



The Ghost Writer

APRIL, 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
or email islandgirlm@msn.com

GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

1st Saturday, April 3 and May 1

Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child
Reservations Required.
Phone (239) 695-1023
or email islandgirlm@msn.com

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Tuesday

April 10: Culverts
April 20: tba
If you can help, phone (239) 695-1023.

BOARD MEETING

Sunday, April 11, 1:00 p.m.

Port of the Islands
Members Welcome.

ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING

ANNUAL MEMBERS' DINNER

Sunday, April 11, 5:00 p.m.

Port of the Islands
See page 4 for details.

AMAZING ADVENTURES

"Whale Watching in the Sea of Cortez"
by Ralph Arwood & Deborah Jansen

Friday, April 2, 6:30 p.m.

See www.rookerybay.org

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

A week prior to the Swamp Safari, near sunset, Jim and Niki Woodward observed a **Great Horned Owl** perched in a Cypress tree in the East Prairies off of Janes Scenic Drive (JSD). On 2/19/10, in the morning, Alicia Campanella, Park Ranger, observed two **Red-bellied woodpeckers** about 15 feet up in the cypress tree across from the Mel Finn Memorial Rock at the Park Headquarters.

On 2/19/10, Ian Bartoszek and Melinda Schuman of The Conservancy, observed a **Red-shouldered hawk** with a dead Green Heron in its talons over JSD around Gate 16/Mud Tram. They also observed two **Florida Box turtles** and two **Florida Snapping turtles** along the drive on 2/24/10.

On 2/22/10, in the early evening, near Gate 12, an **Everglades mink** with an injured eye was rescued to The Conservancy by volunteer Barbara Stoner, Park Manager Renee Rau, and Park Biologist Mike Owen. On 2/24/10, Renee Rau observed a two foot long **Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake** basking on the shoulder of US-41 in the Western section of Fakahatchee.

On 2/24/10, in the morning, Glen Stacell, volunteer, observed an adult **Everglades mink** run across JSD around Gate 2. On 2/27/10, Mike Owen observed 35 **White Pelicans** fly to the south over the Park Headquarters. Later that day, he also noted a **black rail** fly from the Wet Prairie just off the drive On 2/27/10, in the morning, Alicia and Joe Campanella, observed a **bobcat** off of Jones Grade. On 3/8/10, Dan and Pam Yerke, visitors, observed an adult **Florida Panther** walking along the drive around Gate 7.

On 3/8/10, just after noon, Pat and Bill Kapustka, visitors, observed an adult **Everglades mink** run across JSD about 1 mile north of Gate 12. On 3/13/10, mid-morning, part of the Friends of Fakahatchee volunteer Borrow Pit clean-up crew, Fred Townsend (aka Rattlesnake Kid), observed a 4.5 feet long **Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake** on a hammock, around the I-75 and SR-29 Borrow pits. On 3/14/10, in the afternoon, Kathy Hatch, volunteer, and her sister Jenny Mullaney, volunteer, observed a **Northern Harrier** flying over the recently burned prairie on the west side of JSD as well as a two-foot **water moccasin** on the drive.

On 3/15/10, in the late afternoon, Mike Owen observed a **Big Cypress Fox squirrel**, black body and tail with a white nose (*see p.4*), leaping from tree to tree just south of the drive near Gate 2. On 3/18/10 in the morning, Amy Chine, observed two **River Otters** running across the drive near Gate 12. On 3/20/10, at 1:20 PM, while clearing the East Main tram, Alicia and Joe Campanella observed a **bobcat** on the tram one mile North of the cabin.

On 3/21/10, in the morning, Robert Czarnecki, volunteer while hiking in Dan House Prairie observed a Swallow-tailed Kite and a Broad wing Hawk fly over as well as 4 walking stick (insects) on the grass.

On 3/21/10, in the afternoon, Jim and Nikki Woodard, volunteers and Saul and Iris Freis, volunteers observed approximately 12 inch or year old water moccasin on JSD between Gate 7 and Gate 12. They also noted over a hundred baby lubbers around the Park Headquarters.

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

NEWS • PICNIC PICS



The Annual Picnic on March 21 was attended by 75 people, including several new members. Thanks to everyone who contributed and helped out, especially Bill & Pam Mesce for the use of their pavilion and the rangers for helping to set up.

Seen above: “chef” Tom Leonard at the grill supervised by HC Rackley; friends chatting at one of the picnic tables; and Dennis Giardina counting money from merchandise sales (\$450). FOF also received almost \$200 in donations at the raffle table.

Learn About Computers & Photos

Clyde Butcher writes “I have become very much aware of how much photographers depend on PhotoShop. Because I believe photographers need to be in control of their photograph from the moment it is taken until it is printed, I have created a DVD on the techniques I use in PhotoShop. I would prefer that photographers use a darkroom, but PhotoShop allows us to do the next best thing.”

The 3-hour, 2-DVD set costs \$95 and will be shipped by the end of March. The contents are: Introduction, Tools – Overview, Histogram, Images in Layers, Darken Layers, Eraser, Gradient, History Brush, Changing Color to B&W, and B&W Negatives. See www.clydebutcher.com to order online or phone (239) 695-2428.

The Big Cypress Gallery in Ochopee is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



Congratulations!

to Corkscrew Swamp National Sanctuary which has been listed as a Wetland of International Importance, and to PJ Marinelli (FOF swamp walk leader) for his election to the Collier County Audubon Society board. To read more, see www.collieraudubon.org.

Angie's Mink

The little Everglades Mink that was found by member Angie Chestnut and taken to the Conservancy (see *March issue*) is “doing great – eating well and putting on some weight”. She could be released into the wild soon.

FOF By-Law Amendments

The Board of Directors is proposing to adopt the following changes to our by-laws:

1. Extend term of office for President and Vice-President for another year; this is a self-limiting amendment and will expire in 2011.
2. Add a new classification of membership to include “Introductory Membership” which has no voting rights but is included in newsletter circulation and entitled to discounts on Swamp Walks and Canoe Trips.
3. Change the name of the Corporation from “Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Inc.” to “Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.”.

According to the FOF by-laws, members must be notified of these changes before the Board votes on them. If you would like the formal wording, please contact Governance Chairman David Shindle at davids@conservancy.org or phone him during office hours at (239) 325-2665.

HAND FERN (*Cheiroglossa Palmata*) STUDY JANUARY 2010

by Jack Berninger

The Hand Fern is an endangered species found in the Fakahatchee State Park and surrounding Big Cypress. Elaine and I have been conducting a population count along a 1000 meter section of a tram off Janes drive these past 6 years. We have measured Relative Humidity, Poison Ivy, Elevation and Location measurements.

The population count has been adjusted to number of trees with ferns rather than number of plants as it difficult to determine whether multiple ferns on the same tree are separate or does the rhizome or root run from one boot to another sprouting a new frond. All found on Sabal Palm (*Sabal palmetto*).

NUMBER OF TREES along tram with ferns:

| Year | South side | North side |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 2005 | 11 | 6 |
| <i>HURRICANE WILMA 10/19/05</i> | | |
| 2006 | 10 | 7 |
| 2007 | 7 | 4 |
| 2008 | 12 | 10 |
| 2009 | 21 | 14 |
| 2010 | 14 | 8 |

It is interesting to note that the majority of the ferns are on trees located on the south side of the tram. All the ferns from both sides face the tram in varying degrees. None face completely away from the tram. Light maybe a significant factor in spore, gametophyte and root development. This may explain why the plants face the more exposed tram path.

Poison Ivy may also be a limiting factor as 19 trees with ferns had no ivy and only 3 had a small runner of ivy. I did not find any ferns on a tree heavily covered with poison ivy. The Hand Ferns seem to develop on trees with no competition from ivy or other ferns for boot cavities. The ferns were found growing from 30cm to 640cm above the ground with an average of 135cm.

In conclusion: The fern is doing OK. The variability of plants maybe due to light intensities along the tram. Plant destruction resulting from Hurricane Wilma sees to have affected the light intensity. Relative Humidity and Elevation of the tram above the water table both seem to be regulating factors. As measured in past years there is a decrease in R.H. of about 10-15% along the section of the tram where the ferns are found. The elevation change drops 25cm to 50cm along this same section causing a dip in topography.

Note: The best Hand Fern I found with 52 spore capsules in 2009 along a road in Big Cypress just across the road from the FAK is gone. WHY?

President's Message

Editor' Note: President Tom Maish is on a well-deserved vacation but will return in time for the Members' Annual Meeting & Dinner on April 11.

BOARDWALK REPORT

As we reported last time, significant frost damage to several kinds of plants along the boardwalk was caused by temperatures of under 30 degrees during a two day period in January. The good news is that nearly all the plants appear to be recovering. Most of the royal palms have new green center fronds and many of the ferns are sending up new shoots as well. Not so quick to recover are the strangler figs, or so it appears so far.

The fish kill at the gator pond was so severe that hardly any fish have been seen up until a week or so ago when large numbers of minnow-size fish began to appear. The apparent lack of fish has caused the wading birds to look elsewhere for food and those kinds of birds have been scarce lately. The same lack of large fish activity was also seen in the canals by the boardwalk parking area, but in the past couple of weeks the presence of walking catfish has been growing steadily.

It has become apparent that our bald eagle pair has failed to produce a viable chick or two for the first time in several years. A couple of weeks ago the pair were photographed on a limb near the nest, but there have been no sightings or reports of sightings since that time. The familiar comings and goings of the pair with food for the young has stopped and there does not appear to be any remaining activity in the nest. Since feeding activity was observed well after the January cold period, it is not clear that there is any connection between the cold and the loss of the eagle offspring.

We would again like to thank several volunteers who spent many hours working at the boardwalk this winter season. Dick Hughes, Bud Scott, and Bob Barrows were regulars on the construction crew. Edite Hughes kept the boardwalk swept and the interpretive signs clean, and she was assisted by Marg Scott and Kathy Hatch. Kathy also provided interpretation services on Monday afternoons. Other volunteers were Glen Stacell and Dan & Louella London. Part-time ranger Karen Relish has also spent many hours clipping and cleaning along the boardwalk. Rangers Alicia and Terrance were very helpful in transporting lumber for boardwalk repairs and in removing the old wood. We thank everyone for a successful winter season on the boardwalk.

Nelson and Caryl Tilden
Volunteer Naturalists



Thanks to Jim & Niki Woodard for this photo of the eagle taken in December.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 286 memberships in the following categories:

- Benefactor (1)
- Business (7)
- Family (148)
- Individual (106)
- Patron (30)
- Youth (1)

plus 20 Introductory Members who joined after The SAFARI.

Renewals for the 2nd quarter will be sent in May. *The Ghost Writer* is emailed to 274 members, saving over \$120 per issue. If we do not have your email address, please send it to us. We will only use it for official FOF business and will not share it.

Welcome to new members:

- Cynthia Diehl-Peters, Miami Beach
- Malee Earle, Ft Lauderdale
- Gary Goetzelman, Naples
- John Kaiser, Bonita Springs
- Tony Marx
- Carol Rundback
- Joseph Surma

ELECTION FOR BOARD MEMBERS

Please return your ballot in the special envelope provided by **Saturday, April 10**, so they can be counted before the annual meeting on April 11 when the results will be announced.

Thanks to member Dino Barone for this photo of a Big Cypress Fox Squirrel which he saw in February along US-41 around Mile Marker 54. Mike Owen reported (*front page*) that he also saw one on Janes Scenic Drive in March. The squirrel is listed as Threatened by the State.



Annual Meeting & Dinner

Sunday, April 11, at 5:00 p.m.
Port of the Islands



5:00 p.m. Meet & Greet, wine reception
6:00 p.m.

3-Course Dinner served in the dining room
Meeting, election results, awards

Guest Speaker: Mr. Steve Terry

Land Resources Manager and Director of Real Estate Management
for the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

"History and Culture of our Miccosukee Neighbors"

The cost is \$20 per person. Please let us know by Tuesday, April 6. Phone Marya at (239) 695-2905 or BOOK ONLINE with a credit card at www.friendsoffakahatchee.org.

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: _____

ALTERNATE ADDRESS

CITY _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

PHONE _____

MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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