



The Ghost Writer

OCTOBER 2011

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

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Saturday

starting on November 12

Cost: \$60 or \$50

(\$10 off for members), \$15 child

Reservations Required.

Phone (239) 695-1023

or email islandgirlm@msn.com

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Tuesday

starting on November 12

BOARD MEETING

Sunday, Nov 6, 10:00 a.m.

Ranger Station, Copeland

For info, phone (305) 588-9886

Welcome Back Dinner/Talk

Saturday, Dec 3, 5:00 p.m.

Everglades Seafood Depot

See article on page 3

PLAN AHEAD

Jan 21: Everglades Ultras

Jan 21: Coastal Cruise

Feb 25: Coastal Cruise

March 10: Coastal Cruise

March 25: Members' Picnic

March 25: Coastal Cruise

April 15: Annual Dinner

For info, phone (239) 695-2905 or see our website www.orchidswamp.org where you can book online.

MORE Events on page 2.

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 5/22/11, around 9AM, with an easterly breeze of 5-10mph, Mike Cullinan, FOF member, observed 2 **Florida Black Bears** several hundred yards away opposite Gate 16 and beyond Gate 16. On the same day, he also observed a **Barred Owl** at a large water hole on the Preserve boundary. On 5/22/11, Steven Bass, Exotic Plant Removal Specialist, and Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, observed a dark in color, yet tawny brown **Florida Panther**, walk across JSD south of K2. On 5/25/11, in the evening, Steven Houseknecht, observed a **hummingbird** landing on the power line and "buzzing" in the area near headquarters.

On 5/31/11, Entomologists with University of Florida observed a **Florida Black Bear** after Gate 2, while monitoring bromeliads possibly affected by the Mexican bromeliad weevil. On 6/8/11 and 6-9-11, Mike Owen, Biologist, noted 2 **Rough-winged swallows** on wires over Fire tower pond each day.

On 6/12/11, on a sunny about 75°F morning, Mike Cullinan observed a **Florida Panther** family that he may have also seen in January 2011. "At 09:15 I parked my vehicle midway between gates 19 and 16 and switched off the engine – after about 30 minutes I noticed first one, then another and then a final panther stroll on to the drive about 100 yards away from the west side. The first two loitered for about a minute looking around and at me and moved off into the brush to the east. The last, curious one stood still watching me for at least two more minutes before walking slowly off in the same direction" (see photo on page 4). On 6/12/11, Glenn Stacell, FOF member, had reported to Mike Cullinan he had also seen a **Florida Panther** at a long distance as well as a large **Florida Black Bear** on Janes Scenic Drive (JSD).

On 6/20/11, in the morning, Steven Bass observed two **Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnakes** in the ditches along Janes Scenic drive. On 7/2/11, after volunteering at Fakahatchee and on her way home, Amy China observed a **River otter** in the canal off of US-41. On 7/8/11, Eileen and her 2 children, visitors, observed an **American Alligator** in the ditch along JSD.

On 8/3/11, as noted throughout their workday on East Main, Steven Bass and Jeff Kniesley, Park Ranger, observed 4 **Barred owls** flying to the edge of the East Main clearing project. On 8/4/11, between 9-11AM, Howard Lubel, FOF member, observed 3 **Barred owls** off of East Main south of Jones Grade. On 8/4/11, a visitor reported seeing 1 **Everglades Mink** crossing JSD at 1045AM. On 8/5/11, Judy Fleenor and her husband, visitors, observed 2 **Barred owls** off the drive north of Gate 12. On 8/6/11, Dino Barone, FOF member, and Howard Lubel, while trimming East Main observed a **Florida Black Bear** and 2 cubs, 5 **Barred owls**, and 2 **Red-shouldered Hawks**.

On 8/8/11, Mike Owen noted 14 **Barn Swallows**, 6 flying around the shop and 8 on wires and on 8/11/11, Donna Glann-Smyth, volunteer, observed 30 **Barn Swallows** on wires along US-41. On 8/13/11, in the morning along JSD, Mike Cullinan observed a **Barred owl** and 5 **Red-shouldered hawks** with one of them feeding on a small bird possibly a Green heron. On 8/23/11, at 1:12PM Mike Owen and 2 butterfly volunteers observed 1 **Eastern Kingbird** dive to JSD for an insect then fly to a Cypress tree east of JSD. On 8/22/11, Franklin Adams, FOF Historian, observed 1 female **Everglades Snail Kite** flying over the marsh north of US-41 about 2.5 miles west of SR-29 at 11:30AM.

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

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

MORE EVENTS & NEWS



EN PLEIN AIR

Join artists of all levels of experience for World Wide Sketch Day on **Saturday, October 15**, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Naples Preserve (1690 Tamiami Trail North, corner of Fleishmann Blvd, just south of Coastline Mall).

Starting in January 2012, on the 3rd Saturday each month, there will be, sketching sessions in the Fakahatchee ("Art in the Preserve"). See <http://natureartjournal.blogspot.com/>.

LUNCH & LEARN



Rookery Bay is holding a series of talks on the first Monday of the month. The schedule is:

Oct 19: "From Galapagos to Florida", Alberto Chavez

Nov 2: "Sex, Slugs, and Sea Slime", Dr Ellen Prager

Dec 5: "Capturing Florida Panthers", Dennis Giardina

The series continues in the new year until April. Cost is \$8 per person including lunch sponsored by Carrabba's and Costco. For info and to make reservations, phone (239) 417-6310 x401 or see www.rookerybay.org.

Florida Panther Festival

FOF will take part in this event on **Saturday, October 29**, at North Collier Regional Park, Naples, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free. Lots of activities are planned including biologists' presentations, livestock display, live music, food vendors, artists, and children's play area.

On the previous day, **Friday, October 28**, there are field trips, one of which is a bike tour through the Fakahatchee.

For info, see www.floridapantherfestival.com.



"EVERGLADES ULTRAS" NEEDS HELP

Volunteers are wanted on **Saturday, January 21, 2012**, to help with the Everglades Ultras Marathons which will take place in the Fakahatchee. There are three runs: 50 miles, 50 kilometers, and 25 kilometers. They start early in the morning and should be finished by mid-afternoon.

For info and to sign up, see www.evergladesultras.com.

COUNTING BUNNIES

If you see Marsh Rabbits along the Tamiami Trail (US-41), please report the location, time, and date to Mike by email at mike.owen@dep.state.fl.us.



A Walk In The Fakahatchee

by Jim Drake

It was the opportunity of a lifetime, a chance to scratch off another bucket list item. The anticipation made the long, early morning, drive from Suwanee, Georgia to south Florida pass fairly quickly. Saul Friess, a wildlife photographer, had previously volunteered to lead my trip.

The mid-June heat was already bearing down when we set out on the two hour hike deep into the Fakahatchee Strand Swamp with the goal of seeing and photographing the rare and elusive ghost orchid (*Dendrophylax lindenii*). Saul is intimately familiar with the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and a long-time member of Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation that relies on membership fees and private donations to pursue activities which help maintain and protect the Preserve. The first day's hike turned out to be a "warm up" trip. Although ghost orchids were not initially located, a number of other botanical delights, including a couple of *Sabatia* species, were observed. Arriving back at the park headquarters brought good news. Resident biologist, Mike Owen, would be available the following day and agreed to escort us to see the iconic apparition.

Mike, Saul and I met early the next morning to avoid the mid-day heat. Walking swiftly and deliberately along the tram trail, Mike made frequent stops to point out particularly interesting plants. Among those were ribbon orchid (*Campylocentrum pachyrrhizum*), shoestring fern (*Vittaria lineata*), tropical bromeliad or tufted airplant (*Guzmania monostachia*), and others. After leaving the trail and heading into a slough we passed widelip orchid (*Liparis elata*) growing on the base of a tree. Mike also found some fresh water sponges clinging to a piece of dead wood on the ground.

After a while Mike pointed ahead and there they were, ghost orchids only a few feet away. After much bowing and paying homage, his/her majesty *Dendrophylax lindenii* allowed me to approach for a photo shoot. The state endangered ghost orchid, also called palmpolly, is an herbaceous, leafless epiphytic perennial having radiating roots resembling the spokes of a wheel. The stunning white and yellowish flowers are produced singly or in pairs and each stem can produce up to ten flowers serially over a number of weeks. The widely spreading, lanceolate, sepals and petals give the flower its unusual ghostly appearance. The sweet scent emitted by the orchid bloom during the night attracts its pollinator, the giant sphinx moth, which has a proboscis capable of reaching into the flower's long spur.

This favorable culmination of a long trip made enduring the heat, humidity and mosquitoes all worthwhile. Unfortunately, there have been recent incidents of poaching, and Mike mentioned that the Park has been taking measures to try and identify those involved. It cannot be overly emphasized that this state-listed endangered species will likely die almost immediately when taken from its natural habitat.

Special thanks are given to Roger L. Hammer for providing contact information, Saul Friess for providing insight about the Fakahatchee Strand, and extending excellent suggestions on improving my photography, Mike Owen for sharing his great botanical knowledge and park manager Renee Rau for allowing access to the Preserve.

President's Message

As the rainy season comes to its close, the swamp has been replenished with water. While the mosquitoes are not timid, at least they are greatly diminished in number. During a recent walk with Bill Mesce, the swamp treated us to the sight of both a ribbon and nocturnum in bloom. It's time to get wet again.

Call it off-season if you will but FOF has been quite busy throughout the summer months. We both funded and participated in the clearing of East Main Tram from Ballard Camp to Jones Grade. Many thanks are due Park Rangers Jeff Kniesley, Steve Bass, and Steve Houseknecht along with John Jones from J & D Grading for all their hard work on this difficult but valuable project. Take this beautiful walk as soon as you can.

Our events committee chair, Cynthia Peters, has been working overtime to provide FOF with a memorable "Welcome Back" Dinner, which will be held at the Seafood Depot in Everglades City on **Saturday, December 3**. Our guest speaker is Nathaniel Reed, a major force in protecting Florida's environment for over forty years. As environmental advisor to Governor Claude Kirk, he was influential in halting construction of both the jetport in Big Cypress and the Cross Florida Barge Canal. He also served as Assistant Secretary of the Interior from 1971-1977, and was influential in the creation of the Big Cypress National Preserve. Thanks to FOF historian, Franklin Adams, for helping secure Mr. Reed's participation. Mark your calendar and don't miss this exciting event.

Your organization's list of accomplishments does not end with the dinner. We will soon have a picnic table and port-a-let in place at the East River canoe ramp. Thanks to Renee for the picnic table. We are gearing up for another big season at the boardwalk and are awaiting a final conceptual plan from DEP for the Boardwalk Facilities Development Project. We will also be active in support of an ultra-marathon to be held in the park on January 21, 2012.

FOF remains quite busy fulfilling our mission to provide interpretive activities within the park. Our swamp walks, coastal cruises and volunteer work days will begin soon. The schedule is available on our website www.orchidswamp.org.

As always, I welcome your support and participation in our activities. Feel free to contact me with your ideas and suggestions at lubelm@aol.com.

See you in the swamp,
Howard Lubel

Welcome Back Dinner/Talk with Nathaniel Reed

Join us for a unique opportunity at the "Welcome-Back Dinner" on **Saturday, December 3**, to hear one of Florida's outstanding conservationists talk about "Where Have We Come From and Where Are We Going? The Victories and Heroes of the Past, the Contrast to Our Present State". His talk promises to be interesting and stimulating.

Nathaniel Pryor Reed advised seven Florida governors about the environment and was Assistant Secretary at the Department of the Interior under Presidents Nixon and Ford. He was instrumental in saving the Fakahatchee in 1974 and describes it as one of his most satisfying endeavors as a conservationist.

Reed grew up in Connecticut and graduated from Trinity College in Hartford where he first read *River of Grass* by Marjory Stoneman Douglas in a literature class. His family moved to Florida when they started developing Jupiter Island and he finally met MSD at a public lecture. They became friends and he became involved in saving the environment around him, including the Fakahatchee.

Besides his roles as advisor to officials, Reed has served on the South Florida Water Management Governing Board and as a director of various groups such as National Audubon, 1000 Friends of Florida, and the Nature Conservancy. In June of this year, he received the Hall of Fame award from the Florida Wildlife Federation. To learn more, read his own words at <http://nathanielreed.blogspot.com/>.

You can book the Dinner/Talk online at our website or print out a registration form to send with your check. Please reply by November 21. Cost is \$25 for members and \$35 for guests. For info, phone (239) 695-2905.



FOF treasurer Dino Barone represented us with his gator-decorated Jeep in the Everglades City Independence Day parade. The theme was "Everglades Wildlife".

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 320 memberships including 12 from the 2nd and 3rd quarter who are in arrears. There are also 37 Introductory members.

The breakdown by membership category is:

Individual	110	Family	151
Patron	48	Benefactor	1
Business	10		

There have been 30 new members so far in 2011. You can join or renew on our website with a credit card.

Welcome to new members since our last newsletter:

- Bob & Suzanne Becker, Ft Lauderdale
- Shelton Blackwell, Plantation
- Jim Drake, Suwanee, GA
- Pete & Lisa Kostuk, Naples
- Sean & Kerri Meehan, Naples
- Andrew & Gayle Ross, Delray Beach
- Susan Schmitt, Ft Myers
- Harold Valdes, Coral Gables



Thanks to Mike Cullinan for this photo of the panther family on Janes Scenic Drive taken in June. See *MOZone* on page 1 for his report.

THANKS!

to Betty Cruetz, Ann Thayer, Eckerd College, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and Friends of Barefoot Beach Preserve for their donations after walking with Mike in the Fakahatchee this spring. And, of course, a big THANKS to Mike himself.

LINKS to other groups & newsletters

- South Florida Parks Trust
www.southfloridaparks.org/newsletter
- Florida State Parks
<http://floridastateparks.org/resources/enewsletter.cfm>
- Big Cypress National Preserve
www.nps.gov/bicy
- Everglades National Park
www.nps.gov/ever
- Collier Seminole State Park
www.floridastateparks.org/collierseminole

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.

(c) 2011, Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter, including pictures, may be reproduced without permission.

- | | | | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| OFFICERS: | President – Howard Lubel | Vice-President – Glen Stacell | | | | |
| | Secretary – Francine Stevens | Treasurer – Dino Barone | | | | |
| BOARD: | Dino Barone | Julia Cardenas | Frank Denninger | Dennis Giardina | Cindy Hackney | Howard Lubel |
| | Tom Maish | Cynthia Peters | Glen Stacell | Francine Stevens | Charles Wright | John Winebrenner |

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: _____	<u>ALTERNATE ADDRESS</u> _____
CITY _____	CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____	STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____	PHONE _____

MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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