, and many other recreational activities (see Table 1). Recreational activities certainly can produce physical health benefits, but woodland recreation can also benefit your state of mind. In fact, just being in the woods can have a positive impact on your outlook and overall health by reducing stress and providing the opportunity to relax. The Japanese call this “Shinrin-yoku,” or “forest bathing,” and have conducted scientific studies that document reduced cortisol (i.e. stress) levels from simply spending time in the forest.

This effort will help to facilitate recreation when you are conducting woodland management activities or working on woodland access (ex. trails and roads). Foresters consider timber harvesting an important management tool—it

<b>Easy to Moderate Intensity</b>	<b>Moderate to Extreme Intensity</b>
Camping	Canoeing
Dog Walks	Caving (Spelunking)
Fall Color Walks	Horseback Riding
Fishing	Hunting
Hiking	Mountain Biking
Nature Photography	Off-road Vehicles
Non-timber Forest Product Hunting (ex. Berries)	Paint Ball
Orienteering	Primitive Camping
Picnicking	Rock Climbing
Wildflower Walks	Trail Running
Wildlife Viewing	Winter Camping

is one of the few times when enough planning, equipment, and manpower come together to positively impact woodlands. When properly applied, timber harvest operations can be used to enhance recreational activities by improving access issues, improving view sheds, creating building sites, and increasing wildlife habitat/food.



Photo courtesy: Taylor Family

Covered shelters can provide a base camp for woodland recreation activities but are certainly not required to enjoy your woodlands. The image above is of the Taylor family shelter in Boyle County—see the “From the Woods” on page 12 to learn more about how they use their woodlands for recreation.

Likewise, there may be areas or times in your woodlands where you want to avoid mixing recreation and management, such as during an active timber harvest or hunting area during the hunting season. The next time you are working in your woodlands, consider how your actions can enhance or hamper your recreational activities.

### Reducing Risks and Avoiding Conflict

Because some recreational activities expose participants to more risk than others, you should not attempt any activity without first being aware of the risks. Some basic commonsense practices can go a long way in ensuring that your woodland recreational activities are enjoyable and safe for everyone involved. Make sure to point out or otherwise mark any trail hazards or other conditions that may pose a risk to family or friends using your woodlands. These include hazards on the ground as well as above your head. Always be attentive to hanging or dead limbs and dead trees directly adjacent to or overhanging trails and places where you normally spend time. Additionally, wind-

storms, heavy rains, or other severe weather events can make woodlands more hazardous than normal for a period of time after the weather event. Familiarize yourself with areas in your woodlands that are most prone to being impacted by weather events, and avoid them when appropriate.



Many woodland owners use ATVs or other off-road vehicles to get around their woodlands.

Photo courtesy: Taylor Family

Woodland trails provide an excellent way of enjoying your woods, but if they are not planned and maintained properly they can end up as a source of frustration and concern. Mixed-use trails such as those sometimes used for off-road vehicles and horses can be especially problematic because they are incompat-

ible. When considering woodland recreational activities, make sure to consider the compatibility of various recreation and management activities so that you can prevent problems from occurring. It is also a good idea to be considerate of your neighbors when planning or conducting recreational activities to ensure your fun does not infringe on their rights.

### Go Outside and PLAY!

Regardless of the woodland recreational activity you choose, get out and enjoy your woodlands! Even if you are not a woodland owner, Kentucky has an abundance of state forests and state parks that provide many opportunities and locations across the commonwealth for woodland recreation. Woodland recreation does not have to be an expensive endeavor, and the returns to your health, state of mind, and wallet can make it worthwhile. Bring along your family and friends, and help spread an appreciation and understanding of the many benefits our woodlands provide.



Make time to get out and enjoy your woodlands. Not only will you be healthier, but you can also gain a better appreciation and understanding of your woodlands.

### Links for additional information on woodland recreation:

- U.S. Forest Service: <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/>
- Trail Design: [www2.ca.uky.edu/KYWoodlandsmagazine/Vol 4 No 1/Woodland %20trails %20pg8-11.pdf](http://www2.ca.uky.edu/KYWoodlandsmagazine/Vol_4_No_1/Woodland%20trails%20pg8-11.pdf) & [http://woodlandstewardship.org/?page\\_id=785](http://woodlandstewardship.org/?page_id=785)
- Medicinal Plants: <http://www.nps.gov/plants/medicinal/pubs/index.htm>
- Kentucky’s State Forests: <http://forestry.ky.gov/Kentuckysstateforests/Pages/default.aspx>
- Kentucky’s State Parks: <http://parks.ky.gov/>

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