

2020 WETLAND TREASURES OF THE CAROLINAS



PANTHERTOWN VALLEY

Southern Appalachian Bog

Photos courtesy of Gary Kaufmann, USFS

PANTHERTOWN VALLEY BOG

Property Owner: United States Forest Service, Nantahala National Forest

Recognitions & Designations: North Carolina National Heritage Area

(NC Natural Heritage Program)

carolinawetlands.org

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Panthertown Bog, located in Jackson County NC, is a large (>15 acres) example of a Southern Appalachian Bog, the rarest of wetland habitats in the southeastern U.S. The Bog is located in the 6,300 acre Pantherown Valley Backcountry Area within the greater Nantahala National Forest. A series of wetlands, swamp-forest bog complexes, seeps, and spray cliffs, co-occur with the bog in this unique high elevation valley in the headwaters of the Tuckasegee River. Flanked on all sides by steep high elevation granitic domes, rising several hundreds of feet above the large flat valley, the landscape has been denoted as the "Yosemite of the East". Distinctive white sandy flats occur along portions of the slow meandering Panthertown Creek. As a result of both the unique lowlands and uplands habitats, species diversity is outstanding. Prior land use history has shaped this landscape. In the early 1990's, logging camps, housing over 100 people, occurred across the valley. Intense wildfires resulted from the logging slash during the 1930's helping to maintain the open bog as well as the granitic domes. In the mid 1960's, many of the less steep forests were harvested again resulting in the current configuration of mid-age forests and off-site white pine plantations.



Sphagnum Bog Ecosystem

FLORA & FAUNA

Sphagnum moss dominates the open bog with scattered amounts of silk willow, red chokeberry, hardhack, and bushy Saint John's-wort. Cinnamon fern and rushes occur on tussocks among a diversity of grasses and sedges. Various wetland herbs, such as turtleheads, cowbane, monkey flower, and Canada burnet occur within the bog. The bog supports several state-listed rare and endangered species. Timber rattlesnake dens have been located within Panthertown Bog as well as the rare Baltimore checkerspot butterflies. The Valley has also been designated as part of the Panthertown-Bonas Defeat Bear Sanctuary (NC WRC).

THREATS

Recreational activity, including hiking, biking, fishing, and horseback riding, is common across the many trails within the valley resulting in a high risk of introduction and spread of invasive plant species. In addition, as experienced with many other southern Appalachian bogs, woody plant invasion is resulting in closure of the open portions of the bog.

ACCESS

Panthertown Valley can be accessed all year long from either the eastern entrance near Cold Mountain Gap or the western edge near Salt Rock.

SOURCES

United States Forest Service, Click [Here](#) for more Info.

