



The Ghost Writer

FEBRUARY 2011

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

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sat

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

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Tuesday

Sat, Feb 12 Tues, Feb 15
Phone the Park at (239) 695-4593

BOARD MEETING

February 13 at 10:00 a.m.
Port of the Islands

SPECIAL EVENTS

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

See page 4 for February Festivals



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26

see page 3 for details

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 12/28/11, in the mid afternoon, just before Gate 7/West Main, a Fakahatchee volunteer observed an **Everglades Mink** on Janes Scenic Drive On 12/29/11, in the morning, Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, observed a **bobcat** in the Park Shop compound. On 1/1/11 and 1/9/11, in the late afternoon, **whip-poor-wills** were seen by Mike Owen, Biologist, and Donna Glann Symth, volunteer, at the end of Janes Scenic Drive (JSD) as well as near the Firetower. On 1/2/11, in the mid afternoon, Heather Green, park visitor, observed and took photos of three **Florida panthers**, an adult female and two of her older kittens, walking and playing, as well as a **black bear**, possibly juvenile, on the drive. They were also seen by other visitors.

On 1/4/11, while participating in the Ten Thousand Island Christmas Bird Count, among the birds observed by Mike Owen were a brown **female Snail Kite**, **Black and Turkey Vultures**, **Wood Storks**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Osprey**, **Great Blue**, **Tricolored**, **Green and Little Blue Herons**, **Least Sandpiper**, **Common Moorhens**, **Mottled Duck**, **Double-Crested Cormorants**, **Common and Boat-Tailed Grackles**, **Anhingas** and an **American Bittern**.

On 1/5/11, Steven Bass, OPS Ranger, observed an **American Alligator** and 5 of her one-foot babies off JSD. On 1/6/11, Rick Cruz observed 8 **White Pelicans** in the marsh water skimming about 200 feet off of US-41 about 2 miles West of SR-29. On 1/6/11, early evening, Renee Rau, Manager, observed 6 **nightjars** (medium sized birds that are most active early morning or late evening or crepuscular with short legs small feet, short bills, feed on moths and other large flying insects as well as nest on the ground) between Gate 2 and 7. On 1/7/11, in the afternoon, Steve Houseknecht observed 1 **American Bittern** fly over Firetower pond. On 1/9/11, Mike Cullinan, visitor observed a large **bobcat** cross JSD from East to West around 8:30AM just north of Gate 12. On 1/11/11, in the morning, Mike Owen observed over 500 **Tree Swallows** swirling and landing on Myrica or Bayberry on the side of JSD near Gate 2 and later he observed a **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** in the ditch near Gate 7/West Main then fly North.

On both 1/12/11 and 1/13/11, Sally Thorburn took a drive down JSD to Gate 12/East Main the first day and to the end of the drive the next day and saw **Red shouldered hawks**, **Black and Turkey vultures**, **American kestrels**, **Tree swallows**, **Belted Kingfisher**, **Red bellied**, **Hairy and Downy woodpeckers**, **Palm warblers**, **Pine warbler**, **Carolina wren**, **Tufted Titmouse**, **Black and White Warbler**, **Yellow-throated warbler**, **Tufted Titmouse**, **American Crow**, **Great Egrets**, **Blue Gray Knatcatchers**, **Catbirds**, **Cardinals**, **Great Egrets**, and **White Ibis**. She saw one saw one of the kestrels forced off its treetop perch by two of the tree swallows, while the other kestrel was seen mobbing one of the Red Shouldered hawks. She also saw roosting Black and Turkey Vultures fly up when a juvenile Red Shouldered hawk flew into the middle of the roost. The American bittern was seen when it casually strolled across JSD right in front of her.

On 1/16/11, Howard Lubel observed a **Barred Owl** on JSD just North of Gate 16. On 1/19/11, Renee Rau observed 1 **White Pelican** floating with **White Ibis** off of US-41 about 0.25 miles East of the East River. On 1/20/11, in the early evening, Mike Owen observed 100 **Robins** in the East Prairie. On 1/22/11, Karen Relish, OPS Ranger, on the northwest corner of US-41/SR-29, observed a **Northern Harrier** flying low over the salt marsh.

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



Jane Parks (left) and friend Emily Savage with the huge rolled-up petition they collected.

JANE PARKS SAVED THE PARK!

by Tom Maish

You may recall the Mel Finn Award that the Friends of Fakahatchee presents annually to an outstanding FOF Volunteer. Mel was a Miami attorney who, as a founder of the Florida Nature Conservancy, led the effort to save the Fakahatchee Strand.

Well, we have a surprise! Marya Repko was giving a lecture on the history of the Fakahatchee and in the audience was Mrs Jane Parks with a huge list of signatures on a petition that she had collected in the 1960's in her campaign to save the Fakahatchee!

Not many of us in the Friends knew about Jane's commitment to the Fakahatchee. From 1964 to 1967 Jane as Chairman (yes, Chairman back then) of the Conservation Committee of the Florida Junior Federation of Women's Clubs wrote letters, lobbied the State and US Legislature, and spoke to whatever organization would grant her an audience to promote the importance of saving the Fakahatchee.

While Mel Finn was active on the East Coast, Jane lead a committee of "movers and shakers" including Lester Norris who constructed our Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk and John Pennekamp working with Mel. Jane even lobbied the US Department of Interior to make the Fakahatchee a National Monument.

It was an uphill battle! In 1964; the Gulf American Land Corporation's Land Director, a General Jung, said in a speech "that the millions coming to Florida had to go somewhere and whether you like it or not we [Gulf American] are developing a tremendous area of waste land that has been idle up to now". This area comprised of 188 square miles including the Fakahatchee Strand being sub-divided into 3.5 million lots.

Jane has rekindled her interest in serving with the Friends and attended our Welcome-Back dinner in December.

Please say "hello" when you meet her at the Fakahatchee SAFARI and express your "thanks" for her effort that helped save this special place.

Election for Board Members

The Nominating Committee of Friends of Fakahatchee is seeking from the membership nominees to the Board of Directors for the two-year term beginning in April 2011. All members are encouraged to submit nominations of candidates. You may nominate yourself. **Nominations must be received by February 18.** Please send your nomination and nominee's contact information to the address below.

Nominees must be members of Friends of Fakahatchee, be at least 18 years of age, and agree in advance to serve if elected. They must be willing to participate actively in the business of the Board, and attend monthly meetings from November through April. They must submit brief biographical information, indicating interests and experience relevant to serving on the Board.

The term of office is two years with one possible re-election. Activities are reduced during the summer and necessary business is conducted by e-mail or US mail. Seasonal residents are encouraged to participate.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- Feb 18 Deadline for nominations
- March 7 Deadline for nominee's biographical information
- March 21 Ballots mailed to membership (US Mail)
- April 4 Deadline to postmark completed ballots (US Mail)
- April 11 Results of Election announced at Annual Meeting

Allen Caldwell, Chairman, Nominating Committee
2600 Cardena St., Ph-3, Coral Gables, FL 33134
phone: (305) 443-2490, email: llewdlacnella@msn.com



Thanks to Howard Lubel & Rose Flynn, Saul & Iris Freiss, Jim & Niki Woodard, David Bogardus, and Dino Barone for organizing and staffing an FOF booth at the Ft Lauderdale Orchid Show on January 14-16. They spoke to a number of people who expressed interested in what we do. And thanks to Chris Crepage from FLOS for her help.

LOCAL SUPPORT

FOF will be the beneficiary of donations at the "Paddle-In" evening in Chokoloskee on **Saturday, February 19**, which is the last round-up for a week-long event organized by member Captain Charles Wright of Everglades Area Tours. For more info, see www.evergladesareatours.com or phone him at (239) 695-3633.





Take A Walk on the Wild Side of Southwest Florida

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26

11:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.

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

Campground 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 with Story-telling

GREAT AUCTIONS

Some of the items donated for the Auctions are:

- a 40x56-inch photo of the Fakahatchee by Clyde Butcher
- a hand-colored photograph by Niki Butcher
- a framed Ghost Orchid photograph by Jay Staton
- a weekend for 2 at the Carroll Camp in the Fakahatchee
- a weekend for 2 at the Ivey House B&B in Everglades City
- a guided canoe trip for 2 from North American Canoe Tours
- a Swamp Walk for 2 led by Rick Cruz & Julie Cardenas
- a Panther Tracking Tour led by Dennis Giardina
- a Fakahatchee Coastal Cruise for 2

All proceeds benefit the Friends. 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.

GUEST APPEARANCE

Renown photographer Clyde Butcher will attend the SAFARI and has been making a promotional video on our behalf. Our thanks for his support.



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 will be offered a one-year non-voting introductory membership in FOF.

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



The Fakahatchee SAFARI campground is off Janes Scenic Drive across from the park office in Copeland. From I-75 take Exit 80 and travel south on SR-29 about 15 miles. From US-41, go north on SR-29 about 3 miles.



Saturday, February 26 – RESERVATION (one form per person)

Name _____

Street/POBox _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ email _____

I would like to take part in the following activities that I have checked:

- 11:00am – 5:30pm Registration (Please check in at the Welcome Desk when you arrive)
- 11:00am – 5:30pm Art & Nature Gallery (Local Photography & Artwork)
- 11:00am – 2:00pm Early-Bird Photo Safari (wet)
- 12:00pm – 12:15pm Orientation, announcements
- 12:00pm – 3:00pm Swamp Walks, led by expert naturalists (wet)
- 12:00pm – 3:00pm Swamp Buggy Ride, interpreted by expert naturalists
- 12:15pm – 12:45pm Prescription for a Fire, presentation & live fire demonstration
- 12:30pm – 2:00pm Tram Ride, interpreted by expert naturalists
- 1:00pm – 1:30pm Shy Wolf Sanctuary presentation & live demonstration
- 1:00pm – 4:00pm Swamp Buggy Ride, interpreted by expert naturalists
- 1:30pm – 4:30pm Swamp Buggy Ride, interpreted by expert naturalists
- 1:45pm – 2:15pm Bats in South Florida
- 2:15pm – 4:30pm Birding Safari at Boardwalk (you will be bussed to & from location)
- 2:15pm – 4:30pm Nature Walk, led by expert naturalists
- 2:30pm – 3:30pm Pythons & Other Exotics presentation & live specimen
- 3:00pm – 4:30pm Tram Ride, interpreted by expert naturalists
- 3:45pm – 4:15pm Nature Photography & 3D with equipment demonstration
- 4:30pm – 7:30pm **EVENING PROGRAM**
Informal Reception with Live Music and Beverages, Cookout BBQ Dinner
Live Auction, Results of Silent Auction, Sunset Campfire & Story-Telling

_____ Enclosed is my reservation for The Fakahatchee SAFARI \$ 125.00

_____ Optional Swamp Buggy Ride \$ 40.00

TOTAL \$ _____

Send check payable to "FOF" before February 21 to FOF Safari, P.O.Box 35, Everglades City, FL, 34139
or **BOOK ONLINE** with a credit card at www.orchidswamp.org

President's Message

The Friends of Fakahatchee has recently assumed a new role for the Park Service. A while back US Fish & Wildlife approached the Friends to see if we would become an intermediary for Mitigation Funds. The Park Service has had cases of land being deeded to the Fakahatchee Strand in exchange for granting mitigation credits in other areas.

A new development has occurred in that not only land is deeded, but also funds to manage the deeded mitigation land that is transferred. The Friends of Fakahatchee became involved because there is some statute that prohibits the State from directly accepting and managing the mitigation money.

Thanks to Dennis Giardina and Renee Rau who knew all of the agencies involved, this is what has been worked out.

Barron Collier Investments Ltd needed to have mitigation offsets for land that they owned and wanted to develop on Oil Well Road. For the mitigation credit, Barron Collier Investments Ltd deeded 363.7 acres of land they owned in the Fakahatchee Strand near the east side of our Boardwalk to the Park Service. In addition Barron Collier Investments wrote a check for \$329,667 that was deposited with the Wildlife Foundation of Florida Mitigation Trust Funds with very specific contractual instructions on how to invest and manage the money.

Each year the Wildlife Foundation of Florida Mitigation Trust Funds will send a check to the Friends of Fakahatchee to pay for the services needed to maintain the 363 acres. This is how we became the conduit for the funds.

Our Park Staff then had to develop a 5-year budget on how they would spend the approximately \$14,000 received in interest each year to manage the newly deeded 363.7 acres. The Fakahatchee has only about \$44,000 in direct operating budget from the State each year. One can see how this extra money can make a significant difference. Truly a Win-Win situation for both Barron Collier Investments and the Fakahatchee!

It is intended that this agreement become the prototype for future mitigation credits

On January 22nd, Marya Repko organized another Fakahatchee Bay Coastal Cruise. It was well attended by 21 hardy souls who braved the 55 degree temperature and cold winds. A huge THANK YOU to Marya, to Glen Stacell and Karen Relish who did the interpretation, and to Tom Leonard who assisted.

The Coastal Cruises have become very popular with the next one scheduled March 20th. Weather should be a bit milder by then

See you in the Park ...
Tom Maish

THANKS to

Butler Pappas Weihmuller Katz Craig LLP of Tampa who have donated generously for the third year at the suggestion of members Barbara & Louis Schulman. United Way of Miami who sent a substantial sum at the behest of an anonymous donor.

BOARDWALK REPORT

January is a busy month on the Boardwalk with an increased number of visitors. They are always excited to catch sight of an eagle parent sitting high on the nest, often leaning forward as though tending to eggs or young. In the past several years eggs have typically hatched around mid-January and on January 28 we saw an eaglet peeking out of the nest. People are often gathered in the area with cameras and tripods watching for the perfect picture. It also appears that we have two young in the osprey nest.

“What killed all these trees?” is a common question from visitors at this time of year. Our deciduous bald cypress trees actually look as though they are dead right now, and people are relieved to hear that they will be leafing out in beautiful green needles again in February and March.

Each year Nelson and I count the royal palm trees and usually record nearly 100 trees visible from the Boardwalk. This year we notice that we are not able to spot some of the previously documented trees that are located 15-20 yards out because there is such an increase of plant life, probably a result of Hurricane Wilma. Two or three young palms seem to be getting a good start. There are more myrsine plants than usual and an increase of leather and royal fern. Poison ivy is flourishing along the Boardwalk!

Life is a little quieter at the alligator pond these days. There is an alligator with one or two babies along the canal approaching the boardwalk, but neither of the adult alligators at the pond has produced young this year. Many visitors fondly recall other years when we had alligator babies of various sizes stretched out on the big log. We show them our photograph album that we have kept over the years and then we point out what they can see on this visit this year. We explain that things are often not even the same two days in a row. We have not heard of any bear sightings in the past two weeks, but a few days ago we had a large flock of migrating robins settle in the tallest branches, and the whole forest was alive with their songs. As Mike Owen says, “Anything can happen in the Fakahatchee!”

The Boardwalk work crew has been hard at work. Dick Hughes, Bud Scott, Bob Barrows and Nelson Tilden have increased their work days from twice a month to weekly. They have replaced a section of decking at the rest bench corner nearest the bald eagle's nest, installed several supports to shore up wobbly railings, replaced several deck boards and added several hundred feet of new railing tops. Those of you who have visited recently have noticed that they have also built a small platform at the eagle's nest sign for tripod users. This helps to relieve the congestion as visitors try to observe and photograph the bald eagles. While the work crew is doing repairing, Edite Hughes works hard sweeping and keeping the Boardwalk clean. We appreciate her efforts.

This is a beautiful time of year on the Boardwalk. As always, we invite you to join us!

Caryl Tilden, Volunteer Naturalist

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 314 memberships plus 6 from the 4th quarter who are in arrears. Renewal notices for the 1st quarter were sent with the January newsletter. Thanks to the 84 people who have replied so far.

Welcome to new members:

- Miguel Caridad, Coral Gables
- Susan Catron, Naples
- Steve Paddon & Janet Perkins, Copley, OH
- Marlene Soderfan, Chokoloskee
- Barbara & Dan Van Antwerp, Ft Myers



Thanks to Dave Gates, a volunteer at Big Cypress National Preserve, for this photo of the bald eagle taken on January 6 with a Canon EOS T2i and ES 100-400mm zoom lens at 400mm.



Clyde Butcher has donated a huge photo taken in the Fakahatchee for the SAFARI auction (see page 3).

February Is Festivals!

- Feb 5/6: **Everglades Seafood Festival**, Everglades City, www.evergladesseafoodfestival.com
- Feb 10: **Collier Audubon Gala** with Randy Wayne White, www.collieraudubon.org
- Feb 12/13: **“Jammin’ in the Hammock”** Bluegrass Festival, Collier Seminole State Park, (239) 394-3397
- Feb 19: **Paddle-In**, Everglades Area Tours, Chokoloskee www.evergladesareatours.com
- Feb 19-21: **Presidents’ Day “Muck About”**, Big Cypress Gallery, www.clydebutcher.com
- Feb 22-25: **Marjory Stoneman Douglas Festival**, Everglades City, www.evergladesmuseum.org
- Feb 26: **Fakahatchee SAFARI**, www.orchidswamp.org

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