Recreational access enhanced at Salt Rock Gap

We did it! Together with our project partner, Mainspring Conservation Trust, we were able to successfully raise the funds necessary to purchase and conserve the 16-acre property located adjacent to the Salt Rock Gap trailhead entrance to Panthertown.

We are grateful for the outpouring of generosity and community support we received. We would like to thank everyone who contributed, and welcome our new members who joined Friends of Panthertown by donating to this important project. We are especially appreciative of the Jackson County Commissioners and Jackson County Tourism Development Authority for working with us to achieve this important land acquisition. Thank you for helping us protect Panthertown. Now the work begins...

In May, we got started on improving parking and access at the west entrance to Panthertown and will continue our work throughout the summer. See page 6 for photos and more info.

According to U.S. Forest Service Nantahala District Ranger Mike Wilkins, visitation to Panthertown exceeded 20,000 hikers last year. More boots on the trails are expected this summer in Panthertown, and more work will need to be done throughout the rest of the year. Friends of Panthertown will continue to maintain the 30 mile trail system for all to enjoy and explore. Big thanks to our members and volunteers!
In Appreciation

Thanks to the hard working volunteers from Shorecrest Preparatory School who spent a cold week in service during March over their spring break camping in Panthertown and working on different trails with Friends of Panthertown each day. They rocked!

To Adopt-A-Trail in Panthertown, or to volunteer, visit our website for more info, call (828) 269-4453, or e-mail friends@panthertown.org

Big thanks to Zoller Hardware for donating a Yeti Hopper 40 cooler for our July 18th raffle. The retail value is $399! Get your tickets now for $5 each (5 for $20) at Zoller Hardware, at the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor’s Center, at one of our events, or on our website.

We are grateful to Melanie Jones and Carrie Coen for their assistance with our membership mailings, and to our volunteer Trustees and committee members for their outstanding work on planning our community events, guided hikes, and trail work activities.

And, we appreciate these 2017 business community members who have renewed their commitments to help us protect and maintain Panthertown Valley:

- Flickinamazing
- The Orchard Restaurant
- The Laurel Falls Community

News & Happenings

We hope you enjoy our Summer 2017 edition of The Panther’s Roar, hot off the press.

All spring long, the wildflowers have been blooming and a diversity of wildlife has been active throughout Panthertown Valley.

Thousands of visitors, veteran explorers and new folks alike, are expected to arrive this summer from all around the world to experience this treasured backcountry recreation area. This is YOUR public land.

Our organization is tasked to maintain and protect this special place. We work in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, and with the generous support of our members and incredibly hard-working volunteers, to maintain more than 30 miles of public trails in Panthertown, and to improve the recreational experiences here for all to enjoy.

Cover photo contributed thanks to Friends of Panthertown member Christopher D Smith (Smitty) of Southeastern Backcountry Adventures. Thanks also to Thomas “Badger” Mabry, Wynette Wiles, Sharon Taylor, and Virginia Willard for contributing photos.

Jackson County Commissioners Approve Donation Towards Salt Rock Land Purchase

Friends of Panthertown worked in partnership with Mainspring Conservation Trust to purchase and protect the 16-acre Salt Rock Gap trailhead property, located adjacent to the western entrance to Panthertown. In March, county commissioners approved a grant request from Mainspring and Friends for $32,000 to go towards land acquisition. We will continue to work together with Mainspring, under U.S. Forest Service guidance, to enhance parking, camping, and recreational access at the trailhead. The conserved property will eventually be transferred to U.S. Forest Service to be contained within National Forest boundaries and protected for future public use.

Total Solar Eclipse This Summer

At 2:35pm, on Monday, August 21, 2017, Cashiers will be in the path of totality for a remarkable total solar eclipse with totality lasting 2 minutes & 23 seconds. Visit NCEclipse.com for info.
Salt Rock Property Tour & Waterfall Hike

Earlier this year, hike leaders Mike Kettles and Tony Austin, with assistance from Sue Kettles, Mike Purdy, and Margo Purdy, led members on the trails in Panthertown. With about 40 hikers participating, including a 1 year old and a 5 year old, we split off into three groups to explore and learn about Panthertown. We toured the Salt Rock trailhead property, hiked Panthertown Valley Trail, ate lunch at the shelter off Mac's Gap Trail, visited The Great Wall of Panthertown, and enjoyed the sights and sounds of Granny Burrell’s Falls, Frolictown Falls, and Wilderness Falls.

Annual Member Event

Join us on Tuesday, July 18 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm for our annual meeting with a presentation by Bill Jacobs on the unique geology of Panthertown Valley and the Cashiers plateau. Refreshments will be served. Cashiers Community Library. FREE.
We would like to thank these outstanding members of Friends of Panthertown, plus the many generous donors of our project partner, Mainspring Conservation Trust, who helped support the Salt Rock property acquisition. Together, we were successfully able to raise the funds necessary to purchase and protect this important conservation land. We are forever grateful!

DONORS

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  in honor of David & Brenda Bates
Carol Arnold
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Tony Austin
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* Special thanks to our Leadership Giving Donors

Salt Rock Property Successfully Protected

Jason Kimenker, Executive Director of Friends of Panthertown, joins Sharon Taylor, Executive Director of Mainspring Conservation Trust, with attorney Ken Fromknecht at the April 21 closing of the 16-acre Salt Rock property. With paperwork signed and recorded, and a Memorandum of Understanding in place between our two organization, Mainspring will now hold the land for public use until it is ultimately transferred over to the U.S. Forest Service to be contained as part of Panthertown protected borders. We are incredibly humbled by the outpouring of generosity and support. Thank you to everyone who contributed to our fundraising.
Enter Our YETI Cooler Raffle

Thanks to Zoller Hardware for donating a Yeti Hopper 40 cooler for our raffle! Tickets are $5.00 each or 5 for $20.00. Purchase online at www.panthertown.org.

The winning ticket will be drawn on July 18th in Cashiers at our annual meeting.

Glenn Ubertino, owner of Zoller Hardware, generously donated this Yeti Hopper cooler, with a retail value of $399.

Photo by Virginia Willard
Friends of Panthertown

The Panther’s Roar

Panthertown Valley WNC

Salt Rock trailhead property cleared for parking; Volunteers cleanup brush

Friends of Panthertown selectively removed some white pines and dead-standing trees from a small portion of the newly acquired property located adjacent to the Salt Rock trailhead entrance. On May 22nd, volunteers chipped a big brush pile remaining at the site. Fill-dirt and gravel were then added to create a primitive parking area. Mainspring will hold the land for public use until it can be transferred to the U.S. Forest Service.

Salt Rock donation to honor Boy Scout Troop 914

Ali Laird Large hands Jason Kimenker, Executive Director of Friends of Panthertown, a $12,000 donation in memory of her husband Raymond Large, and in honor of Boy Scout Troop 914. The check went towards the 16-acre Salt Rock trailhead property acquisition and was matched by an anonymous donor.

Photos by Virginia Willard
Western Carolina University wins Top Adventure College for 4th year in a row

Once again, nearby Western Carolina University has deservedly won highest honors in the Blue Ridge Outdoors Top Adventure College contest. Congratulations to WCU for being voted top adventure college in the Southeast four years in a row (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017). Visit WCU.edu for more info about this outstanding learning institution that is practically in our backyard. We say, “Way to go Catamounts!”

Total Solar Eclipse arriving this summer; Panthertown in path of totality

At 2:35pm, on Monday, August 21, 2017, Cashiers, Sapphire, and Lake Toxaway, North Carolina, including all of Panthertown Valley, will be in the path of totality for a remarkable total solar eclipse. Totality will last 2 minutes 23 seconds. It was 1979 when this last occurred in North America, and 1506 when western North Carolina experienced one. The next occurrence in this area won’t be until 2153. Make sure to visit NCEclipse.com for more info.

Our volunteers maintain and improve the trail system in Panthertown Valley

In April, a hard-working group of volunteers from Highland Hiker and Friends of Panthertown maintained water diversions and pruned along the heavily used Panthertown Valley Trail.

We also hosted several productive work days in May, including a big brush cleanup at the Salt Rock trailhead (see page 6), and a day with Lake Toxaway community volunteers where they visited Greenland Creek Falls and helped us maintain Greenland Creek Trail.

Thanks to all who have volunteered at our trail work days, and to those who have helped us achieve our work by being a supporting member of Friends of Panthertown. We could not do the work without you. 🐾
Friends of Panthertown Trail Boss & Board Member Mike Purdy led a group of hikers from Mainspring Conservation Trust into Panthertown Valley on May 18th. They visited the newly acquired 16-acre Salt Rock trailhead property and explored the valley. Photos courtesy of Sharon Taylor.