

Outdoor investment pays big dividends: www.heraldtimesonline.com

By Carroll Ritter
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This guest column was written by Carroll Ritter, environmental education coordinator for Sycamore Land Trust.

Most of us manage our finances with heightened scrutiny in these times.

Saving, spending, retirement — all of these require more thought than ever.

We are interested in yields, stocks, gains and losses, portfolios and the like.

We would like to see positive yields and rewarding returns. But the investment climate certainly has major ups and downs, and we do not enjoy these roller coaster rides.

There is another investment that pays handsomely and seems to have great short-term and long-term performance dividends. That is investing time and, perhaps even money, in nature or outdoor recreation.

Let's look at some of the same financial terms and see what this is all about.

Investment necessitates input. The inputs may just be time commitments — that being just spending quiet time in a natural setting by yourself, with a friend or a family. No money needed here (except maybe getting there), but the yield is satisfaction, release, rebirth of the inner self. The metrics aren't quantitative, but rather qualitative. This is a great time for bonding. We are surely in the black or posting a credit here.

Many beautiful spots in southern Indiana can be reached easily and provide opportunities for both group and dispersed recreation.

If one is more adventurous, the mountains, prairies and seashore beckon. Here you might need a little capital or have some assets, perhaps investing in hiking boots, backpacks, tents, a canoe and the like. But what you can create with these are intensive experiences that can change your life.

Exposing children to canoeing, portaging and setting up camp is creating an individual who will be self reliant, confident and also a team member. Learning about bear behavior, being alert and observing the surroundings can also connect one to the greater realization that man is sometimes not the dominant element.

Whatever experiences you choose to give your children, we suggest diversification, that is expose them to hikes, outdoor programs, camping, fine music, fine art, as well as to sports and other activities that seem to dominate their time.

At Sycamore Land Trust, we're bullish on preserving the landscape, see a positive demand curve for outdoor experiences and places set aside for that, and use our educational program to show kids the beauty of nature while also teaching them practical science and math. Come join us.

Courtesy photo
Bloomington High School South student Mo Lamb uses a clinometer in science research with Sycamore Land Trust and IU Research and Teaching Preserve.

