



The Ghost Writer

FEBRUARY, 2010

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, "Home of the Ghost Orchid"

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Saturday
4th Tuesday

starting November 14 through April
Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child
Reservations Required.
Phone (239) 695-1023

GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

1st Saturday

Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child
Reservations Required.
Phone (239) 695-1023

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Tuesday

If you can help, phone (239) 695-1023.

BOARD MEETING

Sunday, February 14, 10:00 a.m.
Port of the Islands

DISCOVERY SERIES

The SAFARI

Saturday, February 27, 1:00 p.m.

ANNUAL MEMBERS' PICNIC

Sunday, March 21
See page 8.

AMAZING ADVENTURES

"Namibia" by Maureen Bonness
Friday, February 5, 6:30 p.m.
See www.rookerybay.org

Blue Grass Festival

Sat/Sun, February 13/14
Collier Seminole State Park
See page 8.

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 12/21/09, Alicia Campanella, Park Ranger, observed a **Crested Caracara** feeding on roadkill with **Turkey and Black vultures** off the east side of SR-29 just south of Jones Grade. On 12/23/09, in the early evening, while out reading water levels, Mike Owen, Biologist, observed an **American bittern** in Four Stakes Prairie. On 12/27/09, Richard Fagan and Ron Kotliar, volunteers, observed a **Peregrine Falcon** perched in a snag off SR-29 and a 3.25-foot **Florida cotton mouth** off of JSD. On 12/31/09, Stacy Hecker, visitor, reported three **Chicken Turtles** on JSD between Gate 12 and the Park Office, with one building a nest.

On 1/4/10, Deborah Jansen, Big Cypress Park Biologist, Richard Fagan, and Karen Relish, Park Ranger, participated in the Ten Thousand Island Bird Count. Their area included the west area (Dan House Prairie) of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park on foot as well as the Ten Thousand Islands and south of US-41 in the Faka Union canal via kayak. Thank you for the use of the kayaks donated in memory of Gary Nederveld. The day started at 38° and the high was 58°. We observed 56 species including **Northern Flicker, Tufted Titmouse, American Goldfinch, Swainson's hawk and Chipping Sparrow.**

On 1/6/10, Mike Owen and Ron Kotliar observed a **Sharp-shinned hawk** fly over the park office. On 1/7/10, around noon, Bill and Pam Mesce, volunteers, observed an adult **River Otter** in the Lake Gloria area. On 1/8/10, mid-afternoon, Dennis Paul, visitor, observed an **American Kestrel** over the East Prairies. On 1/11/10, Richard Fagan observed both a male and the larger female **Sharp-shinned hawk** over Janes Scenic Drive near Gate 12.

On 1/12/10, Joe & Pat Weber, and Virgil & Jo Allmond, volunteers, observed an approximate 250 pound **black bear** on Janes Scenic drive. Jo Allmond had also seen a black bear the west side of SR 29 on 12/22/09. On 1/17/10, Renee Rau, Park Manager, and Bill Rice, visitor, observed one **Northern Harrier** off SR-29 just north of US-41. On 1/18/10, mid afternoon, while hiking on East Main, Susan Cocking, visitor, observed two **River Otters**, going to and from the ditch/slough and the tram. On 1/24/10, in the evening, Alicia and Joe Campanella saw an approximately 250 pound **bear** off Jones Grade.

Swamp leader John Elting sent this email: On 1/29/09, at 11am, 200 meters east of gate 7 on Janes Scenic Drive, I saw the largest **panther** I have ever seen in or out of captivity, close to 160-lbs, with no collar, tawny but with dark hind quarters and tail.

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

Fakahatchee Discovery Series

Sponsored by the Friends of Fakahatchee

See you at The SAFARI ...

SCHEDULE AND RESERVATIONS ON PAGE 7.

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



Future Shock

by Dennis Giardina

Like many of you, the physical presence of the Fakahatchee Strand in my life is very important to me. The relationship I have with the plants, animals and ecosystem of the Fakahatchee Strand improves my life in many ways and there are many reasons why I feel this way. I'm pretty sure that I was born with a love of nature because I cannot remember a time when I did not feel it. I see beauty in the structures and systems of the natural world and that beauty inspires me.

E.O. Wilson coined a term for this hard to explain, emotional attachment that many of us feel towards nature as "biophilia," which literally means "appreciation of life." The Fakahatchee Strand with its incredible biodiversity is where I feel an especially strong appreciation of life. I am a "Fakaphiliac".

I suggest that the Fakahatchee Strand has a similar effect on the community of people who live around it and I think it makes where we live a more valuable and enjoyable place to live. I think we all realize on some level that the Fakahatchee Strand is one of the last remaining monuments of nature in our neighborhood, a rapidly developing suburban landscape. Even though the Fakahatchee Strand is part of one of the largest protected natural areas in the U.S. east of the Mississippi River, it is still threatened by development, a growing human population and all that comes along with it.

I've been reminding everyone that the population of Florida is predicted to double over the next 50 years. This recent economic nose dive will most likely be a temporary thing, a correction to what most people agree was an over heated housing and real estate market. The climate of Southwest

Florida and the opportunities available for outdoor recreation will inevitably keep drawing people to live, work and play here. During the tourist season, the Fakahatchee Boardwalk groans under the weight of tens of thousands of visitors and on the weekends, Janes Scenic Drive has an endless procession of cars driving out and back, out and back. Imagine what it will be like in 2060.

The Friends of Fakahatchee and the Park Manager have started to define a collective vision for the future of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve. Two of the underlying priorities we identified were:

- One, protect the interior of the Preserve to maintain the wildness, functionality and species diversity found therein.
- Two, concentrate the expected increase in casual visitation to areas where a satisfying, quality recreational experience can be had with minimal impact upon the environment.

It is our intention to see that the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve rises to the challenge of accommodating the millions of people who will come to visit between now and 2060, while protecting the ecosystem so that generations of Fakaphiliacs to come will still be able to wade out into the cool water and indulge in what may become a Fakahabit.

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.

FUZZY WUZZY DECLINE

by Jack Berninger

Tillandsia pruinosa (fuzzy wuzzy air plant) numbers have declined from previous years. Elaine and I conducted a population count on January 11, 2010 in the Fakahatchee Strand and found only eleven of these plants along an approximate 1000-meter section of the tram we have surveyed over the past five years. Six of the plants were on the south side and five on the north side of the tram.

Comparisons over five years:

	South	North
2006	17	1
2007	32	2
2008	21	31
2009	26	8
2010	6	5

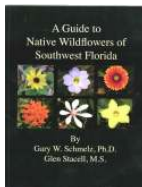


This is the first year we have found none of the plants in bloom. We found eight of the plants high (3.8-8 meters above the ground) in *Myrsine froidana* trees. The other three plants were lower (1 to 1.5 meters) in *Myrsine*. What has happened to all the plants close to eye level that we were able to photograph in past years? We also noticed an increase of low vegetation along the tram causing more shading of edges (1 to 2 meters above ground) along the tram. Has this decrease in light exposure caused the decline of lower growing *pruinosa*? OR – formed a great habitat for the Bromeliad weevil?

Jack & Elaine Berninger visit us every winter from Ohio to lead walks, conduct surveys, and give lectures. Thanks to them for this article and to Rick Cruz for the photo.

NEW BOOK

FOF member Gary Schmelz and FOF director Glen Stacell have published *A Guide to Native Wildflowers of Southwest Florida*, a vastly upgraded version of their little 2001 book about the same subject in Collier County.



This guide is invaluable for identifying plants because it is organized by color with wonderful photos of each entry, the latin name, habitat, flowering season, and size of the flower.

There are also maps of public parks & preserves with telephone numbers, a list of suitable native plants with butterfly-attractors starred, and a list of native plant nurseries. As a bonus, the book comes with a screen-saver CD.

Copies of *Wildflowers* are available at www.fwfonline.org and at the Everglades Visitor Center at the corner of US-41 and SR-29 (the building with the A-shaped roof).

Farewell to Takako

GOOD LUCK to Takako Sato who is leaving the Panther & Ten Thousand Islands Refuge to return to Japan. She has been really helpful at all their events and is a great communicator.

TRAFFIC AT SEAFOOD FESTIVAL

Don't be surprised to find the traffic backed up on US-41 (Tamiami Trail) and SR-29 over the weekend of **February 6/7** when Everglades City welcomes over 30,000 (yes, thirty thousand) visitors to its annual jamboree. For info, see the official website www.evergladesseafoodfestival.com.

WINTER MUCK-ABOUT

Clyde and Niki Butcher host their swamp walk weekend on **February 13/14** at the Big Cypress Gallery in Ochopee. For information and to make reservations phone (239) 695-2428 or see www.clydebutcher.com.

6th ANNUAL MSD FESTIVAL

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas Festival at the Museum of the Everglades, **February 23-26**, features a number of events with a Fakahatchee interest:



- Feb 24: Making of the DVD "Big Cypress Swamp"
- Feb 25: Tram Tours on Janes Scenic Drive
Swamp Walk with Jack Berninger
Talk about Fakahatchee History by Marya Repko
- Feb 26: Photo Workshop with Rick Cruz
"Discover the Fakahatchee" by Mike Owen
Fern Walk with Jack & Elaine Berninger

See www.evergladesmuseum.org for a full program and phone (239) 695-0008 to reserve.



FOF ON FACEBOOK

If you're a member of Facebook, you can become a fan of the Friends of Fakahatchee and read more about what's happening.

PRIZE PHOTO

This photo by FOF director Jay Staton won third place in the Reader-Submitted Photo Contest held by the *Naples Daily News*. In an article dated January 11, Jay describes how he trekked into the Fakahatchee on a rainy day carrying 30lbs of equipment and a ladder to take the picture. See www.naplesnews.com.



The photo has also been selected by juror Clyde Butcher to appear at the Rookery Bay Annual Photography exhibit from **February 2 thru April 2**.

PANTHER FUNDRAISER

The "Panther Prowl Road Rally, Scavenger Hunt, and Poker Run" takes place on **Sunday, February 28**, and wanders from the Panther Refuge to Ava Maria, Punta Gorda, Ft Myers Beach and Ft Myers. All "street-legal" vehicles are welcome, entry fee \$15. For more info, contact Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge president Lisa Ostberg at (239) 642-5472.

GATORIZING

by John Elting



What follows below is the musing of a somewhat reckless but attentive naturalist to the families *Alligatorae* and *crocodylidae* or “thermo regulators”, as Mike Owen and I like to call them.

Please note that without extreme caution and experience some of what follows can be hazardous to one’s health! I have been observing, poking, and prodding (not molesting, mind you) gators and crocs for 50 years. I am still around but that is not to say that I will still be here tomorrow!

I like to call myself a naturalist but I’m really not sure what a naturalist is. My best guess is that it is someone who observes, takes lots of notes and or photos, applies hopefully some science, and then conveys a lot of misinformation. So there you go. Take what follows with a grain of salt and do not, as alluded to above, put yourself in harms way on account of my experiences.

Gators and crocs have fascinated me since I was a kid. I have studied them and their behavior in every venue- rivers, ponds, sloughs, strands, sheet-water prairies, ditches (wet and dry), roadways, and hydrated flat-woods. Most of my experience has been with the American alligator and crocodile in the southeastern states of Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. I have some experience with Spectacled Caimans, Nile crocs, and Cubans.

Some generalities emerge. The American crocodile seems shier in most respects than the alligator, and gators in Florida seem less aggressive than those in Georgia. *What?* (I once towed out two parties of kayakers in the Okefenokee who claimed they had been attacked. This was in the mating season.) Who knows! Alligators in the Atchafalaya seem the most skittish and there has never been a documented death by alligator in the entire state of Louisiana. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Cajuns have been hunting them forever and they have become genetically predisposed to avoid humans. Or maybe they just don’t keep good records in the state of Louisiana. *Who knows!* I won’t dwell on the Nile croc or the Australian “salty” as their aggressive nature is well-documented. The Cuban croc is the most aggressive and I would never recommend an FOF walk in the Zapata swamp!

Female alligators reach sexual maturity at about 6 feet in length; that is to say, between the ages of 6 and 10. One can observe their mating rituals in the lakes of the Fakahatchee: roaring (females, too), water dancing, head slapping, and body arching – females raise their heads and tails well above the water surface, dominate males swim high on the surface while the more subservient can be observed almost entirely submerged.

There is a cardinal rule in gator country and that is **never turn your back on a body of water** even in the winter months when gators seldom feed – they need a core body temperature of 80 degrees to produce the necessary enzymes for proper

digestion. Case in point: I have seen gators wolf down turtles only to throw them back up moments later.

Some thoughts, observations, and experiences as regards alligator behavior: first, alligators in the wild are generally not aggressive unless they have been fed by humans. I say generally because there are exceptions to every rule. We have had some deaths in Florida, but if one looks closely at the facts, one will see that there were extenuating circumstances. Second, the age and corresponding size of a gator has a bearing on its speed and mobility. Gators between 4 and 5½ feet (young adults) are at their physical peak. They are agile and if provoked can be hostile. Thus it is not necessarily the *big* gator that defines threat.

There are several “tells” that have a bearing on an alligator’s intentions: a gator that means you harm will always come at you **in a straight line** whether you are in the water, on a bank, a tram, whatever. They will **come very slowly** (stealth mode), **show little profile**, (often submarining) with **no tail wake**. If you see this behavior, get out of the water, away from the bank – in other words, be gone! In addition, and this is important, before they make the final “lunge”, they almost always **dip their head and chin downwards**. This has been my experience and it has been collaborated by Ken Vliet at the University of Florida. Nobody knows why this happens but it does.

If you must, and like me, can’t resist, it is best to approach gators and crocs from behind – they will scoot. If approached on a nest (please don’t), a female may charge. But if you are alert (and you will be), one can easily escape a head on rush. Not so easy when approaching a gator from the side. If you come up on their right side, look to see if they set their left front shoulder and have their tail curved toward you – again, body language. If approached from the left, the opposite holds true. In either case, they can whirl to the side (and to you) at lightening speed. With the shoulder set and the strength and weight of a swished tail, they can be on you in a nano-second. Again, a disclaimer. Please do not test this stuff. It is only for the foolhardy. Take my word for it.

Now here are some peculiar observations, some of which occurred here in the Fakahatchee, and none of which have been substantiated scientifically. But I am a “naturalist”, so here we go. In the spring dry-down and mating season one might expect the male to be strutting his stuff – protecting turf, showing off for the female, whatever. However, when I have approached what I believed to be a mating pair on land, they have both been docile to the point that one may, if they so choose, come within several feet without so much as a grunt.

An aside: I have come upon a female croc on her nest in labor and stroked her back without incident. She clearly was zoned out – stoned! Several times last spring, I waded into small ponds where there were two gators, one big, one smaller, that I assumed to be a mating pair. In each case, the larger retreated

into the depths while the smaller female came at me in that bee-line I referred to above. Look out! I said to myself, but when she got close enough for me to "tap" her head with my stick, she roiled, turned, and fled. She was bluffing and I had called her bluff!

Now a little levity. Gators can be playful. I found one lying on the bank with a dead opossum in its mouth and when I approached, she backed off into the water still holding the opossum. I followed her in, took the opossum away with my stick and drew it in to shore. She followed, took the "possum" back out. I again went in, retrieved the possum, and brought it toward shore. She came back and got it again. And on and on

it went, sort of like throwing a tennis ball into the surf for your retriever!

In conclusion, there is much I could add, but I hope the above has been at least entertaining if not informative or vice versa. Please feel free to take exception to my observations, discount them entirely, or provide some of your own. I welcome any and all comments.

John Elting was president of the Friends of Fakahatchee from 2004 to 2007. He initiated the FOF Swamp Walk program nine years ago and has been leading them as a volunteer since then. He is passionately concerned with our environment in Southwest Florida.

THE GATOR CALL

by Peggy Egan



The highlight of today was a "wet" hike into the Fakahatchee Strand. If you have seen the movie "Adaptation" with Meryl Streep based on Susan Orlean's book *The Orchid Thief* about the Ghost Orchid, it takes place in the strand. I won't give away the plot, but let's just say someone in the movie becomes a dinner for a gator!

With that visual fresh in my mind, I entered the thigh-deep water to work with Brenda Thomas on her thesis research. Her other assistants included Brenda Brooks and Kathy Broyard. Our goal was to identify, tag, and core Cypress trees within her designated transect. Brenda T. has been working in this transect for many months, but with all the summer rain, this was the first time she has found it wet. And, it was very wet. We had to cross a deep ditch to enter the swamp, and you know what hangs out in the deep ditches!

Well, we made it into the swamp and were on our 7th tree when the excitement started. One of the tools used to core the tree made a loud screeching sound with each turn (friction?). We had to manually drill to the center of the tree and pull the

small core out – later Brenda T. will use it to count rings and determine the age of the tree.

Back to the 7th tree – about half way into our manual drill, both Brenda's heard a low, loud "growl". They stopped me from drilling and making the screech. We waited a second before I started drilling again. Then, another growl. OK, time to figure out a plan? Since Brenda T. was in charge, we waited for her to decide if we should leave. Brenda Brooks said she was familiar with the growl and the tone indicated a very large, territorial male gator. Brenda T. quickly made the decision for us to leave.

We put our gear away – except for the pocket knife – and huddled as close as possible as we made our way out. After a few feet, we heard the growl again, only closer! We continued to walk slowly – through the wet swamp loaded with many downed limbs and branches – and then the growl ... closer ... and then ... another growl ... on the other side! Now, we were between two male gators who were demanding their territory. As we hiked, we listened and it was closer each time we heard them. We would stop at different intervals, get our bearings and listen to determine where the "boys" were.

We ended up having to exit at a different location than we had used to enter the swamp. The ditch was deeper, which did not thrill us, but we were between two gator calls and had few options. We all breathed with deep relief as we reached the bank and dry land. Once we were in the vehicle and driving out, we saw a couple gators on the side of the road who immediately went into the "deep ditch" as we passed. All in all, a beautiful adventure in Southwest Florida!

Peggy Egan is active in the Alligator Amblers chapter of the Florida Trail Association. For more info about what they do, see their website www.ambler.floridatrail.org.

Editor's Note. This article was written in November, 2008. Our apologies for taking so long to print it!

President's Message

For the last two years the Friends of Fakahatchee #1 Goal has been to renovate and expand our aging Boardwalk. #2 Goal is to build a "green" Visitor's Center with clean restrooms and safe parking.

The program has begun!

A Partnership-in-Parks grant request has been submitted to obtain additional funds for planning and permits. Achieving these Goals will require money ... \$3,000,000 estimated!

To reach out to people who may have heard of the Fakahatchee, but have no idea of its beauty, The SAFARI is planned for **Saturday, February 27**.

Your HELP is needed to make the SAFARI successful. Please email The SAFARI poster and reservation form to any organization that you belong, asking them to place info on their website with a link to the FOF site or to "blast" email to their membership: legal ; medical, CPA associations, flower clubs, anyone. Print and leave copies in your doctor's and dentist's waiting rooms or wherever you may go.

Personally mail to friends asking them to attend. And plan to volunteer at the event (phone Renee at 695-4593 to sign up).

If people visit and experience the wonders of the Fakahatchee they will be moved to help and protect it!

See you at The SAFARI ...
Tom Maish



photos thanks to Tom Maish

Swamp Walk leader Paul Marinelli with visitors from Ohio, youth member Austin Sigman on left and his grandad Richard Emens on right, during their foray into the fabulous Fakahatchee on January 16.



And, no, Bill Mesce (co-leader) is not pushing the wonderful old troop carrier that he restored; he is pointing out something on the way out for the walk. Notice how brown everything is after deep frost the previous week.

BOARDWALK REPORT

As of the third week of January the boardwalk is recovering from the coldest period of temperatures in many years. The extent of frost damage to some of the foliage is surprising, given the density of much of the swamp canopy. The hardest hit were the strangler figs, wild coffee, alligator flag, leather ferns and the royal palm trees. After seeing the damage suffered in Hurricane Wilma in 2005 and the remarkable recovery that has occurred, we don't expect to see lasting damage to our plants.

On a very bright note, the cold weather does not appear to have affected the incubation of the eagle chick or chicks. As of about January 20 many observers have seen adult eagles coming and going from the nest in ways that would suggest that young are being fed. If that is true, the chicks should become visible in the next month or so. Our osprey nest has also been very active and is especially visible this time of year when the bald cypress trees are in their "bald" period.

One other effect of the cold was a minor fish kill in both the gator pond and in the canal along highway 41. During the cold temperatures the raccoons and many wading birds seemed to thrive on the lethargic nature of the fish. Over a period of about two hours one day, a family of raccoons put on quite an exhibition for visitors at the end of the boardwalk. They were standing in several inches of water and just reaching down and pulling out one fish after another.

Interesting wildlife sightings this month include several reports of a bobcat, a limpkin, a little blue heron, several otters, many white-tailed deer and an everglades mink.

If you have visited the boardwalk lately you have seen several hundred feet of new railing tops installed by volunteers Dick Hughes, Bud Scott, Bob Barrows, Dan London and Nelson Tilden. Volunteers Edite Hughes, Kathy Hatch and Louella London have spent several hours sweeping leaves from the boardwalk and cleaning interpretive signs and we appreciate their efforts. Kathy Hatch and Julie Cardenas have also been providing invaluable interpretation services for visitors.

Expert birder Alan Murray continues to spend many hours on the boardwalk with his spotting scope. He has helped visitors spot the great horned owl and enhanced their view of the eagles nest, the large bee hive, and the various birds that visit our pond.

Come and enjoy the wonders of the boardwalk.

Nelson and Caryl Tilden
Volunteer Naturalists

Thanks to Dennis Giardina for this report:

This 14-foot long African Python (new species in our area) was found just east of Krome Ave and south of US-41 during a survey on January 12. The python weighed in at 138.8 lbs.



Nester Yglesias with the South Florida Water Management District took this photo.

See you at The SAFARI ... February 27, 2010

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES									
12:00	Event Opens / Registration								
12:15									
12:30									
12:45									
1:00	Guided Birdwatching A	Nature Walk A	Photo Workshop A	Swamp Buggy Ride A (\$40)	Swamp Walk A		Tram Ride A	ONGOING EXHIBITS Wildlife Photo Gallery Answer Man FOF Sales	Prescribed Fire Demos
1:15									
1:30									
1:45									
2:00									
2:15									
2:30									
2:45	Guided Birdwatching B	Nature Walk B	Photo Workshop B	Swamp Buggy Ride B (\$40)	Swamp Walk B		Tram Ride B		
3:00									
3:15									
3:30									
3:45									
4:00									
4:15	Guided Birdwatching C	Nature Walk C	Photo Workshop C						
4:30									
4:45									
5:00	Wine Tasting								
5:15									
5:30	Old Florida Cracker Dinner								
5:45									
6:00									
6:15									
6:30	Sunset Bonfire								
6:45									

✂ ----- RESERVATION FORM -----

Fakahatchee Discovery Series
Sponsored by the Friends of Fakahatchee

The SAFARI

Saturday, February 27, 2010
from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m.
gates open at noon for registration & exhibits
James Scenic Drive, Copeland, Florida

RESERVATION FORM

Some of the activities on the Safari grounds will go on all afternoon. However, we need to know many people in your party want to take part in each of these special sessions. Note, there is not time to do all of them.

- ___ Scenic Tram Ride (1hr 15mins)
- ___ Naturalist-Guided Swamp Walk (2hrs 30mins)
- ___ Nature Walk at an Easy Level (1hr)
- ___ Guided Birding Walk (1hr)
- ___ Professional Photography Hands-On Class (1hr)
- ___ Sunset Bonfire and "Cracker Dinner" with complimentary wine tasting (starts at 5:00 p.m.)

Reserve ___ places at the SAFARI at \$125 each = \$ _____

Reserve ___ Swamp Buggy Rides (2hrs) at \$40 each = \$ _____

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED \$ _____

YOUR NAME _____

Guest Name _____

Guest Name _____

Guest Name _____

YOUR ADDRESS:
Street/POBox _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ email _____

Send check payable to "FOF" before February 22 to:
FOF Safari
P O Box 35, Everglades City, FL, 34139
or BOOK ONLINE NOW at www.friendsoffakahatchee.org

Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. Part of your contribution could be tax-deductible.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 261 memberships in good standing. *The Ghost Writer* is emailed to 244 members, saving over \$107 per issue.

Welcome to new members:

- Jim Barnes, Franklin, WI
- Erich Bauer, Woodbridge, Ontario
- Werner Blow, Naples
- Tonia & James Bock, Minneapolis, MN
- Christopher Boykin, North Miami
- Richard Emens, Galena, OH
- Denise Grossman, Naples
- George & Mary Hruby, Akron, OH
- James Nici, Naples
- John Price, Roslyn Heights, NY
- Carol Rinaldi, Deerfield Beach
- Mary Sanders, Dunedin
- Austin Signman, Heath, OH

Board Members Wanted!

Election time for Directors of FOF is coming up again. If you love the Fakahatchee, help us by serving on the board or nominating someone who shares our interest.

The candidate should be a member in good standing and willing to attend monthly meetings during the winter season. It is convenient to have email for efficient communications.

The deadline for nominations is **Monday, March 1**, so please send in the attached form by post or email with a brief (200 words maximum) biography.

Fakahatchee Discovery Series
Sponsored by the Friends of Fakahatchee

The SAFARI

Plans are nearly completed and it looks like our first signature SAFARI will have plenty for people to do: swamp walks, birding walks, photo workshops, tram rides, exhibits, a guest appearance by Clyde Butcher, and optional swamp buggy rides. And, to end it all on a high note – a Cracker Dinner with complimentary wine-tasting thanks to Redwood Creek.

The cost is only \$125 per person, some of which is considered a tax-deductible donation to FOF. A reservation form is included in this newsletter or you can book on our website with a credit card. For info, phone (239) 695-2905.

Blue Grass Festival



FOF will have a booth at “Jammin’ in the Hammock”, the Blue Grass Festival held by Collier Seminole on the weekend of **February 13/14**.

If you can volunteer to hand out brochures and talk to visitors, please phone Marya at (239) 695-2905.

ANNUAL MEMBERS’ PICNIC

The picnic for members only will be held this year on **Sunday, March 21**. More details in our next newsletter.

What Are We? Who Are We?

The **Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, 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 – Susan O’Farrell | Treasurer – Saul Friess | | | |
| BOARD: | Allen Caldwell | Elsa Caldwell | Saul Friess | Dennis Giardina | Tom Maish |
| | Susan O’Farrell | David Shindle | 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 _____	EMAIL _____
STREET / P.O.BOX: _____	<u>ALTERNATE ADDRESS</u> _____
CITY _____	CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____	STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____	PHONE _____

MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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