

From the basics to the big stuff, the Backyard Tourist has what's hot at Beaufort's local outfitters. □ □ **By Mark Shaffer**



For a lot of locals and visitors alike, summer in the Lowcountry is all about being on, in or near the water. It's second nature for natives. After all, when you live on an island you're never far from water, and if you grew up in Beaufort chances are a large part of your summer was spent A) on a sandbar, B) in the river, C) on a boat or D) A, B and C.

The truth is we live in a paradise for water sports and outdoor activities in general with world-class paddling and fishing opportunities. We're also lucky to have two local outfitters with unique areas of expertise. Both Higher Ground and Bay Street Outfitters offer expert advice along with top quality gear and services. Higher Ground's primary focus has always been centered around the region's paddling community while Bay Street is practically holy ground for fly fishermen seeking the challenge of our world famous Lowcountry Redfish. And both stores sell really cool stuff you had absolutely no idea you needed.

HIGHER GROUND OUTFITTERS

Beaufort Town Center (look for the kayaks across from the Bi Lo)

843.379.GEAR

www.highergroundbeaufort.com

Gear Up For Summer

Written by Mark Shaffer

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Higher Ground's been a Beaufort fixture since 2004. Tim Lovett spent nearly two decades in retail sporting goods before buying the place in 2010. Beaufort native Leslie Norris came on board soon after. As Leslie puts it, both "are passionate about what's right here in our backyard."

Boards, Boats & Beyond

One of the hottest summer sports on or off the water is paddleboarding (that's right, on or off the water). And Higher Ground's got you covered by land and by sea. So, how does one paddleboard on dry land, you ask? Why with a Big Stick and some wheels, of course.

Behold Kahuna Creations Longboard & Big Stick. It's a hybrid combination of skateboard meets paddleboard. The Longb



oard's basically a throwback skateboard but with the addition of the Big Stick something new is born: landboarding. The concept is pretty simple and made possible by the stick – which is essentially a long handled paddle capped with a hard rubber "blade" to provide the push and stability. Blades are replaceable and the sticks come in a wide range of styles and materials.

Higher Ground is the exclusive area dealer for Kahuna Creations and the only place around where you can try before you buy.

For those of us with a tendency to be a bit more "gravity challenged" a softer landing for the inevitable fall makes stand up paddleboarding – or SUP – a better choice. SUP traces its DNA back to ancient Hawaii. It re-emerged in the early 1960's as a way for surf instructors to better observe their students. Surf legends Laird Hamilton and Dave Kalama are credited with helping to stoke the current wave of popularity making SUP the fastest growing board sport on the

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planet.



Higher Ground stocks four major brands of stand up boards, including NSP, Naish, Odyssey and Tahoe. But it's the Tahoe Woody that makes us want to dust off our Ventures records and drop terms like "jazz the glass" and otherwise speak in Point Break. This board's a most excellent homage to the golden age of surfing, that nascent G-rated beach party where Dick Dale appears out of nowhere with an electric guitar, amps and a power source, spontaneous twisting ensues and somehow Frankie and Annette's hair remains annoyingly perfect.



If interests lie toward a more conventional approach to



paddling Higher Ground's got you covered. It's no coincidence that the store mascot and resident badger hound answers to Hobie. HG is kayak central for Beaufort with a full line of Hobie boats including the newest innovation on the water. Hobie's exclusive line of MirageDrive kayaks replace paddles with pedals. The pedal drive can be configured for virtually any size kayaker. Hands-free silent running makes this boat a perfect choice for fishing and photography. The Mirage comes in a wide range of configurations, and, yes, there are plenty of paddle-powered boats in stock, too. Tim and Leslie will be happy to arrange for classes and lessons on anything that floats. Both paddleboards and kayaks are available for rent.

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When you're out in the woods, you need a good knife. A good knife is a must-have for any outdoor enthusiast. It can be used for a variety of tasks, from cutting wood to preparing food. A good knife is also a great gift for anyone who loves the outdoors.