



The Ghost Writer

JANUARY, 2011

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee, "Home of the Ghost Orchid"

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sat, 4th Tues

Cost: \$50 or \$60 depending on length of walk, \$15 child (\$10 discount for members)

Reservations Required.
Phone (239) 695-1023

GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

1st Saturday

Cost \$50 (\$40 for members),
Reservations Required.
Phone (239) 695-1023

GUIDED BOARDWALK TOUR

2nd Sat: Jan 8

Cost \$15 (\$10 for members)
Reservations Required.
Phone (239) 695-1023

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Tuesday

Sat, Jan 8 Tues, Jan 18
Phone the Park at (239) 695-4593

BOARD MEETING

January 9 at 10:00 a.m.
Port of the Islands

SPECIAL EVENTS

Jan 22: Coastal Cruise
Feb 26: Fakahatchee SAFARI
March 20: Coastal Cruise
March 27: Family Day Picnic
April 10: Annual Dinner

See page 5 for details of the
Fakahatchee SAFARI
on Saturday, February 26.

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 12/3/10, in the early afternoon, Mike Owen, Park Biologist, observed an adult **Bobcat** running to the east then south before Gate 7/West Main. On 12/5/10, Brenda Thomas and Kathy Broyard, visitors, observed a pair of **American Redstarts** off of Gate 12/East Main. On 12/8/10, Renee Rau, Park Manager, observed a healthy adult **otter** off of SR-29 just south of Janes Scenic Drive (JSD).

On 12/10/10, Mike Owen observed a **Cooper's Hawk** flying to the North over Headquarters and later a **Short-tailed Hawk** circling to the North about 400 feet high. On 12/11/10, Mike Owen observed two **Short-tailed Hawks**, both white morph, at the end of JSD near old Prairie Canal, one flying and landing on a snag and the other circling just north of the other. On 12/13/10 Renee Rau, and Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, observed off SR-29 an **American Kestrel** flying to the fence of a wildlife crossing.

On 12/14/10 and 12/21/10, during the Fakahatchee Christmas Bird Count, Mike Owen and Deb Jansen, Big Cypress Biologist, observed a first year male **Baltimore Oriole** on Jones Grade. Later, one was also seen by Steve Houseknecht at the shop flying around in the trees.

On 12/15/10, Doug Gaskill observed a **Red-Shouldered Hawk** perched on the fire tower and appeared to be intent on fishing in fire tower pond. On 12/21/10 in the afternoon, Renee Rau observed 12 **Roseate Spoonbills** in the marsh approximately 100 feet south of US-41 not far from the East River Canoe Access.

On 12/23/10, Don Harmon observed a 5 foot long **Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake** near Lake Harmon. On 12/24/10 in the morning, Pat Weber, volunteer, observed 1000+ **Tree Swallows**, two **Great Blue Herons** flying together to the ENE, and 10 **Black Vultures** settling over the North end of the shop. On 12/25/10, Amy China, volunteer, saw an adult **otter** off of East Main tram.

If you want to report sightings, contact Park biologist Mike Owen or his assistant Karen Relish by phone at (239) 695-2886.

Coastal Cruise

Join us on **Saturday, January 22**, to explore ancient Fakahatchee Island. We gather in Everglades City at 3:00 p.m. at the National Park for a short history lesson, from Calusa to 19th century pioneers. We then board the chartered boat and meander through the mangroves. When we land, we walk up to the cemetery, observing plant life that has not been disturbed for over 50 years. A biologist will be with us to answer questions. On the return journey we pass a famous rookery where the birds are settling in for the night.

The cost is \$75 per person. For info and to make reservations, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905. You can download a flyer or book online with a credit card at our website www.orchidswamp.org on the Events page.



Visit www.orchidswamp.org for events, newsletters, colored tram map, history, and more.

President's Message

It was a pleasure to see so many of our members at the Welcome-Back dinner in December. Board Member Glen Stacell presented an interesting illustrated talk on the "Unusual Fakahatchee" to a record 71 attendees. Elsa Caldwell did a wonderful job in setting up the event.

The Friends purchased the special steel needed to repair the Park's mower deck. The photo displays the excellent work by Park Volunteer Joe Webber who is a Master Mechanic! New Park Ranger Jeff Kneisley is shown pointing out Joe's work.

There is a newly-completed concrete slab and walkway at the East River Canoe Launch site. The money came from the remainder of the Gary Nederveld Memorial Fund with the balance provided by the Friends. Soon a picnic table and handicap-accessible "potty" will be installed making the launch site much more user friendly with facilities to encourage keeping the area clean.

In December Allen Caldwell, Saul & Iris Friess, and Tom Maish represented the FOF at the Annual CSO Conference presented by the Friends of Florida Parks. There were so many interesting topics on the agenda that we each tried to attend a separate seminar to get maximum value from our time.

In the general meeting room were several displays by various CSO's, but I am proud to state that the FOF traveling display and continuous video of Jay Staton's Fak-a-Habit DVD was "Best of Show"! There was a steady stream of attendees who admired our work.

Our efforts are now being concentrated on the 2011 Fakahatchee SAFARI which has been expanded with many new activities at SAFARI Camp. Please talk up the Fakahatchee SAFARI with friends and make your reservations early for an event not to be missed!

All the Best,
Tom Maish



Thanks to Brent Mathison of Raleigh, NC, who snapped these three panthers traveling up Janes Drive about half a mile north of Gate 12 on New Year's Day. To see more of his Fakahatchee photos, visit www.brentmathison.com.



Mike in the News

Park Biologist Mike Owen featured in an article in *Florida Parks & Wildlife Magazine*, the publication of the Friends of Florida State Parks. To read more, go to www.friendsoffloridastateparks.com.

ORCHID SHOW

The Fort Lauderdale Orchid Society are holding their annual show on **January 14-16** in the War Memorial Auditorium (800 NE 8th Street). For info, see www.flos.org.



Rookery Bay Festival

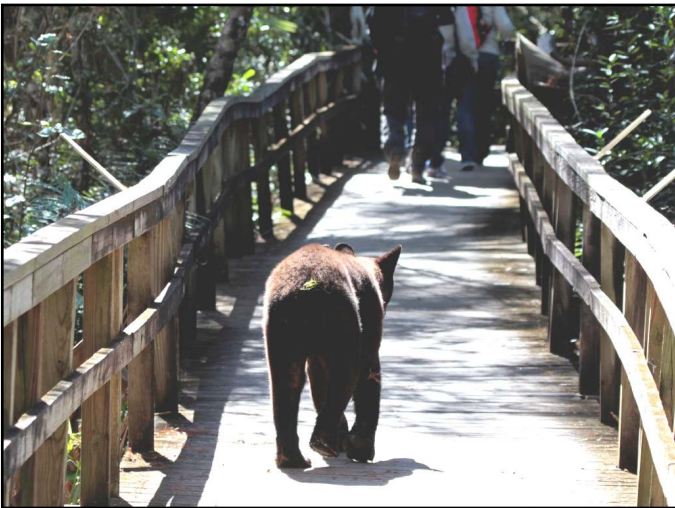
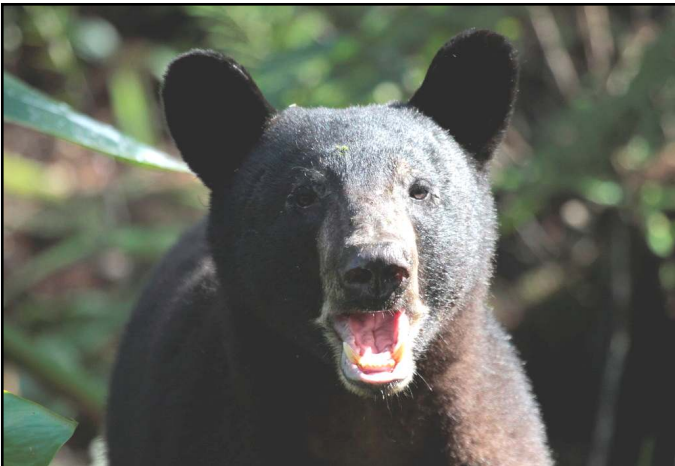
The Southwest Florida Nature Festival will be held in 2011 on **January 14-16** at Rookery Bay in East Naples. There are activities each day for all the family. To learn more about the many events in the program about native wildlife, see www.rookerybay.org or phone (239) 417-6310.



To report environmental crimes
call 1-877-272-8335 (1-877-2 SAVE FL)
or dial #DEP on your cell phone.



BOARDWALK REPORT



Thanks to Steve Paddon who sent these photos taken on December 8 of a bear on the Boardwalk "having fun with visitors".

During December we have had several documented sightings of the black bear ambling along the Boardwalk during the day while visitors are in attendance.

The Ghost Writer provides a good opportunity to review safety tips to follow if you have a close encounter with a bear. "Be Bear Aware" is an interagency education campaign designed to prevent and reduce conflicts between people and bears in our communities. If you experience bear problems, please contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 561-625-5122.

This agency recommends that if you have a close encounter with a bear:

- * Remain standing upright
- * Avoid direct eye contact
- * Back away slowly
- * Speak in a calm, assertive, assuring voice
- * Make sure the bear has an escape route
- * Do not run from the bear

For information go to www.myFWC.com and click on "Wildlife & Habitats", "Living with Wildlife".

Hundreds of visitors are enjoying the Boardwalk during this holiday season. The eagles have been observed changing places on the nest suggesting that we may have eggs. The osprey pair is tending their nest high on a bald cypress on the east side of the boardwalk out about 100+ yards. It can be seen from near the Pond Apple sign.

Our two resident alligators are usually found in the same sunny spot across the pond from the observation platform. Behind them is a well-traveled opening in the brush where the bear has been seen foraging for food. Susan and Jim Snyder, experienced volunteers with the Conservancy, observed the bear walk up to one of the alligators and touch it with its foot. The bear then sniffed the alligator and returned to the thicker undergrowth. The alligators do not appear to react at all when the bear is present.

A variety of wading birds is seen daily at the pond. A great horned owl is often heard on the west side near the beginning of the Boardwalk. It sits on the same limb of a large cypress tree about 100 yards out. On one occasion, two owls were sitting on the same limb of a tree and calling to one another in the same cadence but at different pitches. We were able to observe them through binoculars and share the experience with many visitors. Binoculars really enhance your experience at the Boardwalk.

We are keeping a close eye on the red shouldered hawk's nest and hope that it will be used again this year. It is cleverly located on a branch between two large trunks of a bald cypress tree. Overhead a large bromeliad provides some shelter from heavy rain. The nest is marked by a sign along the Boardwalk.

We look forward to meeting you at the Boardwalk and hope that you will introduce yourselves as members of the Friends of the Fakahatchee. We appreciate your support of the Boardwalk.

Caryl Tilden, Volunteer Naturalist

The Ecosystem of Ideas

by Dennis Giardina

If you compare the human imagination to the genetic potential of life, then DNA, the code that organizes biological elements into species, could be compared to ideas, the origin of all human invention. A healthy imagination, just like a robust genetic profile contains possibly unlimited intrinsic creativity. An ecosystem is the laboratory of biological experiment. The mysterious phenomenon of mutation within a plastic genetic code creates variation in species which leads to an increasingly novel and diverse ecological assemblage. Mystery shrouds the human imagination as well and the proving ground for ideas is human society. Anthropologists reckon that our brain doubled in size between 150,000 and 50,000 years ago due in part to the increasing complexity of understanding and interacting with each other. Just as species respond to the temporal and spatial conditions of an environment in flux, so too do ideas and invention in the matrix of a developing society.

Species and ideas have to change to survive. Inevitably, over time, the environment in which a species arose changes and, often, changes radically. Even the most successful species, those that survive for long periods, eventually change and adapt or go extinct. Something like 99% of all the species that have ever existed are now extinct but life today is more diverse than it has ever been. In comparison, the time line of the human imagination is short. Imagination as we know it may be less than 100,000 years old but a lot of ideas have arisen over the course of that time. Some were born and died the way most genetic mutations in species do. Others had their time and place but eventually died out like those of every obsolete human invention. One of our earliest inventions has proven to be exceptionally durable, language – the key to communication and the realization of an unparalleled diversity of ideas and invention in the modern world.

Indulge me for a minute in another analogy. Ideas can also be likened to the seeds of orchids and the Fakahatchee Strand, a place for those ideas to be tried and possibly realized. As tropical cyclones form and blow across the Caribbean, the dusty seeds are whisked up into their vortices and some eventually cascade down into the Fakahatchee Strand. A species that can adapt to its conditions, like a great idea at the right time, can grow and flourish. Along those same lines, a notable biological initiative was the organization of bald cypress trees into vast swampy stands within the historic Fakahatchee Strand that persisted maybe six to eight thousand years. A consequential human initiative was the almost complete removal of those cypress stands over the course of a little more than a decade. At that time there was a perception of a necessity of a resource (lumber) and an idea of how to extract and provide it. An analysis of that enterprise and a judgment of whether it was right or wrong (the idea of justice, another human invention) is a matter of opinion.

“Everyone is entitled to his or her opinion.” We’ve all heard it said. I appreciate that entitlement as I guess most people do. We all think (or let’s assume we all do) and we

have thoughts and ideas about a lot of things. A few weeks ago the Park Manager and the Board of Directors of the Friends of Fakahatchee were asked to come up with ideas about ways that the Park could generate revenue in the future. This exercise was requested by the Florida Park Service and the Department of Environmental Protection. Over the past few weeks, people have forwarded their ideas via email and they have generated a lot of sometimes-worried discussion. Regardless of how one may feel about this exercise or what opinion one may have about other people’s proposals, in my opinion, this exercise might not be such a bad idea.

The Florida Park Service runs its hundred and sixty State Parks on a shoe string budget. The amount of natural and cultural resources that are managed and interpreted by the people who work for all these parks is pretty impressive. Currently all the State Parks combined generate about sixty percent of what it costs to run them. Some parks are very popular and collect a lot of money through their admission fees. They, in part, provide funding to operate the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve and other State Parks that don’t charge admission fees. The Florida Park Service will have to provide recreational opportunities for increasing (doubling) numbers of visitors over the next 50 years and it has been asked to look for ways to increase the amount of revenue generated within State Parks to fund them. I don’t know if there’s a better group of people to generate and analyze ideas related to money-making enterprises in State Parks than their own Park Managers and Friends Groups?

Ideas in and of themselves are ethereal and more harmless than orchid seeds. Even though there are examples throughout human history of ideas that spurred the invention of instruments and the implementation of initiatives that caused great harm to a billion human beings and their environment, there is one mitigating factor that has consistently moderated and changed a negative or obsolete paradigm; reason. To paraphrase a quote from Thomas Jefferson’s first inaugural address that he gave in the midst an extremely polarized and tenuous political environment, he said “Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle,” and “If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.” I believe reason will be the arbitrator of any idea or initiative to generate funding within the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve now or in the future. I am confident there are and will be enough thoughtful, altruistic people watching over it, dedicated to ensuring that it is recreationally accessible to a growing public but as well protected as it can be.

Dennis Giardina is the Everglades Region Biologist, Invasive Plant Management Section, of the FWC and was formerly Manager of Fakahatchee Strand. He is Vice-President of FOF.



Plans are underway for our signature event on **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26**, with an exciting line-up of activities.

A DAY FULL OF FUN ACTIVITIES

The choices out in the field are:

- Early-Bird Photo Safari (wet)
- Swamp Walks (wet)
- Swamp Buggy Rides
- Tram Rides
- Birding Safari at the Boardwalk
- Nature Walk

These are all led by expert naturalists who can point out what to look for.

Camp activities this year include:

- Art & Nature Gallery (Local Photography & Artwork)
- Prescription for a Fire (presentation & live fire demo)
- Shy Wolf Sanctuary (presentation & live demo)
- Bats in South Florida
- Pythons & Other Exotics (presentation & live demo)
- Nature Photography & 3D with equipment demo
- Silent Auction

The culmination is the Evening Program:

- Informal Reception with Live Music and Beverages
- Results of Silent Auction
- Live Auction
- Cookout BBQ Dinner
- Sunset Campfire
- Story-telling

GREAT AUCTIONS

Some of the items donated for the Silent & Live Auctions are:

- a 40x56-inch photo of the Fakahatchee by Clyde Butcher
- a weekend for 2 at the Carroll Family Camp in the Fakahatchee
- a Fakahatchee Swamp Walk for 2
- a Fakahatchee Coastal Cruise for 2

All proceeds benefit the Friends so they can support the park.

If you would like to contribute a prize, phone Jay Staton at (239) 298-0039.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR

The Committee is pleased to announce that Fifth Third Bank has agreed to become a Platinum Sponsor of the SAFARI.



To learn more about sponsorship, see our website or phone Tom Maish at (239) 992-5962.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

The SAFARI is a fundraiser for the Friends of Fakahatchee to help the park and 80% of your payment qualifies as a tax-free donation.

The cost is \$125 per person with an extra \$40 for the optional Swamp Buggy Ride. You may sign up for a one-year non-voting introductory membership in FOF.

Our cancellation policy for the SAFARI and other events is:

- Prior to 7 days of the event, a full refund will be given.
- From 7 days to 48 hours prior to the event, a 50% refund will be given.
- Less than 48 hours prior to the event, full amount is considered a donation to FOF.

For info and to reserve your places, phone (239) 695-2905 or see our website www.orchidswamp.org where you can pay in advance with a credit card.



The Fakahatchee SAFARI campground is at the start of Janes Scenic Drive across from the park office.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 294 fully-paid memberships plus 18 that were due for renewal in the 3rd and 4th quarter. Notices for the 1st quarter are being sent with this newsletter.

Welcome to new members:

Manfred Dangel, Ft. Myers
 Meredith & Karol Galloway, Naples
 Joyce Hester Laeser, Chokoloskee
 RoseLynn & David Malarek, Coatesville, PA
 Cyndy Marquez & James Deane, Miami
 Andrew McElwaine, Naples
 Robert Mohl, Naples
 Francine Stevens, Bonita Springs

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD FRIENDS

It will soon be time to elect new leaders for FOF. We are seeking persons to serve on the Board of Directors where there will be several openings. The Friends function in a number of areas, from field projects to fund raising, so we would like to hear from anyone with knowledge of and/or interest in the Fakahatchee. We could use your help in many different ways.

Consider nominating yourself or someone else with time and skills to dedicate to the Friends. A "request for nominations" and details will appear in the February Ghost Writer. Start thinking about it now and let us hear from you in February. We would welcome your participation. For info, phone (305) 443-2490 or email llewdlacnella@msn.com.

Thanks, Allen Caldwell, FOF Governance Committee



Thanks to members Rose Flynn and Howard Lubel for this photo of a barred owl taken in December about a mile north of Gate 16.



This little (about 6-foot long) fella was snapped by member Rod Webster at the side of Janes Scenic Drive on December 3.

What Are We? Who Are We?

The Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, is the Citizen Support Organization of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, the largest cypress strand in the world and the deepest slough in the greater Everglades. Its 80,000 acres are bordered by I-75 (Alligator Alley), US-41 (Tamiami Trail), SR-29, Fakahatchee Bay, and Picayune State Forest.

The Friends of Fakahatchee strive to aid in the preservation of this ecologically unique area and to educate the public about its importance.

The Ghost Writer, named after the endangered Ghost Orchid which blooms in the Preserve, is edited by Marya Repko with contributions from members and friends. It is issued at least six times a year and has an average circulation of over 300 copies.

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OFFICERS:	President – Tom Maish	Vice-President – Dennis Giardina				
	Secretary – Howard Lubel	Treasurer – Saul Friess				
BOARD:	Allen Caldwell	Elsa Caldwell	Julia Cardenas	Frank Denninger	Saul Friess	Dennis Giardina
	Cindy Hackney	Howard Lubel	Tom Maish	Glenn Stacell	Jay Staton	Carol Swingle

NEW ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

date _____

Please make check payable to "FOF" and send to: FOF Membership, P.O.Box 35, Everglades City, FL, 34139

___ Individual (\$20) ___ Family (\$30) ___ Business (\$50) ___ Patron (\$100) ___ Benefactor (\$500) ___ extra (\$ _____)
 ___ Youth (\$10) birth date: month ___ day ___ year _____ (members under 18 years old must select this)

NAME _____
 STREET / P.O.BOX: _____
 CITY _____
 STATE _____ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____

EMAIL _____
ALTERNATE ADDRESS

 CITY _____
 STATE _____ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____

MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

___ JAN ___ FEB ___ MAR ___ APR ___ MAY ___ JUN ___ JUL ___ AUG ___ SEP ___ OCT ___ NOV ___ DEC