



The Ghost Writer

FEBRUARY 2013

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

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Saturday

Cost: \$70 (\$50 for members)

Reservations Required.

Phone (239) 695-1023

or email FOF_90@hotmail.com

or book online at our website

See article on page 2

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Wednesday

Saturday, February 9

Wednesday, February 20

See article on page 2

BOARD MEETING

Sunday, February 3, 10 a.m.

Ranger Station, Copeland

For info, phone (239) 370-2654

ANNUAL PICNIC

Saturday, March 2, 12 noon

Mesce Pavilion, Copeland

For info, phone (239) 695-2905

Elam Talk

Thursday, March 14, 5:30 p.m.

Bellasera Hotel, Naples

For info, see our website or

phone (239) 695-2905

MORE EVENTS

Feb 9-10: Collier Seminole

Feb 16: Ultra Marathon

Feb 16-18: Muck-About

Feb 19-23: MSD Festival

Mar 9: Art-in-the-Glades

Apr 14: Annual Dinner

See our website and click on Events to download a calendar or to link to more info about what's happening.



photo thanks to Jay Staton

If you missed the very successful talk about "Orchids in Cuba" by Dennis Giardina and Mike Owen at the Players Club & Spa last month, you can hear them on Friday, February 8, at 5:30 p.m. at Rookery Bay in the "Amazing Adventures" series. For info, call (239) 417-6310 or see www.rookerybay.org.

Naples Preserve Nature Talks



FOF member Jack Berninger will give a talk about "Dinosaurs of the Everglades Region" at Naples Preserve on Tuesday, February 12, at 11:00am. He will also be speaking about "The Fabulous Fakahatchee" on Tuesday, March 5. The talks are free and the public is welcome. For info, call (239) 261-4290.



BUTCHER MUCK-ABOUT

Renown photographer Clyde Butcher is celebrating 20 years at the Big Cypress Gallery in Ochopee (on US41 about 20 miles east of SR29) with an Open House on Presidents' Day Weekend, February 16/17/18, from 10:00am to 5:00pm. There will be dry and wet walks, booths from local parks, and talks. Clyde will also be signing his books. For info, see www.clydebutcher.com.

MSD Festival

The Museum of the Everglades holds its annual festival celebrating environmentalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas on February 19 to 23. Activities include talks, walks, and tram rides. Among the speakers are Mike Owen, Jack Berninger, and Franklin Adams (who knew her well). For info, call (239) 695-0008 or see www.MSDfestival.com.



COASTAL CRUISE

One of the highlights of the Coastal Cruise is watching birds settle down for the night in the rookery, as seen in this photo by Francine Stevens. The next available chartered trips to historic Fakahatchee Island take place on Friday Saturday, March 2, and on Wednesday, March 13, starting at 3:00 p.m. from the National Park in Everglades City. Cost is \$75 and reservations are required. Visit our website or call Pam at (239) 695-1023.



ANNUAL MEMBERS' PICNIC

SATURDAY, MARCH 2, from 12:00 noon

Mesce Pavilion, Copeland, donation \$10

Great Food • Raffle • Good Company

RSVP to (239) 695-2905 or FOF_90@hotmail.com



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

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 12/22/13, in the afternoon, while on Mud Tram, Skip Fisher observed 2-Juvenile **White Ibis**, and 10 **American Robins**. On 12/25/12, Amy China, volunteer, observed next to and over Janes Scenic Drive (JSD), 2 **Great Egrets**, and more than 400 **Tree Swallows** circling overhead, then fly off to the South.

On 1/2/13, Tom Trotta observed an Adult **Big Cypress Fox Squirrel** off of US-41 near the Port of the Islands. On 1/4/13, Mike Owen, Biologist, observed south of US-41 during the Ten Thousand Island Bird Count, a **Red-tailed Hawk**, 3 **Tri-colored Herons**, 2 **Roseate Spoonbills**, 2 **Greater Yellow-Legs**, and a **Sora** among other birds. On 1/6/13, in the early afternoon, on the beginning of the JSD, Holly and Norman Roy saw a **Praying Mantis**, a **Chicken turtle**, **Great Egrets**, **White Ibis**, and near the end of the drive, a **Bobcat** walking across JSD and about 50 **American Robins** and a **Red-shouldered Hawk**.

On 1/7/13, Stephen Bass, Ranger, observed 3 **Black Bears** off of Jones Grade. On 1/12/13, while on a volunteer work day, FOF members John Kaiser, Bob Becker, Dave Pickering, and Howard Lubel saw a sub-adult **Black Bear** on the west end of Mud Tram at approximately 12:30 PM. On 1/13/13, between 9-11AM, off of Union Road in Dan House Prairie, Bente Torvund, Administrative Assistant, observed an adult **Northern Harrier**, a **Red-belly Slider**, 8 **Savannah Sparrows**, 10 **Eastern Meadowlarks**, and 1 adult **Green Anole** on a Cabbage Palm frond.

On 1/20/13, Edite Hughes, volunteer, observed and heard 2 **Red-shouldered Hawks** and a **Barred Owl** calling while hiking off Union Road. On 1/21/13, Skip Fisher reported seeing a **Common Snapping Turtle** along JSD and a male **Kestrel** fly to the west over the drive.

If you want to report sightings, contact Park biologist Mike Owen or his assistant Karen Relish by phone at (239) 695-2886 or by email at FOF_90@hotmail.com



VOLUNTEER CORNER

by Jeff Kneisley



We are now full-bore into season and with that said there are many opportunities to join.

I first would like to encourage anyone interested to volunteer for the upcoming Everglades Ultras race on **Saturday, February 16** in the park. Registration of volunteers is done at <http://evergladesultras.com/volunteers.html>.

Our visitor center at the park office should be open by mid-February and there is a need for folks to staff it.

The District 4 Volunteer Appreciation Day will be on **Saturday, March 9** at Lake Manatee State Park. Please RSVP before February 14 if planning to attend. For more info, contact: Jeffrey.Kneisley@dep.state.fl.us.

FEBRUARY WORKDAYS

Feb 9th and 10th: Jammin' In The Hammock Bluegrass Festival at Collier Seminole State Park. Help could be used at the FOF booth.

Feb 20th: Collection of scrap metal and clean up of the park's compound. Please bring gloves and an expectation of visual impact!



COLLIER SEMINOLE

Our sister park, up the road in Naples, is holding its annual Bluegrass Festival, "Jammin' in the Hammock", on **Saturday/Sunday, February 9/10**, from 10:00am to 6:00pm each day.

FOF always has a booth to give out literature and talk with visitors about the Fakahatchee. It's a fun event and volunteers will have a rewarding time. For info, see our website where you can download a poster.

HOW & WHY?

We asked members how they heard about the Fak, why they joined FOF, and what they appreciate about our group. We will have more stories in the next issue. Please send yours to FOF_90@hotmail.com.

I have served various volunteer organizations most of my adult life. When the most recent organization lost their funding, I was vaguely looking for an opportunity. I had been to the boardwalk and must have picked up a copy of *The Ghost Writer* and saw they were looking for volunteers. I was looking to be an "out doors" volunteer so emailed to sign up for the next volunteer day. Found a warm, welcoming hard-working wonderful group of volunteers and absolutely LOVED it. I heard talk of continuing the work days through the summer and I hope that turns into reality as I'd like to do this year round. I so look forward to my Saturdays in the Fakahatchee. Not only are the volunteers and park staff great, but Nature provides the most amazing show each and every time. I highly recommend the volunteer work days. They are awesome. Love my new volunteer "home".

Cynthia Marquez

Tromp in the Swamp

It's now the time to make reservations for Swamp Walks in March (February is mostly sold out). The naturalist-led walks start on the first three Saturdays of the month at 9:30am from the ranger station in Copeland. You can get up-close & personal with the plants and critters of the famous swamp called the "Amazon of North America."



Past participants have said it was their most memorable Florida experience. The walks through knee-to-waist-high water are led by those who know the area well.

Reservations are required. To see a Swamp Walk video and reserve with a credit or debit card, visit www.orchidswamp.org and click "Events." For info, call Pam at (239) 695-1023.

President's Message

by Ray Carroll

By the time you get this newsletter we'll be getting ready for the 2nd running of the Everglades Ultras through Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. Hosting ultra-marathon races (25k, 50k & 50 miles) is a new Park outreach intended to introduce a new user group to a Florida Park they've probably never heard of before. This year the 50-kilometer and 50-mile races are designated as the 2013 USA Track & Field Florida State Championship Trail Races at those distances. Runners move through the Park over the existing system of roads, trams, and pathways. The event leaves no trace on the ground, but it does make lasting memories, it throws off donations to the Park and to the Friends, and it gives us another reason to get the roads, trams, and pathways into top condition for our other winter season users. You can learn more about this race and the interesting people involved in making it happen at www.evergladesultras.com.

You'll see (page 4) that the Board of Directors has filled the vacancy of FOF Treasurer. Kathy da Silva comes to us with excellent academic qualifications and over ten years of experience as CFO of a New England based non-profit. Kathy, welcome aboard! We expect to learn from Kathy.

See you in the swamp ... Ray

NOMINATIONS DUE NOW



Nominations are due no later than **March 6** to fill positions on the FOF Board of Directors. The Board meets every other month during the summer and monthly throughout the remainder of the year (usually on Sunday), sponsors events, raises money, authorizes expenditures, and sets priorities and objectives for both short-term and long-term improvements to benefit the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve. You will get to know and work with park staff and those with an intimate knowledge of what the park has to offer.

A nominee must be a member in good standing at least 18 years of age, verify a willingness to actively participate at board meetings and activities during the two-year term beginning in April, and be prepared to submit a brief statement of background, interests and qualifications. ALL interested members are encouraged to apply. Seasonal residents are welcome. Please do not nominate anyone who has not agreed to serve.

If you are willing to serve, or know a member that is, please send your nomination (including yourself, if interested), with: your name and contact information, and the nominee's name, address, phone, email, and any other contact information, to: friendsoffakahatchee@hotmail.com, or mail to Jim Woodard at 17001 SW 90 Ave., Palmetto Bay, FL 33157, or fax to him at 786.206.8602 as soon as possible.

The deadline for nominations is March 6. Bios are due by March 13. All nominations must be in writing, but questions can be addressed to Jim at the email address listed above or by calling 305.856.4559. If you do not receive an email confirmation of the nomination within two business days, please call the number listed above.

Jim Woodard, Chairman, Nominations Committee
Howard Lubel, Immediate Past President
Marya Repko, Member, Nominations Committee

BOARDWALK REPORT

by Linda Koreny

We have at least one **eaglet** this year! Though one has been sighted many times, only one at any one time, so the total number is still a mystery. Both adult **Florida Bald Eagles** have been actively attending the nest, flying in and out, exchanging places, bringing food to the nest, and sitting on the Watching Tree. So much activity is exciting.

So much activity is everywhere – both the wildlife and the visitors! At any given moment the parking lot is full of cars; obviously, a most popular tourist stop at this end of the state!

The water is dropping, **Cardinal Bromeliads** can be found in bloom and the **Bald Cypress** trees are getting their new leaves making a dramatic change to the landscape. The change is wonderful to watch.

Bird sightings reported this month include **Red-Shouldered Hawks, White Ibis, Great Egrets, Osprey, Red-Bellied, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Carolina Wrens, Great Crested Flycatchers, American Crow, Blue Jay, Catbird, Blue Grey Gnatcatcher and White-Eyed Vireo.**

Our "resident" **Great Blue Heron** which seems to "own" the parking area has been strutting around and regularly sitting on cars – as though he enjoys his reflection in the car windshields; the other day he was seen stabbing at a windshield wiper – wonder what he was thinking ...



Other sightings include **Turtles, Alligators** both juvenile and adult, **Deer, Cottonmouth and Black Racer Snakes** and the adult **Florida Black Bear** with her two cubs.

On **Saturday, February 16**, the Boardwalk was chosen as the location for the monthly **Art-in-the-Preserve** – what a place for inspiration! Contact Karen at (239) 695-2886 or lizardart@gmail.com for information.

Bring a pair of binoculars on your next visit to enhance your experience and please contact me with questions, sightings, experiences, and/or interest in the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk – lkoreny@gmail.com.

Young Birders at the Boardwalk

by Karen Relish

On January 12, Kathy Hatch, Cyril Marks and I joined some Young Birders and their family members from the Collier County Audubon on the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. Their compiled list of what they saw included a Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Turkey vulture, Tree swallows, Palm warblers, Blue Gray Gnat Catchers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, American Robins, Bald Eagles and Osprey. They also heard Catbirds, White-eyed Vireo, Barred Owl, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

They are working on a Blue Bird project and with the assistance of Fakahatchee volunteers and support of the Friends of Fakahatchee. Blue Bird Box kits were provided to the appreciative Young Collier Audubon members.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 361 memberships plus 14 in arrears from the 4th quarter of 2012. Thanks to everyone who renewed promptly after getting notices in January.

Welcome to new members since our last newsletter:

- Sandra Capanci, Naples
- Peter Cookro, Marco Island
- Kathy da Silva, Naples
- Tom Fuess, Ft Myers
- Jeremy Gauger, Miami Beach
- Matt Hedrick, Ft Lauderdale
- Joanne Johnston, Punta Gorda
- Bert McDaniel, Naples
- Marjorie & Robert Moore, West Palm Beach
- Gus & Mary Morris, Everglades City
- Joseph & Virginia Mulligan, Naples
- Neil & Ginny O'Connor, Bonita Springs
- Vincent & Nancy Prior, Naples
- Monika & Andy Schomburg, Naples
- Henry Sanchez, Miami
- Susan Small, Raleigh, NC
- Leonard & Elisa Zullo, Naples



NEW TREASURER

The Friends of Fakahatchee board completed its search for a new treasurer at its January 13 meeting naming Kathleen da Silva of Naples to the post. The board also elected Kathy to fill the remainder of former treasurer Dino Barone's board term.

Kathy retired last year as treasurer of M/A-COM Technology Solutions in Lowell, Mass. In addition to serving as an officer of the \$70 million company, she held board positions with several non-profit organizations in the Lowell area. She is an honors graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Lowell with a Masters of Business Administration.

"We are thrilled to have Kathy join our board," said Finance Committee Chairman Tom Maish. "Her enthusiasm and expertise will be invaluable to the Friends of Fakahatchee as we move forward."

What Are We? Who Are We?

The Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation Citizen Support Organization, provides financial and volunteer support to preserve the unique ecology and cultural heritage of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and to educate the public about its importance. The Fakahatchee is 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 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 – Ray Carroll Vice-President – Jimene Rinehart
 Secretary – Francine Stevens Treasurer – Kathleen da Silva
- BOARD: Bruce Bunch Ray Carroll Kathleen da Silva Frank Denninger Shaun Floyd Dennis Giardina
 John Kaiser Howard Lubel Cynthia Peters Jimene Rinehart Glen Stacell Francine Stevens Charles Wright
- LIFETIME MEMBERS: James Nici, Warner Blow, Tom & Judy Maish
 PRESERVERS OF THE FAKAHATCHEE: Bruce & Janet Bunch
 BUSINESS PATRONS: EarthTech Environmental, Naples Bicycle Tours, North American Canoe Tours, Shamrock Bank, Shurr Adventures

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NEW 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) Patron (\$100) Benefactor (\$500)
- Lifetime Individual (\$1,000) Lifetime Family (\$1,500) Protector (\$2,500) Preserver (\$5,000)
- Business Patron (\$200) Business Benefactor (\$500) Extra Donation (\$ _____)
- Youth (\$10) under 18 (birth date: month ___ day ___ year _____)

NAME _____
STREET / P.O.BOX: _____

EMAIL _____
ALTERNATE ADDRESS _____

CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____

CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____

MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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