

# The Ghost Writer

MAY 2012

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

## EVENTS

### GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

Will resume in November.

### VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Will resume in November.

### BOARD MEETING

to be advised

Ranger Station, Copeland  
For info, phone (239) 370-2654

### NEW BOARD

The results of the Board elections, announced the the Annual Meeting on April 15, included some familiar names but we are fortunate to also have new talents such as Bruce Bunch, Ray Carroll, and Shaun Floyd. The full list is on the back page.

### NEW COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Finance – Tom Maish  
Vision – Dennis Giardina  
Governance –  
Education & Ecological Interpretation –  
Glen Stacell  
Boardwalk – Tom Maish  
Swamp Walks – John Elting  
Events – Cynthia Peters  
Merchandise – Jimene Rinehart  
Public Relations – Charles Wright  
Membership, Newsletter – Marya Repko  
Website – Jay Staton, Rose Flynn  
Historian – Franklin Adams  
Scrap Book – Jinny Ball  
Volunteer Coordinator – Dino Barone

If you would like to help on any of the committees, contact our president Ray Carroll at (239) 370-2654.

## M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 3/28/12, around 9:25AM, Renee Rau, Park Manager, observed a large adult **Everglades mink** with a critter in its mouth near Mud Tram or Gate 16. On 3/28/12, around 3:30PM, Karen Johnson, volunteer, observed a **Mangrove Cuckoo** at the East River. On 4/2/12, Steven Bass, Park Ranger, observed an Adult **River Otter** off of Jones Grade in the North Ditch. On 4/3/12, around 3:45PM, Don Leonard, volunteer, observed an adult dark brown **Everglades Mink** going north to south across Janes Scenic Drive (JSD) east of Gate 7 (West Main). On 4/17/12, he also saw one near Gate 2.

On 4/3/12, around 8PM, Renee Rau observed an adult **American Bald Eagle** flying around 1.3 miles west of the intersection of SR-29 and US-41. On 4/5/12, around 5:45PM, Renee Rau and her father Larry Rau and Aunt June Rau observed an **Everglades Snail Kite** flying north by northeast over JSD, north of Gate 1. They also observed a **Black Bear** near Gate 2. On 4/7/12, Steven Bass, Park Ranger, observed an approximately 200 pound **Black Bear** near the northeast rock pits. On 4/14/12, Cyndy Marquez, volunteer, observed a **Swallow-tailed kite** over Gate 19. On 4/15/12, Dan and Terry Wilson, volunteers, observed an **Eastern diamondback** and a **skunk** off of SR-29.

On 4/16/12, around 9:45AM, Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, observed a ~2.5 foot shiny **Corn Snake** near the Administrative Building. On 4/21/12, around 9AM, Cyril Marks, volunteer, observed a wet **Red-Shouldered hawk** perched on the line across Firetower pond. On 4/22/12, around 9:15AM, Jay Staton, volunteer, observed a **Swallow-tailed kite** flying over the Park Headquarters.

On 4/22/12, at 5:45PM, Mike Owen, Biologist, and Karen Relish, OPS Park Ranger, observed 12 **Barn swallows** flying north over the ranger station. The weather was 78°F, cloudy and windy. On 4/28/12, around 9AM, Jeff Kneisley, observed a **Southern Ringneck snake** around the Administrative building. On 4/29/12, on a rainy day, Howard Lubel and Rose Flynn, volunteers, while on JSD between 12:14PM and 3:47PM, observed 2 **Red-winged blackbirds**, an **American Alligator**, a **Swallow-tailed Kite**, **Northern Cardinal**, two **Eastern Gray Squirrels**, a **Red-shouldered Hawk**, and numerous **deer** including some fawns.

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



Thanks to Jay Staton for this snapshot of Rose Flynn taking a photo of a buck on Janes Scenic Drive on April 29.

*Letter from our Student*

Greetings from your first Scholarship recipient!

I wanted to again thank you for your generous support. The scholarship funds FOF provided will be prudently used to cover college related costs.

I am pleased to inform you that I have been accepted into The Florida State University Certificate Program in Marine Biology which is a specialized program under the direction of Dr. Felicia Coleman. Only about 10 students are accepted into the program each year and it is excellent preparation for graduate school.

Next summer, as part of the Certificate Program, I will be in an internship at the FSU Coastal and Marine Laboratory which conducts research on environmental issues in the coastal and marine ecosystems of the northeastern Gulf of Mexico that leads to sound policy decisions.

Meanwhile, this summer I will be staying on campus in Tallahassee to take additional courses and to pursue a Directed Independent Study (DIS) under Carly Ryan, a Masters candidate, and Dr. Thomas E. Miller, Professor of Biology. Carly just received grant funding for her research on Orange lined Green Anemones (*Diadumene lineata*) an invasive exotic species. I am very much looking forward to contributing to this research.

Thank you again!

*Matthew Berning*



Rose Flynn sent this photo taken on the Boardwalk on April 16. She says they could hear babies crying and the smaller owl flew closer to them and hissed.

 **VOLUNTEER CORNER** 

by Dino Barone

Hard working attendees on April 14 were Dick Traiser, Richard Martinez, Cyndy Marquez, Jacquie Roecker, Dino Barone, Jeff Kneisley and Steve Houseknecht (Park Rangers).

No sooner had we begun our work day, talking about an isolated shower, it rained on all of us for about 10 minutes. It does not appear that it rained anywhere else in the Park. Our clothes may have been wet, however our spirits were not dampened.

Our goal was to cut back the Hog Plum and Brazilian Peppers between gates 15 & 16, and to open up a couple of windows into the Fakahatchee. We had loppers lopping, and machetes cutting through the Hog Plum and Brazilian Peppers, all the while doing our best to avoid poison ivy, which is abundantly present, and some select inconvenient locations where fire ants have taken up homestead. By 1 PM we had accomplished our goals and then some.

I wanted to say THANK YOU for all the volunteers who took their valuable time and skill sets, and helped out in the Fakahatchee this season. There were many activities, with some running concurrently with each other. The Boardwalk (trimming, maintenance, and rebuilding of the deck at the Gator Pond), Janes Scenic Drive (grading the road, trimming and mowing the sides of Janes, clearing culverts), the Ultra Marathon, the East River, the Trams (clearing of East Main ) and the many trails. Let's not forget the Admin building and the soon to be converted Ranger station, which will become our new Welcome Center in the Park. WOW, what a year of accomplishments.

I am already looking forward to the fall, after our heat, humidity and mosquito season has ended, to get back out there. We have close to 90,000 acres to maintain and yet preserve. Let's get ready to work.

Have a Super Duper Summer, while resting up.

**JOIN THE PARADE!**

Participants are invited to the informal Independence Day celebrations on **Saturday, June 30**, in Everglades City.



The theme of the parade is "Honoring Our Veterans" and everyone is welcome to join in ... by foot, on a bike or golf cart, or with any other vehicle. There are trophies for the best floats. For info and an entry form, phone (239) 695-2695.

### PLAN AHEAD

We are honored to have Roger Hammer agree to talk at our "Welcome-Back" Dinner on **Sunday, December 2**. Roger is the author of *Everglades Wildflowers*, among other books, and knows the Fakahatchee well.

Formal invitations will be sent in October when you will also be able to reserve places on our website.

If you have ideas for other events, phone Cynthia at (305) 865-6758.

### En Plein Air

by Karen Relish

Rain Gear was the fashion for the season finale of the Art in Preserve on April 21 which also happened to coincide with the weekend of Earth Day and World Wide Sketch Crawl Day.



Those who chose to work in water color had a little extra help from Mother Nature (photo above by Elizabeth Smith). Others artists used pencil and ink. We enjoyed listening to a talented artist playing 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century music on her wooden recorder and had access to cover where we moved as needed. Great conversations were had. Another small piece of Fakahatchee was explored and creatively transformed / translated to art.

This event has been approved again for next year and the artist attendees wanted to make sure it got on their 2013 calendar for the third Saturday of the month January through April from 10 AM-2PM. Add those dates to your calendar and join us!



Francine Stevens and Glen Stacell represented FOF at a booth they set up for the Delnor Wiggins State Park Nature Festival on April 14. They were also at the Conservancy on the following weekend for an Earth Day celebration when the weather was less cooperative.



At the ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING & DINNER on April 15, the presidential walking stick was handed over by outgoing president Howard Lubel to new president Ray Carroll. Howard summed up his year in office by listing some of the Friends' many achievements.

Speaker Larry Perez talked dynamically about pythons, the subject of his book *Snake in the Grass*.



We said farewell to Caryl & Nelson Tilden who are moving from the area after ten years of devotion to the Boardwalk. They were presented with a crystal trophy in recognition of their support.



As a former Mel Finn winner, Nelson was then asked to announce this year's award which, much to his surprised delight, went to Caryl.

The delicious roast beef buffet was enjoyed by 78



members and guests at the Everglades Seafood Depot.



# ZOO PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS FOF

by Tom Maish, Boardwalk Vision Chair



It was the “luck of the draw” that seated Judy and me at the table with Tim Tetzlaff, Director of Conservation with the Naples Zoo. We had signed on for the “ZOOobilee” to check out ideas for our Fakahatchee Safari.

During the evening, conversation turned to the Fakahatchee and the importance of its eco-system in the Western Everglades. The Fakahatchee is very unique in that there are three distinct weather climates in a compact area. One goes from a temperate climate, then to subtropical and finally a tropical climate all within this 85,000 acre parcel of Old Florida.

The following summer Tim Tetzlaff sent a note asking if we could meet. During that meeting Tim explained that each year the Naples Zoo Conservation Fund supports a local project as well as its international programs. At the ZOOobilee, a National Geographic Emerging Explorer spoke about the Zoo’s project in Madagascar which provided people living outside a national park with fuel efficient stoves to reduce deforestation. Zoo President Paula Brothers had also requested that this year’s projects include a regional connection.

In the next several meetings we researched the partnership idea with Park Manager Renee Rau and the FOF Board of Directors. Next step was to determine which of the many needs in the Fakahatchee was most critical. It was agreed that more educational interpretive graphics that would provide information to our visitors should be #1 on the list. There are few signs on the Boardwalk and almost none along Janes Scenic Drive. This idea was presented to the FOF Board who enthusiastically endorsed the Zoo Partnership idea.

During February, Tim Tetzlaff (*second left in photo*) met with Renee Rau, Tom Maish and Nelson Tilden at the Boardwalk. Nelson had prepared a suggested list of graphic needs that Tim had a opportunity to review as we walked the length of the Boardwalk. From there Tim went over to drive Janes Scenic with Renee and Mike Owen to better understand what was needed here.

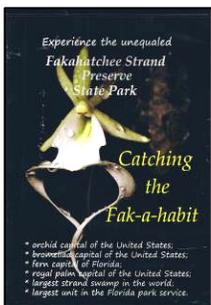


After agreeing on the needs in the Fakahatchee, Renee forwarded the ideas to the Florida Park Service for their comment. The Park Service has required standards for all graphics that are installed in the Park system. During our meeting Renee had a file with requirements from the Park Service. After review, Tim said that it would not be a problem in meeting these requirements.

Everything came together in March when the Naples Zoo Conservation Committee voted for the project and requested funding approval from the Naples Zoo Board. After a Memorandum of Understanding from the Park Service to the Naples Zoo was prepared, the Zoo sent a check for \$15,000 to the Friends of Fakahatchee to start the graphics project.

This is just the beginning. Tim Tetzlaff has considerable experience in graphic design for the Naples Zoo. Tim will work with Renee and the Park Service throughout 2012 to design the signs, gain approval from the State with the goal of installing the new graphics on the Boardwalk and along Janes Scenic in the first quarter of 2013.

The Friends of Fakahatchee extends our grateful appreciation to the Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens for funding this needed project!



The beautiful DVD “Catching the Fak-a-Habit” filmed by FOF member Jay Staton is now available for sale at the Big Cypress visitors’ centers book stores and on the Florida National Parks Association website [www.evergladesassociation.org](http://www.evergladesassociation.org).

## WEBSITE UPDATES

If you haven’t seen our website [www.orchidswamp.org](http://www.orchidswamp.org) recently, visit the home page which now has a short video about wildlife in the Fakahatchee. There are also new photographs in the gallery.

Our thanks to Jay Staton and Rose Flynn for organizing the updates.

## President's Message

Greetings,

Maybe it would help you to know something about me and what I hope we can accomplish together in the coming year.

I'm a Florida native. My family settled what is today Collier County in the late 1800s. As a boy I visited the Fakahatchee Strand led by my grandfathers who were members of one of the hunting clubs that leased large tracts from Lee Tidewater Cypress in the late 1950s and 1960s.

I did not see the Strand before it was logged, but I remember a higher groundwater table and the natural, sheet flow drainage that is so often talked about.

I've never lost my enchantment with the outdoors. Today a group of us own an inholding in Fakahatchee Strand on Fourstake Prairie where we camp during the dry season.

I'm a practicing real estate appraiser with field experience in Collier and Lee Counties. This causes me to have to keep up with land use regulations, environmental issues and land management policies. The economics of south Florida, especially the part environmentally sensitive land plays in that economy, is part of my regular thought process.

We live in a vast, interrelated ecosystem generally described as the Everglades. People from all over the world come to Florida to see Mickey Mouse, South Beach and "The Everglades". We, the Friends of Fakahatchee (FOF), have an opportunity to deliver high quality life experiences to visitors and local residents who seek to understand this complex system.

My goal is to build and prepare your FOF Board of Directors so that together we can marshal the resources that are needed to support Park Staff in their efforts to preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources, and to educate the public through personal experience.

Now is a good time to assess how you want to be involved. We need volunteers of every sort. We need benefactors and we need builders. If you've been troubled not knowing how to do your part, let us help you find a way. Call or e-mail. We're waiting to hear from you.

*Ray Carroll*

## NEW IRON RANGER

by Tom Maish, Chair, Boardwalk Vision

With the departure of Caryl and Nelson Tilden, The Friends' Board had to decide how to handle the donations that are placed in the Iron Ranger at the Boardwalk. These donations are the major source of funds for the repair and rebuilding that has been accomplished on the Boardwalk. Nelson and Caryl always emptied the Ranger and then sorted and counted the money in their "spare time".

Now that there will be more Volunteers involved; a new system has been devised. The new Iron Ranger has locked inner boxes that will be removed and taken to the Park office for counting and deposit. This will eliminate the handling of money at the site.

During the search for someone to fabricate these new boxes; the Ft Myers Institute of Technology was contacted to see if they could help. Mr Mike Remy, Welding Instructor, responded that he would like the Ranger as a training project for the students. The Friends' made drawings and a full size mock-up for the class to understand what was needed. Student Ben Garcia was assigned to perform the fabrication and welding of the Ranger. Ben's craftsmanship is a testimonial to the quality of instruction at Ft Myers Tech!

During one of our progress checks we met Bill McCormick, Director of the Center, who heard of the project and wanted to meet us. Bill expressed his appreciation in our allowing his students the opportunity to work on the project. When we explained that the FOF, in addition to paying for the cost of material involved, also wanted to award the Tech Center a \$200 Scholarship, Bill was delighted!

While taking the photo for the School scrapbook, Mr McCormick noted that the Ranger was not painted and offered the service of the Tech Center's Collision Repair class. Student Sammy Scurry was selected to prime and paint the Ranger and did a very professional job.

The new design Iron Ranger is complete and ready for installation at the Boardwalk. The existing Iron Ranger there will be relocated to the East River Boat Launch site so the Friends will now have three Iron Rangers on duty in the Park.

This project was clearly a WIN: for the Ft Myers Institute of Technology, the FOF, and the Park.



Bill McCormack (director), Mike Remy (welding Instructor), Ben Garcia (welding student), Tom Maish for FOF.

