By the book

Guide helps families get up and out on local trails

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It's always nice when an adage is proven right. Scott Lynch learned firsthand that necessity really is the mother of invention, after constantly being asked for good locations for family hikes.

The manager of Appalachian Outfitters, a Greenville hiking and outdoors store, Lynch said he was "almost every day asked to recommend a hike to somebody."

Now Lynch has put his two decades-plus of hiking experience on South Carolina trails into a book, "Family Hikes in Upstate South Carolina." And so far, it's been nearly flying off the shelves.

"In a good week here at the store we might sell four or five books," Lynch said Wednesday. "Since Saturday, we've sold 16 or 17 of these. It's already really popular."

Making hikes family friendly in South Carolina's most mountainous region took some effort. Lynch said he decided early on to set ground rules for hikes he'd include in the book:

» Trails are located in five Upstate counties: Greenville, Pickens, Spartanburg, Oconee and Cherokee.

» Hike length is 4 miles round trip or less, and total hiking time is two to three hours.

» Trails are rated easy or moderate in difficulty.

» The hike includes "something interesting" such as a waterfall, beautiful vista or picnic spot.

» Trails have no inherent danger from hazards, and children can be readily evacuated if inclement weather hits.

Using the sctrails.net web site, Lynch found 50 trails and hiked them all. Only the top 20 made the cut.

Using a voice recorder to capture his thoughts, Lynch hiked all the trails. He used that information to write hike instructions, then using those instructions, he re-hiked the trails. He also included directions to the trailhead, maps and more.

"I've read a lot of hiking books," he said. "Most don't have good on-trail information, so I wanted that in there."

He highlighted points of interest on the trail, "Did You Know?" factoids and photographs.

"Working at the store, I think I'm very familiar with what families want in a hike," he said. He's so familiar, in fact, that he's already working on a Midlands version of the book and has plans for a Coastal edition, too.

Because it's inexpensive, "Hiking is already family friendly," Lynch said. "You really don't need a whole lot to go out and hike."



numerous family-friendly hikes that allow people of all ages to get on the trails and ther. BILL SANDERS/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES



Well-groomed and flat trails allow hikers of varying ages, fitness and skills levels to enjoy an outdoors outing together on Upstate trails. FILE

FAMILY FRIENDLY BOOKS

» "Family Hikes in Upstate South Carolina," 119 pages, by Scott Lynch. 2012. Milestone Press. $14.95. http://milestone-press.com

» "Favorite Family Hikes: An Active Family's Guide to Walking in South Carolina," 86 pages, by Palmetto Conservation Foundation. 2004. PCF Press. $9.95. www.palmettoconservation.org/books.asp

SAFETY CONCERNS

Scott Lynch highlights many ways to ensure increased safety on the trails with children, including bringing a hiking kit with first-aid and other supplies.

He recommends the kit include:

» Windproof and waterproof matches, as well as an inexpensive disposable lighter.

» A compass and map (and the knowledge of how to use them).

» Headlamp or flashlight, and batteries for the devices.

» A pocket knife or multi-tool.

» Emergency whistle.

» Emergency blanket or bivy sack.

» Toilet paper, enclosed in a plastic bag to avoid shredding.

» A trash bag.

» Extra snacks and water.

Other items you should conside packing or wearing are sunscreen; insect repellent; sturdy shoes; and a light rain jacket.