

Gear for the Great Outdoors

Sounds inviting, doesn't it? A leisurely stroll through the lush, tropical paradise called southwest Florida, taking in nature's beauty. But before you head out the back door, you might want to grab a few of the following items. They could mean the difference between a joyful memory and a visit to the emergency room. Happy trails. —by Julie Clay

Take a Hike >

The Life Is Good line of clothing and accessories is the main product offered at **Synergy**, and quite a bit of it would work great on a nature walk. A durable cloth backpack with zippered outer pocket and cloth cinch tie on top is available in an earthy rust color. Many comfortable hats, in an array of colors, can also be found here including baseball hats and fishing caps in green, navy, pink and brown. Water bottles that are both see-through colored plastic and insulated aluminum with a clip to attach them are also available. The plastic ones hold 32 oz., and the aluminum hold slightly less.

*Synergy, 2075 Periwinkle Way,
Unit 18, Sanibel, 239-395-5353,
synergy202@earthlink.net*



< Visuals

Where else but at **Brookstone** could we find toys for our trip? Field binoculars are built to military specs and stay waterproof for up to thirty minutes underwater. They are reinforced with heavy-duty rubber body armor and come with a rugged carry pouch, strap, and cleaning cloth. At about half the size and weight, compact binoculars feature the same extras. Smaller still are the zoom binoculars, which the store actually recommends as best for bird-watching and hiking. And if your walk keeps you out after dark, a microbeam headlamp provides hands-free light from a bulb that lasts up to 100,000 hours, pivots to adjust the angle of light, and attaches with a lightweight, padded strap. The super-lux flashlight delivers fifteen times the brightness of standard LED lights, is encased in nonslip anodized aluminum, and is only five inches long. *Brookstone, Bell Tower Shops, 13499 S. Cleveland Ave., Fort Myers, 239-481-7711*

Education >

It helps to know what you're looking at while taking to the trails, and the **Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF)** can help. In its store we discovered ample information on local butterflies, birds, and animal tracks. Three individual guides titled *Quick Guide to Commonly Seen Animal Tracks*, *Local Birds of Southwest Florida*, and *Florida Butterflies and Caterpillars* all feature beautiful color photos and descriptions. All three are lightweight, laminated fold-up brochures for easy reference and transport. The SCCF also has quite the selection of coffee table books to help familiarize one with what's out there, including books on birds, reptiles, and amphibians. *Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Nature Center, 3333 Sanibel-Captiva Road, Sanibel, 239-472-2329, www.sccf.org*



Got You Covered >

The good folks at **Tarpon Bay Explorers** have an ample supply of all-natural protection from the elements courtesy of Burt's Bees. Doctor Burt's Natural Remedy Kit contains eight travel-sized items including poison ivy soap, lip balm, and hand salve in a zippered see-through pouch. Lemon eucalyptus is the base for a bug repellent by Repel, and Cactus Juice not only offers sunscreen protection but soothes wind-burned skin as well. Simply wear the Bug Band on your wrist to repel mosquitoes, flies, gnats, and those most notorious of Florida pests, no-see-ums. For added creature comfort there's also the Aquis Adventure microfiber towel and a wide-brimmed, lightweight Triangle Sport Headwear hat to help block the sun. *Tarpon Bay Explorers, 900 Tarpon Bay Road, Sanibel, 239-472-9621, tarponbayexplorers.com*