Hikers enjoying the view from Salt Rock Gap overlook in Panthertown on National Trails Day.

**World Record National Trails Day**

Together, our volunteers helped to set a world record. June 1, 2019 was American Hiking Society's National Trails Day®, and 41,424 people joined AHS to set the world record for the most people improving trails in a single day. Friends of Panthertown hosted guided hikes and led trail work in Panthertown Valley on NTD.

Thanks goes to our volunteers Mike Purdy, Mike English, Buddy Sanders, Wynette Wiles, and Margo Purdy for being at Salt Rock Gap when we needed to cut out and remove a big tree that had recently fallen across the main Panthertown Valley Trail.

Guided hikes on NTD included a visit to Greenland Creek Falls led by Tony Austin, and a hike from Salt Rock Gap led by Mike English and Wynette Wiles. Thanks to all who celebrated with us.
N e w s & H a p p e n i n g s

Summer is here in Panthertown and we had a great time celebrating National Trails Day this June on the trails to kick off the season.

We are happy to announce that our new Trail Crew Leader, Charly Aurelia, has recently graduated as a Leave No Trace Master Educator on a partial scholarship from Landmark Learning. He is now also a Wilderness First Responder and a Red Cross First Aid / CPR / AED Certified Instructor. He is currently leading our trail work volunteers and teaching forest stewardship and Leave No Trace principles of outdoor ethics to students at the Boys & Girls Club.

Panthertown Prescribed Burn: Blackrock & Little Green Added

District Ranger Wilkins recently added Blackrock (485 acres) and Little Green (292 acres) to Big Green Mountain (497 acres) for a total of 1,311 acres (or 21% of Panthertown Valley) to be burned. While we understand the need for prescribed burns, we would prefer that the U.S. Forest Service not burn two of the most popular areas for hiking in Panthertown, instead focusing their attention on lower use hiking areas. Read more on our website.

Thank you to National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance for awarding Friends of Panthertown a $2,000 “Boots On The Ground” grant in support of trail maintenance on the Panthertown Valley Trail System.

Thank you to Landmark Learning for their generous scholarship towards our Trail Crew Leader’s Leave No Trace Master Educator certification. Congratulations, Charly!

To volunteer with Friends of Panthertown, or to learn more about the work our volunteers do, visit: panthertown.org/volunteer

Thanks to Landmark Learning for their generous scholarship towards our Trail Crew Leader’s Leave No Trace Master Educator certification. Congratulations, Charly!

To Adopt-A-Trail in Panthertown, or to become a trail sponsor or business member, please visit: panthertown.org/adopt

To renew your membership online, or to make an additional gift in support of the conservation work we are doing in Panthertown, visit: panthertown.org/renew

PANTHERTOWN BEAR ALERT
See important information posted on our website at panthertown.org/bears

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

Nantahala District Ranger Wilkins Retires from U.S. Forest Service

After 40 years, Nantahala District Ranger Mike Wilkins is retiring from his position with the U.S. Forest Service as of July 3rd.

Friends of Panthertown has been fortunate to have had the support and partnership of Ranger Wilkins and district staff since the earliest days of our organization and mission. With gratitude and appreciation we wish Mike farewell and best wishes.

As part of our mission, we work in partnership with the Nantahala District to maintain and improve the Panthertown Valley Trail System. A nationwide search for a new District Ranger is currently underway. An acting district ranger will serve until the position is filled.
TRAIL WORK
Send e-mail for more info: friends@panthertown.org
or visit panthertown.org/volunteer
Everyone is welcome!

Monday  July 8
Trail Work & Hike
9am-1pm at Salt Rock

Tuesday  July 16
Trail Work & Hike
9am-1pm at Salt Rock

Saturday  August 31
Trail Work & Hike with Longview Ridge
9am-2pm at Salt Rock

Saturday  Sept 28
National Public Lands Day in Panthertown

Panthertown Valley was selected by LNT as a 2020 Leave No Trace Hot Spot
Stay tuned for more details coming this fall.

Friends of Panthertown volunteers led by Charly Aurelia take a break at the Salt Rock Gap overlook. Thanks to all our volunteers for helping us maintain the Panthertown Valley Trail System.
Friends of Panthertown
The Panther’s Roar
Panthertown Benefit to Feature Iditarod Champion

**Friends of Panthertown** is hosting a benefit presentation featuring **Iditarod Trail Invitational Champion Pete Ripmaster** on **Saturday, July 20, 2019** at the Country Club of Sapphire Valley.

**Pete Ripmaster** is a competitive long-distance ultra-runner, adventurer, and inspirational speaker. He is the winner of the 2018 Iditarod Invitational—running 1,000 miles by foot, with no dogs, carrying just his pack and pulling his survival supplies by sled. Remarkably, Pete has also competed in 50 marathons in 50 states.

The MtnMeister Podcast summarized Pete’s amazing achievement, “You’ve probably heard of the Iditarod before, and you might think it’s bizarre to be pulled by a bunch of dogs in sub-zero temperatures in the Alaskan wilderness. But that’s not the Iditarod that Pete won. He did the same course - 1,000 miles and 50 degrees below zero - in the form of an ultra-marathon. With no dogs to help him along the way, Pete’s feet carried him an average of 38 miles a day over 26 days.”

Henry David Thoreau wrote, “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.”

Pete Ripmaster would be quick to tell you that for the music he hears, “far away” would be an understatement. He was an athlete from day one, but didn’t find his true passion until later in life when he was first invited to run one of the toughest endurance races on the planet, the Iditarod Trail Invitational. This human powered race - without dogs - is a 1,000 mile ultra marathon on the Iditarod Trail in Alaska’s wilderness.

Pete has a colorful and inspiring story to share. He speaks from the heart encouraging others to chase their passions through determination and grit. He will talk about setting and achieving audacious goals, including winning the 2018 Iditarod Trail Invitational by foot, and running 50 marathons in 50 states.

When you hear Pete Ripmaster share his story, you will leave inspired to hear your own drummer. Make plans to hear Pete speak this month. Event proceeds will benefit conservation work in Panthertown Valley.

Limited tickets are available for $10 in advance and $15 at the door. Purchase with cash or check at Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce or by credit card on our website: [panthertown.org/tickets/](http://panthertown.org/tickets/)

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"Pete nearly died attempting the ITI in 2016... He had every excuse never to return to Alaska. But in 2018, Ripmaster ran the Iditarod again - and won it.” - Blue Ridge Outdoors

"Pete Ripmaster has an amazing story of triumph by ultra running the 1,000 mile Iditarod Invitational. He went from dead last, having a near death experience, to winning the race..." - Adventure Sports

"Three years ago, accomplished ultra runner Ripmaster, read an article about the 1,000-mile race and wanted in. He called the director the same day. His sheer enthusiasm secured him a spot.” - Gear Junkie

"Buckle your seat belts, because you’re in for a treat... I’ll let Pete tell you about his journeys and obsessions about this event that led to his victory...” - I Could Never Do That
Friends of Panthertown Benefit Presentation

Pete Ripmaster is a high-adventure competitive long-distance ultra-runner and inspirational speaker with great stories to tell.

Pete is the champion of the 2018 Iditarod Trail Invitational 1,000 miles by foot and he has also completed 50 marathons in 50 states.

PETE RIPMASTER

LIMITED TICKETS AVAILABLE

SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2019
General Admission 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
THE COUNTRY CLUB OF SAPPHIRE VALLEY
120 Handicap Drive, Sapphire, NC

$10 ADVANCE / $15 AT DOOR
Available at Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce
202 US Hwy. 64 West (828) 743-5191
or purchase tickets online at panthertown.org/tickets

Contact us for V.I.P. tickets w/ reserved front row seating, autographed poster, and invitation to join Pete on a hike.
Visitors to Panthertown are asked to take extra precautions this summer to avoid bears after recent multiple reports of increased encounters.

Panthertown is a black bear sanctuary. Although no injuries have been reported, recent encounters include bears stealing packs and riffling through camping supplies and gear. Bears will often stay in the area of the incident for multiple hours.

This time of the year black bears are opportunistically looking for food that campers and trail users bring on their trips.

According to District Ranger Mike Wilkins, “Bears become used to people due to the close proximity of residential neighborhoods and the regular use of the same camping spots. Once there is more natural food available across the forest the bears should be less aggressive.”

While black bear attacks on people are rare, such attacks have resulted in human fatalities.

To avoid bear attacks, experts recommend:

• Keep your dog on a leash, especially in areas where bears have been reported.
• If you notice a bear nearby, pack up your food and trash immediately and vacate the area ASAP.
• If a bear approaches, move away slowly; do not run. Get into a vehicle or a secure building.
• If necessary, attempt to scare the animal away with loud shouts, by banging pans together, or throwing rocks and sticks at it.
• If you are attacked by a black bear, try to fight back using any object available. Act aggressively and intimidate the bear by yelling and waving your arms. Playing dead is not appropriate.

Visitors to Panthertown are encouraged to prevent bear interactions by practicing these additional safety tips:

• Do not store food in tents.
• Properly store food and scented items like toothpaste by using a bear-proof container.
• Clean up food or garbage around fire rings, grills, or other areas of your campsite.
• Do not leave food unattended.
• Never run away from a bear - back away slowly and make lots of noise.

A reminder to forest visitors that bear canisters are required in the Shining Rock Wilderness in the Pisgah National Forest. Since this requirement has been in place the number of successful black bear attempts to getting campers food has significantly decreased. Remember to always be bear aware.

Friday, August 9 is Smokey Bear’s 75th Birthday
Friends will give a free presentation at Albert Carlton-Cashiers Library
More details online.

Big Tree Falls Across Panthertown Valley Trail; Volunteers Clear Way

Right: Panthertown Trail Boss Mike Purdy on National Trails Day quickly responded to reports of a large tree that blocked the main Panthertown trail near Salt Rock Gap.
Friends of Panthertown Teach
Forest Stewardship, Leave No Trace
To Students From Boys & Girls Club

Friends formed an important educational partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau thanks in part to a 2018 grant award from Wade Hampton Donor Advised Fund. Our staff worked with students ages 6-14 over May, June, and July to teach them how important it is to Leave No Trace and be good stewards of the forest and our public lands. A service learning session provided youth volunteers age 10-14 a hand-on opportunity to learn how we maintain trails, and they picked up trash and helped us take care of the backcountry trails in Panthertown.
Volunteers are needed. Join us on Saturday, March 30, 2019 for a Panthertown Valley Spring Trail Work Day. Volunteers of all experience levels are welcome and appreciated.