



THE PANTHER'S ROAR

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Summer 2021

Friends of Panthertown News

Our mission is to work in partnership with the **U.S. Forest Service** to conserve this outstanding natural resource while improving the quality and experience of recreational opportunities in Panthertown.

Saturday **August 21**
Hook Line Drinker Festival

Saturday **August 28**
Greening Up The Mountains

August 30 - September 3
Leave No Trace Hot Spot Project, Workshops, Activities, and Trainings

/ including /

Tuesday **August 31**
Effective Communication Workshop & Trail Tales

Wednesday **September 1**
LNT Outdoor Leader & LNT Intro Workshops

Thursday **September 2**
LNT Service Project

Saturday **September 18**
Trail Work Day & Hike

Saturday **September 25**
National Public Lands Day in Panthertown

October 12-15
Outdoor Economy Conference

Saturday **October 16**
Trail Work Day & Hike

November 1-4, 2021
Sustainable Trail Design, Layout, Construction, and Maintenance Course in Panthertown Valley



Happy hikers on a guided hike in Panthertown led by Virginia Guilfoile

Stewardship Key To Sustaining Panthertown Trails

Are you a **Friend**? If you are a volunteer, donor, or community partner who supports the conservation and stewardship work that we do in Panthertown, then we consider YOU to be a **Friend**. Thank YOU for your crucial support. Your investment in stewardship benefits everyone.

We work in partnership with the **U.S. Forest Service** as stewards of this prized natural resource, and as advocates for its protection. Our staff has coordinated and trained hundreds of volunteers who have helped us to maintain and improve the **Panthertown Valley Trail System** (with 30 miles of public trails, trailheads, and parking areas in Panthertown), protect its natural resources, monitor fragile ecosystems, repair bridges, staircases, and other structures, and identify and remove invasive plants.

With now more than a decade's worth of conservation work accomplished since we incorporated in 2010, we are currently developing a 5-year strategic plan for our organization. After reviewing the results from a comprehensive survey we sent out to our supporters last autumn, we have decided to transition from annual "memberships" and renewals to our new annual **Panthertown Stewardship Fund**. Your contributions to the Fund will be used for the same purpose - to support the essential conservation, stewardship, and maintenance needs of Panthertown Valley.

With the generous support of our **Friends**, together we have accomplished a record 54 project work days in Panthertown Valley since last summer, with 273 volunteers contributing 1,643 hours of work on-the-ground. We are grateful for their dedication, and for YOUR support! 🐾🐾

Thank you

We are grateful to the **National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance** for a \$13,486 grant in support of stewardship work in Panthertown.

Big thanks to the **Jackson County Tourism Development Authority** for a \$10,000 grant in support of trail data collection in Panthertown.

Thanks to Burt Kornegay and **Panthertown Map Association** for a \$5,000 association donation.

Special thanks to our community partner, **D.D. Bullwinkle's Outdoors**, for a \$1,000 sponsorship towards our LNT Hot Spot activities.

We were awarded a \$5,000 RTP Training & Safety grant from the **State of North Carolina** to provide staff and volunteers with sustainable trail construction training.

Thanks to our friends at **Deerfoot Lodge Blue Ridge** for becoming our newest community partner.

Thanks to **Mechanix Wear** for their donation of gloves for our volunteers.

Thanks to our community partners, **Killer Bees Honey**, and **Camp Merrie-Woode**, for their gifts in support of conservation.

Thanks to **Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce** for a donation of vehicle traffic counters to help us collect visitation data for Panthertown Valley.

Thanks to stewardship champions, **Danny and Kim Bottoms**, for their generosity, dedication, and support of our work in Panthertown Valley.

News & Happenings

We would like to welcome **Nancy West** and **H.A. Moore** as the newest additions to our volunteer Board of Trustees. Please let us know if you too may be interested in serving.

August 30 - September 3 is **Leave No Trace Hot Spot Week** in Panthertown Valley (*see page 4*).

We recently signed a new 5-year volunteer service agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, and we are developing a 5-year strategic plan to help guide our organization into the near future.

We kicked off our inaugural Panthertown Stewardship Fund this spring, to benefit all who visit, supporting its conservation and stewardship.

Our crew has worked hard this year, removing fallen trees and storm debris, keeping the Panthertown Valley Trail System maintained. This autumn we will be offering trainings to our dedicated volunteers, including first aid, sustainable trail design and construction, and Leave No Trace essentials. Sign-up to volunteer.

In Memory of Tony Austin

We lost a great friend of the forest in February. Tony Austin was a longtime volunteer of Friends of Panthertown who was dedicated to his family and his community. He loved and cared for Panthertown, and had generously served on our Board of Trustees since 2012. Tony's family has asked that memorial donations be made to Friends of Panthertown in his honor. Funds will be used for a special project in his honor. Tony is forever in our hearts.



Snakes Common In Panthertown

During the warmer months in North Carolina it is not uncommon to see snakes along trails, in the woods, crossing roads, and in our yards. Wildlife biologists at the **N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission** request that if you see a snake, do not be alarmed, do not kill it, and give it plenty of room. Venomous snakes in Panthertown include timber rattlesnakes and copperheads. Some snakes found here are endangered and protected. If you spot an elusive northern pine snake or a rattlesnake in Panthertown, report it to pinesnake@ncwildlife.org or rattlesnake@ncwildlife.org. About 70% of snake bites occur when people try to kill or handle them. Some snakes may become aggressive if agitated by a human or animal, but most will leave people alone if they are not bothered and are provided an escape route. Respecting wildlife, watching for snakes, and giving them a wide berth is an effective habit for preventing snake bites when visiting Panthertown.



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Jason Kimenker
Executive Director

Krista Robb
Trail Stewardship Coordinator

Friends of Panthertown is a 501(c)(3) non-profit conservation and stewardship organization. Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.



Rattlesnake in Panthertown

Stewardship volunteers working hard and having fun in Panthertown Valley



Thanks to our community partners **Cullasaja Women's Outreach, Wade Hampton Golf Club, Cedar Creek Club, and Jackson County Tourism Authority** for grants in support of our work.



Star Volunteers Receive Coveted Green Helmet Awards
Several of our top volunteers have earned their **Green Helmet Award** this season by working multiple volunteer work days, each contributing dozens of hours on the trails working with our Trail Stewardship Coordinator over the past year. You too can sign-up to volunteer, earn your official Stew Crew position, and get your own lime green hard hat to wear on trail work days.

PANTHERTOWN BEAR NOTICE
panthertown.org/bears

Remember, when in bear country:



- ✓ Do not hike alone
- ✓ Make noise on the trail
- ✓ Carry bear spray and have it accessible
- ✓ Never run from a bear

Photo: Thomas D. Mangelsen

August 30 - September 3 is LNT Hot Spot Week in Panthertown



LEAVE NO TRACE 2021 HOT SPOTS



Leave No Trace Hot Spot Team To Visit Panthertown August 30 - September 3

Worried that Panthertown may sometimes be loved by visitors a little too much? With stunning landscapes and more than 30 miles of trails to explore, **Panthertown Valley** is one of our region's most prized natural assets.

Ever-increasing levels of visitation to an area less than 7,000 acres has caused significant impacts over the years, including campsite impacts, campfire impacts, and a proliferation of undesignated trails. Work is always needed to remedy visitor impacts and encourage users to **Leave No Trace** when they visit.

To help, a team from LNT will travel to Panthertown to take part in a volunteer service project, offer LNT workshops, and share impact solutions with our community.

As a longtime partner with **Leave No Trace**, we teach LNT principles of outdoor ethics, on the trails, and in our community. Our Trail Stewardship Coordinator, **Krista Robb**, and her classmates recently completed their **LNT Master Educator** training course in Panthertown. Congratulations to each of them!

Detailed info: panthertown.org/hotspot
Register online today for free. Space is limited.

Tuesday August 31
Effective Communication Workshop & Trail Tales

Wednesday September 1
LNT Outdoor Leader & LNT Intro Workshops

Thursday September 2
LNT Service Project

Special thanks to these community partners for sponsoring LNT Week!



November 1-4, 2021 Sustainable Trail Design, Layout, Construction, and Maintenance Course in Panthertown Valley

Limited spots available. Now accepting applications.
 Send e-mail: friends@panthertown.org

Training, certification, and scholarships provided by Friends of Panthertown through a Recreational Trails Program grant.

RTP Funds Awarded For Training

Friends of Panthertown received a \$5,000 Safety & Education grant from Recreational Trails Program funding to cover costs of bringing this popular trail building course to Panthertown for participants to learn hands-on about sustainable trail design and construction. All are encouraged to apply. Contact Friends to apply or for more info.

To volunteer or learn more about the work our volunteers do, visit: panthertown.org/volunteer

To **Adopt-A-Trail** or become a **Trail Ambassador**, business sponsor, or community partner, visit: panthertown.org/adopt

Annual Panthertown Stewardship Fund Created To Help Sustain Our Trails

"My favorite hike in Panthertown is to the Blackrock Overlook, with its expansive views of the majesty of nature: mountains, skies and green space. It is a place of reflection, of taking a deep breath and reviewing the things that are important to me. I come to this place many times over the course of a year. It centers me. It fills me with gratitude."

- Virginia Guilfoile, a Friend of Panthertown

Panthertown is indeed a special place. It is one of the most treasured natural resource attractions of our region.

Over the past year and a half, the Covid-19 pandemic has created a world of stress, uncertainty, and anxiety. Yet in the comfort of the woods we find solace, peace, and predictability. This past year has found more people coming to the woods, including **Panthertown Valley**, than ever before. Unlike many other natural places, recreation areas, campgrounds, and trails in our region, Panthertown remained open throughout 2020, and welcomed more visitors than usual during the pandemic, giving them a place to de-stress, get exercise, and experience a constant in our world — Nature.

What does this mean for Panthertown? Increased usage and the abundance of rain has caused significant damage and wear to the public trail system. Staff and volunteers working with Friends of Panthertown do their best to look after 30 miles of public trails here, but the weather has caused extensive rutting which will require heavy equipment to repair, and there is plenty of work to do.

The mission of Friends of Panthertown is to work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to conserve this outstanding natural resource while improving the quality and experience of recreational opportunities in Panthertown.



Panthertown Valley is a special place. This 6,311-acre backcountry treasure is located within the Nantahala National Forest on the eastern continental divide between Cashiers and Toxaway. It is protected and maintained in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service by Friends of Panthertown who care for more than 30 miles of public non-motorized trails. **Visit our website at panthertown.org to learn more.**

- American Black Bear Sanctuary
- Blue Ridge National Heritage Site
- Headwaters of Tuckasegee River
- 6,311 acres on Nantahala National Forest
- 30 miles of Maintained Public Trails
- World Class Waterfalls & Vistas



Friends of Panthertown, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit conservation and stewardship organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Federal tax ID number 27-3758868. Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-814-5400. The license is not an endorsement by the State.



Donations to the Panthertown Stewardship Fund are tax-deductible. Your generous gift will help us protect and maintain this special place. panthertown.org/give

In addition to our maintenance work on the trails, the trailhead parking areas need regrading and gravel, and the bridges and staircases are due for improvements where Mother Nature has taken its toll.

To address these needs, this spring we launched our inaugural **Panthertown Stewardship Fund** with a goal this year of \$60,000 to address the significant costs of maintenance and improvements to our well-loved trail system. All this work begins with YOU. **Please join other Friends by making a gift to this Fund.** Your generous tax-deductible gift will directly support our maintenance, conservation, and stewardship activities in Panthertown Valley. Please join others not only in experiencing, but also in conserving this unique natural treasure.

Thanks for being a good steward of Panthertown!

Three easy ways to contribute to the Fund and help us protect this special place:

- Donate online at panthertown.org/give
- Text **PANTHERTOWN** to **44321**
- Point your phone's camera at this QR code to make a gift.





National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding Awarded

Friends of Panthertown was awarded \$13,486 in funding as a 2021 recipient of National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding through the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA). This program provides stewardship organizations with funding to encourage National Forest stewardship activities.

According to NWSA, there was significant interest in this program with 91 organizations submitting proposals. Even with increased funding of \$545,000 this year, NWSA was only able to fund 48 proposals. The proposals were reviewed by representatives of several national trail groups, including American Trails, American Hiking Society, the Back Country Horsemen of American, the International Mountain Bicyclists Association, the American Motorcyclists Association, and the National Off-Road Highway Conservation Council, along with the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, and the U.S. Forest Service.



National Environmental Education Foundation Grant Awarded

Friends of Panthertown, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, was awarded a \$2,500 Covid-19 impact grant this spring by NEEF in support of coordinating volunteers to provide dispersed campsite assessments and restoration related to increased visitation in Panthertown during the pandemic.

This season our stewardship crew worked at Panthertown's northern entrance on a culvert repair and rock armoring project benefitting hikers, horses, and equestrians accessing **Turkey Knob Trail (#469)** from the Flat Creek parking area off Rock Bridge Road. *Thanks to all who support our work in Panthertown.*



Rockfall at Big Green Mountain - Rock Cuts Loose From “Solid” Wall

By Bill Jacobs, author of “Whence These Special Places? The Geology of Cashiers, Highlands, and Panthertown Valley”

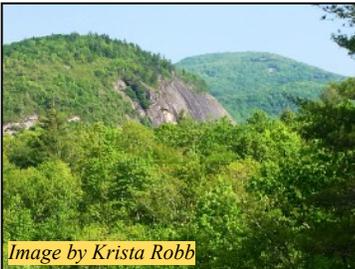


Image by Krista Robb

At about noon on May 24, 2021, a large slab of rock fell 175’ or so from Panthertown’s Big Green Mountain into the forest at the base of the steep granite cliff known as the “Great Wall”. Before falling, the slab was, to all appearances, securely embedded as part of that cliff wall, and was on an established climbing route.



The source of the fallen slab is high above the tree tops at the base of the cliff. White abrasions resulting from falling rock impacting protrusions on the cliff face. Drone-based images by Corey Scheip



Image by Jason Kimenker

The fallen slab is an estimated 30 – 40 foot rectangle, with a thickness ranging from about 3 feet to an inch or so (thicker at the top and along the right side). Thankfully, no one was on the rock or at its base at the time of the fall. Nearby campers heard the fall, and initially thought it was a thunderclap. The descending slab struck lower portions of the wall at two places, and was broken into boulders that came to rest up to almost 100 feet from the wall’s base. The larger pieces toppled several mature trees. Other smaller rocks sprayed out like shrapnel, damaging and even impaling other trees. It appears that the fall was explosively sudden and occurred without warning.

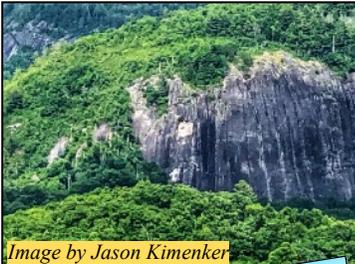
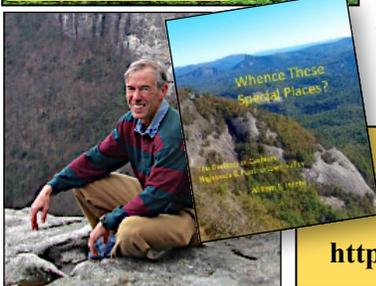


Image by Jason Kimenker

Like much of Panthertown, Big Green is part of the Whiteside pluton, which intruded into the the Ashe Metamorphic country rock about 465 million years ago. It’s basically tough, resistant granite, and the exposures seem solid. Certainly rock climbers would consider it a more secure (albeit challenging) climbing surface than the layered, schisty rocks common in the surrounding country rock. To deal with the pluton’s steepness and scarcity of “features” to serve as handholds and footholds, climbers place bolts into the rock to attach their safety gear. The ability of granite to safely host those bolts, on a long-term basis, is hardly given a second thought.



But plutons can harbor a hidden weakness. [...]

What caused the rock fall?

Read more at Bill’s website and check out his book covering Panthertown’s geology at: <http://greatrockpress.com/rockfall-on-big-green/>



Bill Jacobs shared his gratitude for Corey Scheip, a geologist with the North Carolina Geological Survey’s Asheville Regional Office who works in the NCGS Landslide Program, and visited the site a few days after the event — when he could still smell and taste the rock flour spread across the forest as the slab shattered. Corey provided some of the accompanying photographs found on Bill’s website (using a drone to get otherwise unobtainable perspectives), as well as thoughtful commentary about the rockfall. 🐾🐾



Congratulations to our Executive Director, Jason Kimenker, and the 2020/21 graduating class of **Leadership Cashiers**, a valuable program sponsored by the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce and other local area partner organizations.



Drone-based images provided courtesy of Corey Scheip, NCGS
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A bird's eye view of Panthertown Valley and the "Great Wall" of Big Green Mountain as seen from high above Salt Rock.



Friends of Panthertown
 PO Box 51
 Cashiers, NC 28717



Take a peek at our redesigned and updated website
panthertown.org



Natural beauty all around us in Panthertown while working on the trails with our stewardship crew. *(Photos by Krista Robb)*

