This summer, with our assistance, the U.S. Forest Service excavated and constructed 12 much needed new gravel parking spaces at the Cold Mountain entrance to Panthertown. Additional improvements are planned for Flat Creek trailhead in 2016.

Parking improvements at Cold Mountain trailhead complete; Flat Creek parking improvements planned for 2016 season

Panthertown Valley has been a busy place this spring, summer, and fall. We have seen increased recreational usage in all types of activities, from hikers and bikers, to horseback riders and rock climbers, and most recently leaf peepers. During this time Friends of Panthertown has been busy working to improve recreational experiences by our routine trail maintenance and improvements, along with some special projects.

Those of you entering Panthertown Valley from the Cold Mountain entrance anytime shortly after July 4th should have noticed the improved and enlarged parking lot. This project, funded through a Recreational Trail Program Grant (RTP), was a joint effort with the US Forrest Service (USFS) and Friends of Panthertown. We hope to start on a similar project for the Rockbridge entrance in 2016 that will also provide some improved parking for horse trailers.

Our thanks to all the volunteers who have turned out for our workdays! Students from Shorecrest High School spent a week working in Panthertown in March, Western Carolina students participated on a snowy morning in March, and Highland Hiker sponsored a workday in June. The Bald Rock Subdivision, who has sponsored workdays for many years, stepped up again this year and worked to improve many of our horse trails. We also held several special project work days, including several days devoted to removing an invasive species, the autumn olive, from several areas in Panthertown including a large infestation at the Granny Burrell homestead location. (continued on page 4)
In Appreciation

Thanks to everyone who came out or supported our annual event this summer. We appreciate all our volunteers, sponsors, raffle donors, and other contributors to the picnic. Big thanks to Jim & Denise Dunn and Camp Merrie-Woode for graciously hosting us.

- We are grateful to Margaret Carton, Margo Purdy, Virginia Willard, and Holly Falls for serving on our event committee.
- Raffle prizes generously donated by C. Orrico, Cashiers Farmer’s Market, City Lights Bookstore, Food Matters, Gamekeeper’s Tavern, Kilwins, Massage by Kim Hough, Mica’s, Randevu, Signature Brew Coffee Co., Slab Town Pizza, Spoiled Rotten, TJ Bailey, and Trillium Links.
- Also, extra special thanks to Wade Hampton Donor Advised Fund for a grant of $3,000 awarded in September in support of our conservation work in Panthertown!

News & Happenings

November is here, welcome to our autumn 2015 edition of The Panther’s Roar.

Cover photo by Thomas Mabry features an October sunset in Panthertown.

We are pleased to welcome Mike English as our newest Trustees. He is a long-time volunteer and advocate for Panthertown.

Share your hike reports and favorite photos by e-mail, via social media or our website.

Forest Service seeks public input on Forest Plan work

Panthertown protects the healthy headwaters of the Tuckasegee River. Our precious waters have been identified as having potential Outstandingly Remarkable Values and may be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The system was created by Congress in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Comments are requested by December 15 to be most effective. More info is on our website or call us for details.

Increase in bear activity this season; Bears are protected in Panthertown

While close encounters with bears in the Panthertown - Bonas Defeat bear sanctuary are not common, black bears (Ursus americanus) do live here. Bears are getting ready for winter and looking for easy food sources. Avoid an unwelcome campsite visitor by hanging your food in scent-proof bags away from camp. Find out how else to protect yourself: www.panthetown.org/
Annual Member Event

Friends gathered in August for a picnic and concert at Camp Merrie-Woode, adjacent to Panthertown in nearby Sapphire. Thanks to all who came out to celebrate and share good times at our annual event. Save the date for next year’s big event in Sapphire, a benefit Horse Exhibition at Bald Rock: June 25, 2016
**Volunteers remove non-native Autumn Olive from Granny Burrell’s home place**

**Trail notes from Mike Purdy, Friends of Panthertown Vice-President and Trail Boss**

This fall Friends of Panthertown took on the project of removing non-native Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata Thunb.*) from Panthertown Valley. This tree/shrub is an invasive species that was originally planted because its berries are eaten by birds and other wildlife. However, it had taken over the Granny Burrell’s home place along the Deep Gap Trail and had spread to several other places in the valley. We cut down the trees - leaving 6 inch stumps - and applied herbicide to the stumps to kill the root system. There are now large piles of the cut trees in the field and in the Pines around the field. When the wood is seasoned it will make good firewood for campers. In the mean time the piles will be good hiding places for rabbits and other small critters. In a year or so the piles will be gone and the stumps will have rotted away. In time the field will look like the forest surrounding it. Over three days, 15 different people put in 108 volunteer hours and 16 Forest Service hours to accomplish this effort. Our work is not done, however. Next year many shoots from this season’s berries will appear and we will have to mount a much smaller effort to remove them. Over the years we will have to monitor the field and remove any other trees that come up. Thanks to the efforts of our volunteers this menace can be controlled in Panthertown Valley.

A Word from our President (continued from page 1)

Our 2015 Annual Event, held on Saturday, August 22nd at Camp Merrie-Woode, was a success and raised over $3,000 which will go to special projects and equipment to support our trail maintenance program. Our thanks to the many volunteers on event day and to those who helped us prepare for the event in the months leading up to the event. Even now we are starting to plan next year’s Bald Rock Horse Exhibition, a benefit for Friends of Panthertown, to be held on Saturday, June 25, 2016. Please save the date and plan to join us at this event.

For those of you wondering how you can start, or continue, to support Panthertown Valley and Friends of Panthertown, there are three easy ways. First, please come to our workdays and help us maintain our many trails. Second, become a member of Friends of Panthertown and join us for our annual events, thus supporting us financially. And finally, come and enjoy all that Panthertown Valley has to offer. The Valley is a vast natural resource that invigorates spirit of all who venture into its boundaries!