



**EXPLORERS CLUB**  
**Newsletter**

**AUGUST + SEPTEMBER 2025**

**FLY FISHING  
ROCK CLIMBING  
PANTHER TOWN VALLEY**

**2025 SEASON  
ISSUE II**

---



**FOREST  
INSPIRED  
NATURE  
DISCOVERY™**



# SAVE THE DATE

## EXPLORERS CLUB

### CAMPING TRIP

WOLF FORD HORSE CAMP,  
PISGAH FOREST, NC



**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2025**  
**8:30 AM DROP OFF AT FIND HQ**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2025**  
**12:00 PM PICKUP AT FIND HQ**

**FIND**  
ESTD OUTDOORS 1972





## FLY FISHING AUGUST 6, 2025

The Explorers Club had an exciting day with Headwaters Outfitters, who generously sponsored our fly fishing adventure. The morning started off a little cloudy with fresh rain, but that made for the perfect fishing conditions. Spirits were high as we gathered at Headwaters Outfitters, eager to begin.

Our guides welcomed us with a smile and helped everyone get geared up. With waders, fly rods, boots, and plenty of flies, the Explorers looked like real anglers ready to take on the water. The excitement was contagious as each Explorer suited up and grabbed their rod.



Once ready, we loaded up and headed out to Headwaters Outfitters' private stretch of water. The Explorers were buzzing with energy, already imagining what it would be like to catch their first fish.







## Casting and Knots

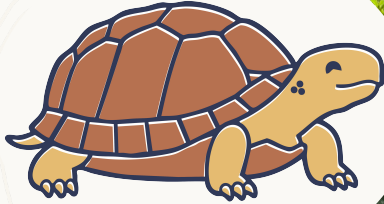
Before stepping into the river, the Explorers enjoyed a hands-on lesson in casting. To make it fun, our guides set up a game where each Explorer aimed their cast at targets on the ground. It was a great way to practice technique while cheering each other on. The Explorers did great and picked it up quickly!

Afterward, we gathered for a lesson on tying knots and how to attach a fly to the line. The kids practiced carefully, twisting line through tiny loops until they got it right. It was a test of patience, but they rose to the challenge.

These early lessons gave the group a strong foundation for the rest of the day. The Explorers not only learned skills but also grew more confident with every step.













# Exploring the River Life



We took a closer look at the macroinvertebrates living in the river system. With special-made nets and cups, the group scooped up samples to examine.

The kids were amazed to discover dragonfly larvae, mayflies, and caddisflies. These tiny creatures are important indicators of healthy water quality. The Explorers loved seeing how life under the surface connects to the bigger picture of the river's ecosystem.

This activity added a whole new level of appreciation for the environment. It was science in action, and the Explorers were fascinated by every find.









# Time to Fish

Finally, it was time to put everything into practice. With waders strapped on and flies tied, the Explorers stepped into the river. Some stood still, focused on their casts, while others laughed as the cool water swirled around them.

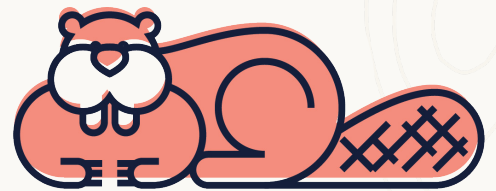
The fish didn't come easy, but that made each bite even more exciting. A few Explorers landed their very first catches, and the cheers from the group echoed down the river. Even those who didn't catch anything had fun just being out on the water.



As we packed up to head home, the Explorers carried not just their memories but also new confidence and respect for the river. We are grateful to Headwaters Outfitters for making this adventure possible and look forward to more days like this one!



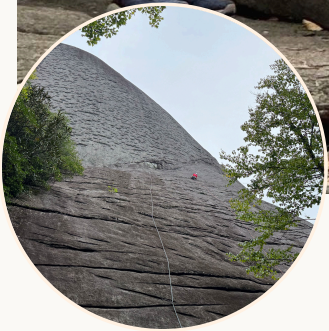












## ROCK CLIMBING AT LOOKING GLASS

**SEPTEMBER 6, 2025**

The Explorers Club gathered early in the morning at Pisgah National Forest, full of anticipation for a big day ahead. Thanks to the Carolina Climbers Coalition and Fox Mountain Guides, we were set for a rock climbing adventure like no other. A special thank you goes to Alycia Andrade, CCC's Marketing and Events Director, for making the connection that brought this opportunity to life.

Before setting foot on the rock, our guides gave us a detailed safety briefing. They explained how the ropes, carabiners, and harness systems worked, emphasizing that safety is always the top priority in climbing. The Explorers listened closely, understanding that trust in the gear and the guides was just as important as strength and courage.

Once the briefing was complete, we tried on our gear. Each Explorer tested their climbing shoes, adjusted their harnesses, and buckled on helmets. The climbing shoes were snug, almost glove-like, designed to help feet grip even the tiniest edges of rock. With everyone suited up, we were ready to begin the hike to our climbing site.





## The Hike to Looking Glass Rock

The trail leading up to Looking Glass Rock was steep and strenuous, but the reward was worth every step. Rising nearly 4,000 feet in elevation, Looking Glass is one of Pisgah's most iconic formations. Its name comes from the way water and ice glisten on its granite surface, reflecting light like a mirror. The rock is famous for its unique features called "eyebrows," small ledges and grooves that climbers use for footing and handholds.



Lincoln went first, followed by Jace, setting the tone for the day. Each Explorer watched, cheered, and encouraged one another while waiting patiently for their turn.



**At the base of the wall, our guides set up two climbing routes, securing ropes anchored into the rock. For perspective, modern climbing ropes are designed to safely hold well over 2,000 pounds.**



## Trust and Challenge

With helmets on and ropes locked tight, each Explorer took those first steps upward on nearly vertical stone. The sticky climbing shoes helped them balance, grip, and edge their way higher, often surprising themselves with what they were capable of.



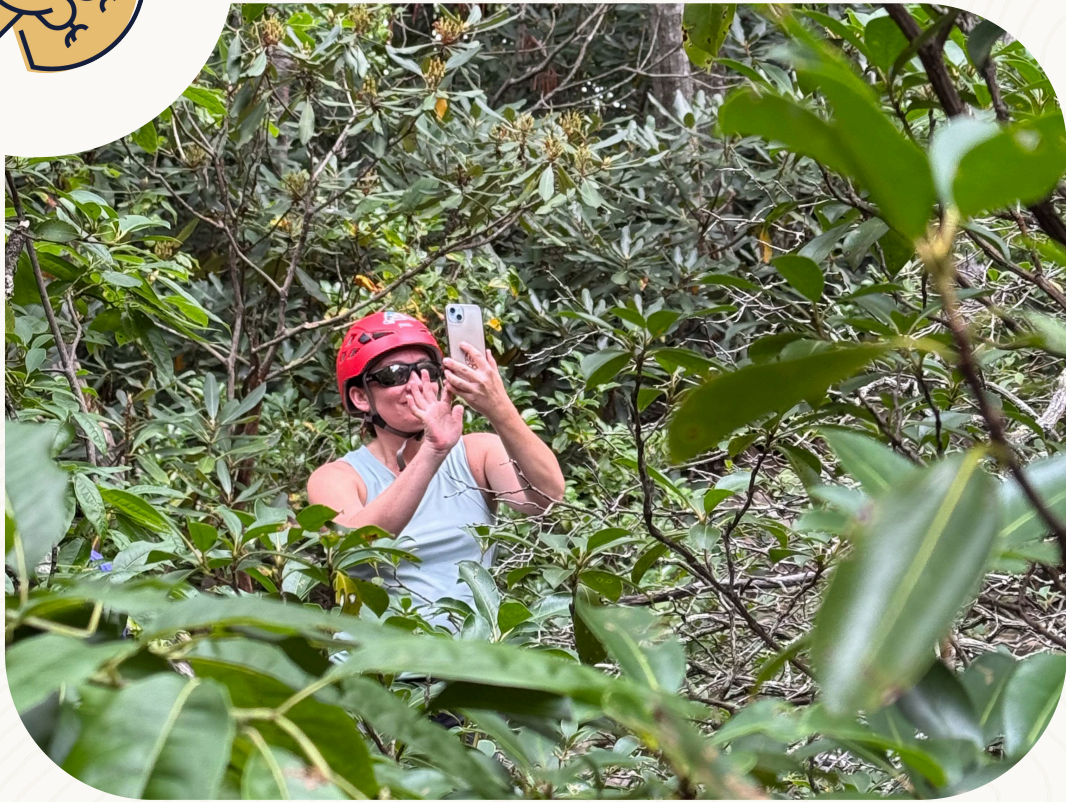
Not everyone chose to climb, and that was fine. For some who thought they might not try, the encouragement of the group gave them the push they needed to give it a shot!



Some Explorers could not get enough of the challenge. Two even climbed nearly ten times, determined to push higher and improve with each attempt. For others, a single climb was victory enough, and the pride of making it up even a few feet was just as rewarding. Every effort counted, and every Explorer showed courage.











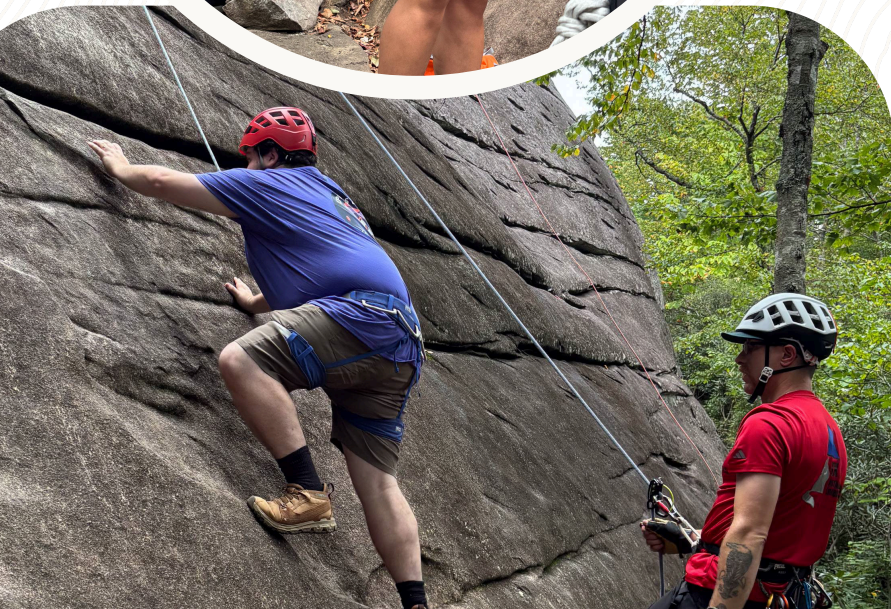


# Wrapping Up the Day



Even the adults joined in, testing their limits on the rock. The cheers and laughter from below echoed with every move upward, creating a sense of teamwork and accomplishment.

As the day came to a close, we reflected on what we had accomplished. Rock climbing was not only a physical challenge but a lesson in patience, courage, and trust. We are deeply grateful to Fox Mountain Guides and the Carolina Climbers Coalition for making this adventure possible. The Explorers showed bravery, determination, and a true spirit of adventure, qualities that will serve them on the rock and beyond.







## EXPLORING PANTHERTOWN VALLEY

SEPTEMBER 20, 2025

The Explorers Club set out on a short thirty-minute drive from FIND Headquarters to Panthertown Valley, often called the “Yosemite of the East.” Upon arrival, we were greeted by our guide, Kaci McMahan, Trails and Stewardship Assistant for Friends of Panthertown. Kaci started us off with a thoughtful safety briefing before we began our hike into the valley. Excitement was high as we made our way through lush forest, listening for the sound of Panthertown Creek.

Once we reached the creek, we gathered to learn about Panthertown’s wildlife and history. Kaci let us know the valley is said to have gotten its name in the late 1800s, when settlers reported seeing panthers, or cougars, roaming the area. Though the big cats no longer live here, their spirit lingers in the landscape. The valley today is home to a rich diversity of plants, animals, and waterways that support thriving ecosystems.







## Into the Creek

To explore the creek, volunteers Jace & Mr. Jeremiah helped us search for macroinvertebrates. Mr. Jeremiah headed upstream to perform what our guide called the "river dance." By shuffling his feet and stirring the stream bed, macroinvertebrates were carried downstream into our waiting sieve nets. The Explorers eagerly peered into the mesh, recognizing many familiar species from our earlier fly fishing trip. The highlight was spotting dragonfly larvae, a discovery that linked the lessons of two adventures together.





## Indicators of Health

Kaci explained that macroinvertebrates are indicator species, meaning their presence helps scientists understand the health of a water system. Mayflies, caddisflies, and dragonfly larvae all pointed to the creek being a healthy habitat. What was once brand new during our fly fishing trip had now become knowledge the Explorers confidently applied. Their growing awareness of the natural world was inspiring to see!

Explorers searched the surrounding forest and spotted native plants, colorful mushrooms, salamanders, birds, and a variety of insects. The rain eventually caught up with us, but even that became part of the experience as we laughed and hiked back through the misty forest.

## Signing Off...

Although the rain ended our day early, we returned to FIND Headquarters where we played games and shared stories about our time in the valley. The trip marked the conclusion of our 2025 season of day-trips, each one filled with learning, teamwork, and adventure. Our next outing will be the season's grand finale: the Explorers Club camping trip, where we will put all we have learned into practice under the stars.





# THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 EXPLORERS CLUB PARTNERS

Our community sponsors play a vital role in helping FIND Outdoors bring people together. Through their generous support of events, these partners help us create meaningful outdoor experiences, foster environmental stewardship, and strengthen connections across the region.

*We're grateful for their continued investment in our mission!*



rei  
cooperative  
fund | action



JUSTICE  
OUTSIDE

