

The Ghost Writer

MARCH 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

TRAM TOURS

Tues/Thurs in April

Reservations Required.

Phone (239) 695-1023

or book online at our website

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Wednesday

Saturday, March 9

Wednesday, March 20

See article on page 2

BOARD MEETING

Sunday, April 14, 2:00 p.m.

Ranger Station, Copeland

For info, phone (239) 370-2654

"Sights & Sounds of Florida"

with Elam Stoltzful
and Grant Livingston

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

Bellasera Hotel, Naples

See article on page 3

For info, see our website or
phone (239) 695-2905

MORE EVENTS

Mar 7: Amazing Adventures

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.



FOF volunteer Glen Stacell addresses participants on a tram tour and then takes them for a walk in the strand. If you would like to help by driving or interpreting, contact Tom Maish at (239) 478-0077.

Tram Tours a Big Hit!

The response to the full-page spread about the "Ghost Rider" Tram Tours in the *Naples Daily News* on February 24 was so overwhelming that we had to add 8 more trips and they were booked out within a few days. Now, the good news is that we have our own tram and have set new dates for more trips on Tuesdays and Thursdays in April. Cost is \$25 and reservations are required. You can book online at our website or phone Pam at (239) 695-1023.

COASTAL CRUISE

Thanks to new FOF member Marcelo Alvarez for this photo of the sunset taken on a Coastal Cruise in February. The next available chartered trips to historic Fakahatchee Island take place on on **Wednesday, March 13**, and on **Saturday, March 30**, 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.



TROMP IN THE SWAMP

The last swamp walks of the season are scheduled on **March 9**, **March 14**, and **April 6**. Be prepared to get wet to the waist as you gaze in wonder at the fabulous Fakahatchee. You can book online or call Pam at (239) 695-1023.



Scenes from Four Stakes Prairie

FOF member and Everglades artist Jo-Ann Sanborn has been painting in Four Stakes Prairie. She will have an Open House on **Thursday, March 21**, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at her Sunshine Studios gallery in The Esplanade at 760 N. Collier Blvd, Marco Island. For info, see www.joannsanborn.com.

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

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 1/27/13, around 8:30AM, between Gate 15-Gate 16, Mike Cullinan, volunteer, observed for a half an hour, a **Barred Owl** plunge into the water off of the ditch off of Janes Scenic Drive (JSD), seemingly after prey then return to sitting and waiting on the edge of the water then back toward the water trying, though unsuccessfully, to scratch out prey from under a log, then back to just looking around the water's edge. At 12 :15PM, Mike Cullinan observed a **Bobcat** about 0.25 miles north of Gate 1.

On 1/31/13, around 8:20AM, between 1.5 to 1.7 miles West of US-41/SR-29, Bente Torvund, Administrative Assistant, observed seventeen **White Pelicans** flying over US-41, as well as two **Roseate Spoonbills**, and two **Glossy Ibis** feeding in the marsh off of US-41. On 2/1/13, around 9AM, on the fence next to Park Headquarters, Mike Owen, Biologist, observed an **Eastern Phoebe** and later that morning, at the Ballard Cabin, on East Main, he observed two Belted **Kingfishers**, one **Anhinga**, two **American Crows**, four **White Ibis**, one **Great Egret** and one **Little Blue Heron**. Also over Ballard Pond, he observed approximately fifty **Tree Swallows** drinking from the surface of the Pond. On his return to the office, he observed a male **American Kestrel** near the beginning of the Drive.

On 2/4/13, around 9AM, Dee Leonard, volunteer, observed an adult, light brown **Everglades Mink** adult run to the west near K2. On 2/5/13, in the early evening, in the first two miles of JSD, Mike Owen heard a **Downy Woodpecker** and three **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** call and saw an **Eastern Phoebe** as well as a female **Northern Harrier**. On 2/6/13, at 10:40AM, prior to Gate 7, Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, observed a small adult dark brown **Everglades Mink** run across JSD from North to South. *See the note about mink on the page 3.*

On 2/7/13, at 4:35PM, Steve Houseknecht, observed two **Black Bears**, an adult and a cub, go to the east just after Gate 12, East Main. On 2/6/13, in the early evening, around Gate 7, West Main, Mike Owen heard two **Great Horned Owls** calling and on 2/14/13, while at Gate 19, he heard two **Barred Owls** calling.

On 2/17/13, around 10:22AM, Steve Houseknecht, observed a **Short-tailed Hawk** (black morph) flying over the Shop Area. On 2/19/13, around 2:45PM, Renee Rau, Park Manager, and Bente Torvund observed an adult **Bald Eagle** soaring low over Headquarters. On 2/23/13, at 9:36AM, George Wilder, visitor observed a **Green Anole** on the south steps of the Administration building.

On 2/24/13, Karen Relish, OPS Ranger, observed a **Red-shouldered Hawk** flying and carrying a **Black Racer** over Firetower Pond to the West. On 2/24/13, at 8-8:15AM, over Dan House Prairie, Bente Torvund, observed two perched **Orange-crowned Warblers** along with a male **Northern Parula** in Oak trees, and two perched **Savannah Sparrows** in Florida Bully trees, as well as one **Grasshopper Sparrow** close to the ground (*see photo below*).

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



The Everglades Ultras races were a success! Thank you to everyone that volunteered for the race and those that conned their friends into doing the same! It was also a measure of success for all of the dogged days put into trail work from the past several months.

The visitor center is basically finished and we just need a few more volunteers to open it with full coverage.

You can email me at jeffrey.kneisley@dep.state.fl.us.

MARCH WORKDAYS

Saturday March 9: The workday will meet at 9am on the Jones Grade side to the North lakes. The day will be spent trimming trail on the north side of the lakes. This is in preparation for the St Patrick's Day races.

Wednesday March 20: The workday will be trimming on Janes Scenic Drive starting from Gate 12. Meet at the shop at 9am or drive to Gate 12 by 9:30am.



Thanks to Bente Torvund for this photo of the grasshopper sparrow she saw in Dan House Prairie in later February. The prairie is named after a local pioneer who farmed there in the 1930s. The House family is still prominent in the Everglades City area.



Fakahatchee Artists at Museum

Works from the group who meet once a month in the Fakahatchee are on show in the Pauline Reeves Gallery at the Museum of the Everglades this month. An informal reception to meet the artists takes place on **Saturday, March 9**, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

The paintings and sketches, such as this one by Rose Flynn, were all inspired or created within the park during their Art-in-the-Preserve “En Plein Air” sessions on the third Saturday from January through April, thanks to Elizabeth Smith of Buildersmith.com for her expertise and leadership.

The Museum is in Everglades City at 105 W. Broadway, the little pink building just off the circle. It is open Tuesday through Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and on Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free but donations are welcome. For info, call (239) 695-0008.

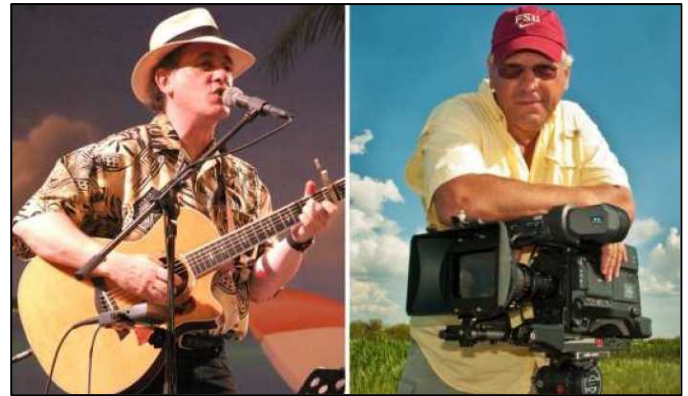
Who Saw the Everglades Mink?

FOF biologist Mike Owen would like to hear from the visitors who saw a pair of these elusive little critters on February 5 and then stopped into the visitor center the next day to report them.

Mike says it is rare to see two mink together although it is breeding season now (February 1 to March 15). He would like to know how big the mink were, where they were seen on JSD, and at what time of day. He can be reached by phone at (239) 695-2886.



Thanks to Jay Staton for the photo of volunteers and runners at the Everglades Ultras in the Fakahatchee on February 16. For Jay’s films of the races and the results, see www.evergladesultras.com.



Sights & Sounds of Florida

Singer/songwriter Grant Livingston and filmmaker Elam Stoltzfus feature in our special evening on **Thursday, March 14**, at the Bellasera Hotel in Naples from 5:00 p.m. onwards.

Elam has recently completed a 1000-mile trek (in 100 days) from the south to the north of Florida in search of the wild heart of our state and will show clips of his film about the epic voyage.

Cost is \$30 which includes a drink and refreshments. Reservations are required. You can book online with a credit/debit card or fill in the form to send with a check. For info, phone (239) 695-2905.

Big Cypress Talk

Local historian Marya Repko will give a free illustrated presentation on **Saturday, March 16**, about Deaconess Harriet Bedell who helped the local Seminoles. The event takes place at 1:00 p.m. in the Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center in Ochopee. For info, call (239) 695-4758.

PANTHER FESTIVAL

Florida Panther Day is **Saturday, March 16**, at the Panther Refuge on SR-29 just north of I-75. Activities start at 7:30 a.m. with a Bird Walk and continue throughout the day with buggy rides, swamp walks, and native plant walks. For info and reservations, see www.fws.gov/floridapanther or call (239) 353-8442 ext. 229.



AUCTION & CONCERT



A weekend at the Carroll Camp in the Fakahatchee and a swamp walk led by Mike Owen are just two of the items up for bids at the silent auction to benefit CREW (Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed) Land & Water Trust during a concert on **Saturday, March 23**, from 6:00 to 9:30 p.m. at Riverside Park in Bonita Springs. For info, see www.CREWtrust.org or call 657-2253.

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 had read an article in the *Palm Beach Post* and was intrigued by "the orchids hanging in the air". I called up and made a reservation for a swamp walk and was escorted by John Elting and Bill Mesce. I was so taken with the swamp that that was the beginning to the end. Passionate members like Jim & Niki Woodard, among others, never failed to include me on outings, providing me with the opportunity to meet many interesting people as well as familiarizing me with the strand.

Joining FOF was, at first, a way of offering support through my membership fee. However, after many years I have made great friends, been on many exceptional adventures, and learned a good deal from the park staff and FOF board members regarding the relationship between CSOs and the Florida State Park system. With the current economy being something to cry about, my membership fee is and has been one of the best and longest rewarding investments that I have ever made.

Shaun Floyd

- How did you hear about the Fakahatchee?

I love natural Florida and when I was a young girl, I used to wander into swamps at my grandfather's place in Jupiter, Florida, with my beagle. Much later, when I saw there was a Sierra Club outing into the Fakahatchee, I signed up ... that was about 15 years ago. I've come back several times to do swamp walks.

- Why did you join the Friends?

So I could stay up-to-date on your activities.

- What is important to you about the Friends?

The Friends help preserve this natural wonder. Someday ... I hope to have time to devote to the organization. Right now, I'm up here in Hollywood, Florida, and working ... which limits my time.

Christine Lee

I know our first exposure was a wet hike with Mike, John Elting, a young woman naturalist who talked about everything else in the swamp but orchids (which Mike covered pretty well!) and the dark-haired guy with the beard who's afraid of snakes which we see every time we hike out with him! Then we must have received the *Ghost Writer* and got to be members that way. I remember going to our first Members' Welcome-Back dinner at Port of the Islands. We had such a good time, that we next went on the 1st Fakahatchee Cruise (the one where it was rainy and FREEZING!) and had dinner after at the Depot. Then there was the great program at the church in Everglades City with Franklin Adams about the early days in EC and the Fak. We just really enjoy everybody we've met through the Friends. I met Karen Relish at Collier Audubon, so there just are so many connections that we are really grateful for.

Janet Bunch

President's Message

by Ray Carroll

Well, we're up to our ears in people wanting a life experience in "The Everglades". Sometimes we call them tourists, but I think they're deeper than that. At any rate, everyone is busy with new Tram Tours on Janes Scenic Drive, Boat Tours to Fakahatchee Island, being docents at Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk, taking visitor surveys and manning the new visitor office at Park Headquarters.

We had a good picnic in Copeland Saturday. We had lots of fun meeting each other and talking about the Park. There was a call for all volunteers to think about who you want to "play" with and starting asking your friends to join you volunteering in the Park. We can see that next year will require twice as many volunteers as we have now, so start recruiting. Contact Marya or me if you want to get plugged in.

What have we accomplished? This year we've helped fund the most comprehensive and successful prescribed burn program in Park history; burning for the first time several thousand acres in the west part of the park. We've repaired lots of essential equipment including a heavy pickup truck and swamp buggy that get used all the time. We had great success with our first annual appeal letter & wish list which generated over \$8,000 in direct park support. We added a Tram Tour on Janes Scenic Drive. We conducted an organizational audit and are in the midst of an internal assessment to prepare us for the major undertaking of improvements at the Fakahatchee Boardwalk at Big Cypress Bend. Last, but not least, we've just acquired membership/donor management software that lays the foundation to grow our membership and develop donors.

The coming year is challenging the Board to organize more efficiently. We'll be starting a Board assessment & training program, we'll review our bylaws, we'll reorganize the committee structure, and we'll develop a budget that can serve as an effective management tool. We're looking at offering additional visitor experiences and developing the Visitor Center at park headquarters where we can offer a broader line of merchandise. Most important, in 2013-14 we'll provide the highest level of park support in the history of our organization.

I invite you to be part of the fun. Come see what we have to offer, volunteer, or just keep supporting in the ways you can. From the Board of Directors, from park staff, and from all the volunteers, thanks for your support.

See you in the swamp ... Ray

ELECTION



Nominations for candidates to the election for Board of Directors closed on March 6. Ballots will be posted to all members in good standing on March 22 and must be returned with a postmark on or before April 5. The results will be announced at the Annual Meeting & Dinner on April 14. Thanks to everyone who cooperated in this endeavor.

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



Donna Tarmey, a visitor from Massachusetts, took this wonderful photo of the eaglet with parent at the Boardwalk in mid-January. She emailed:

I was on vacation with my husband. This was the first time my husband has traveled with me on a photography trip. I am a nature photographer. I was there for 3 days. I visited the Big Cypress Welcome Center and they told me about the eagle. It was taken with a Canon 7D with a 500mm lens with a 1.4 extender. I set up in the tripod niche and waited for the right moment. I was there for about 2 hours. The sky was clouded which does not make for the best image. So I said to my husband "OK I need blue sky with puffy white clouds, with the eagle in the back ground and the eaglet in front." My husband took a walk down the boardwalk and it all came together. It gives me such joy to share my images. Photography is just a hobby. I own a construction company. I have thousands of wildlife images. I have been to about 20 of the National Parks. I was asked by a person while I was taken this picture if it was not the national bird would I have taken the picture. My response was absolutely I will take a picture of anything. I enjoy taking pictures of landscapes, people, sports, animal and birds. I took hundreds of images while I was in the Everglades.

NEW TRAIL OFF JSD

The Alligator Amblers branch of the Florida Trails Association have marked a new trail with their orange blazes in the Fakahatchee.

FOF and FTA member Jean Bub wrote:



A nice circuit goes from Gate 18 south to Mud Tram, out to Janes Scenic Drive, then back along Janes to Gate 18, a total of about 5 miles. If anyone wants companionship to explore it, we'd be glad to go along. Contact me at jbubwm@gmail.com anytime.

The FTA has been involved with trail development at Fakahatchee for at least 10 years, off and on – you'll see our blazes on several tram roads and back-country trails. We are glad of the opportunity to work on trails out there.

To learn more about FTA see <http://amblers.floridatrail.org/>.

BOARDWALK REPORT

by Linda Koreny

Ahhhhh, it seems that spring is in the air ...

Our young (1-year and 2-year-old) **Alligators** and their mother seem to be slowly moving down the borrow canal and can now usually be seen from the opening across from the corner of the Indian Village fence mostly in the afternoon. You must often look for them through the vegetation.

Our young **Bald Eaglet** is growing – no longer looking like a ball of fluff but nearly the size of his/her parents! He is now flapping his/her wings. One visitor sent this great photo along to share with you.

From the behavior it appears that there may also be young **Osprey(s)** in the Osprey nest. The nest can be viewed from that short jog in the railing near the Pond Apple Sign.

A couple of visitors excitedly shared with me that they had watched the mating of a pair of **Red Shouldered Hawks**.

Always a favorite place for birders, this month they have been reporting these sightings: **Black & White Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Yellow Throated Warbler, Common Yellow Throat, Tufted Titmouse, Blue-Grey Gnatcatcher, Red Bellied Woodpecker, Black-Crowned Night Heron.**

Small details are as interesting as the larger ones, such as, **Zebra Longwing** and **Ruddy Daggerwing Butterflies**, tiny **Green Tree Frogs** on fern stems, **Anoles, Turtles** and small **Fish**.

Fascinated by the spider webs I often see while walking along the boardwalk, one day there was a **Silk Spider** vertically suspended in what looked like mid-air overhead near the Sword Fern Sign. He was, of course, in the middle of a finely woven, delicately looking, beautifully symmetrical vertical web secured by the trees on *both* sides of the Boardwalk. Almost immediately one visitor stopped to see what had caught my attention and in short order we had a crowd of visitors admiring and photographing this amazing and beautiful feat of construction.

The **Royal Palm**, listed on the endangered native plant list, is native to south Florida. One day each year for the past several years Boardwalk volunteers along with Mike Owen, the Park Biologist, have been taking a survey of these magnificent trees. Each tree has been given its own identification number and then the height, the distance from the Boardwalk and the health of the palm is recorded. The number of these trees which can be seen from our Boardwalk have steadily increased over the years. In 2004 69 were recorded, the number increased to 87 in 2006 and this year the number has risen to 104! Only by keeping this data do we know that our population of these trees is growing.

You can contact me with your Boardwalk photos and experiences at lkoreny@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 374 memberships including 66 who have not renewed yet for the 1st quarter and will get reminders by post. You can join or renew with a credit/debit card on our website.

FOF Secretary Francine Stevens is taking over responsibility for membership from Marya Repko who has been handling it for almost ten years.

Welcome to new members since our last newsletter:

- Marcelo & Betty Alvarez, Naples
- Jeanne Connelly, Washington, DC
- Matthew Dangel, Columbus, OH
- Paul Joslyn, Ft Myers
- Peter Kambourakis, Estero
- Larry Lawrence, Naples
- Lynn Livingston, Marco Island
- Michael & Suellen Maxwell, Naples
- Henry Sanchez, Miami
- Martin Scherr, Washington, DC
- Pamela Talkin, Washington, DC



FOF President Ray Carroll addressed about 60 members and guests at the Annual Picnic at the Mesce Pavilion in Copeland on March 2. Thanks to Cynthia Peters for organizing the food, to John Kaiser for grilling the hotdogs, and to those who brought dishes to share.

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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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