



# The Ghost Writer

NOVEMBER, 2010

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

## EVENTS

### GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat, 4<sup>th</sup> Tues

Cost: \$50 or \$60 depending on length of walk, \$15 child (\$10 discount for members)

**Reservations Required.**  
Phone (239) 695-1023

### GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday: Dec 4

Cost \$50 (\$40 for members),  
**Reservations Required.**  
Phone (239) 695-1023

### GUIDED BOARDWALK TOUR

2<sup>nd</sup> Sat: Dec 8, Jan 11

Cost \$15 (\$10 for members),  
**Reservations Required.**  
Phone (239) 695-1023

### VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday

Sat, Nov 13      Tues, Nov 16  
Sat, Dec 11      Tues, Dec 21  
Phone Alicia at (239) 695-4593

### BOARD MEETINGS

November 14 at 10:00 a.m.

December 12 at 2:00 p.m.

Port of the Islands

### 2010-2011 SEASON

Nov 23: Coastal Cruise

Dec 3-5: CSO Conference

Dec 12: Welcome Back Dinner

Jan 22: Coastal Cruise

Feb 26: Fakahatchee SAFARI

March 27: Family Day Picnic

April 10: Annual Dinner

**WARNING: Some dates may change.**

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

On 6/6/10, Bente Torvund, volunteer, observed a 350 pound plus **Black Bear** on Janes Scenic Drive. On 6/13/10, in the evening, Renee Rau, Park Manager, observed an adult **Black-necked Stilt** walking in the marsh approximately 50 feet south of US-41. On 6/14/10, around 11:30 AM, park visitors Sonja Perkins and her son Miles observed a **Florida panther** walking away from them on East Main.

On 7/8/10, Alicia Campenella, Park Ranger, and Alexis Frank, Intern, observed 4 **Roseate Spoonbills** fly to the south over the Park shop. On 7/12/10, in the early afternoon, Amy China, volunteer, observed a juvenile **cottonmouth** with a yellow-tipped tail as well as a **bobcat** around Gate 12. On 7/28/10, in the evening, Alicia Campenella, Park Ranger, and her husband Joe saw a **Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake** off of Jones Grade. On 7/29/10, in the early evening, Steve Houseknecht, Park Service Specialist, observed a **Hummingbird**.

On 9/4/10, while walking on the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk, Rachel and Kitty, visiting birders, observed a **Chuck-will's-widow** fly to and roost on horizontal cypress limb, a **worm-eating warbler**, **white and red eyed vireos**, two **black racers**, and an **American alligator**. While driving on JSD, between 12 noon to 2 PM they also noted about 30 **Eastern Phoebes**, and a **snapping turtle**.

On 10/11/10, in the morning, Mike Owen, Park Biologist, observed three **Florida panthers**, one weighing around 100 pounds and two kittens weighing around 50-60 pounds, walking along JSD past Gate 2. On 10/17/10, Renee Rau observed three **Florida Banded Water snakes** thermo-regulating together on a log in water near the end of Janes Scenic Drive.

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

## Coastal Cruise

Join us on **Tuesday, November 23**, to explore historic Fakahatchee Island. The chartered boat leaves at 3:30 p.m. from Everglades City and meanders through the mangroves. When we land, we walk up to the cemetery, observing the wildlife. Some of the plants in this habitat have not been disturbed for over 50 years. On the return journey we pass a famous rookery.

Fakahatchee Island, a high shell mound, was settled by fishermen and farmers in the 1890s and in 1903 a school was provided by Lee County. The population shifted after the Tamiami Trail was built in the late 1920s but some home-owners visited on weekends.

The cost is \$75 per person. For info and to make reservations, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905 or see the Events page at our website [www.orchidswamp.org](http://www.orchidswamp.org) where you can download a flyer or book online with a credit card.



## CSO GOALS 2010-2011

In May 2010 we established our goals for the coming fiscal year and submitted them to the Park Service. Here is an update:

1. Define the FOF requirements for the expanded Boardwalk and the Visitor Center. *IN PROCESS with Florida Parks Bureau of Design & Construction*
2. Meet with Florida Park System planners to develop a "request for proposal" to select a Design firm and start the permitting process. *PERMITTING IN PROCESS with Collier County Planning Department*
3. Identify, interview, and select a Fund Raising firm to lead our campaign. *SAFARI FUND RAISER CONTRACTED*
4. Identify, interview, and select a Grant Writer to search for funding. *GRANT WRITERS HAVE VOLUNTEERED*
5. Increase our Interpretation and Fund Raising with additional Events. *NEW PROGRAMS INTRODUCED – Guided Boardwalk Tour and Cruise Weekend*
6. Construct a pad for a portable toilet and picnic table at the East River canoe launch site.
7. Provide funding to renovate the Harmon Building for Park offices and FOF meetings. *INVESTIGATING PERMITS*
8. Clear the East Main trail from Ballard Camp to Jones Grade.
9. Provide resources for Burn support and Exotic Species removal. *ONGOING - \$5,000 in helicopter burn support and donation for cigar orchid restoration project*

## AUDUBON LINK

Congratulations to swamp walk leader and former FOF president John Elting who has been elected as vice-chairman of Florida Audubon.



## ARTIST GONE

We are sorry to report that Sam Vinikoff passed away on October 1 at age 91. He loved the greater Everglades area and visited often from his home in Miami to produce renown paintings and observe nature.

## FORESTRY EXPERT DIES

Professor Larry Harris, author of *The Fragmented Forest* about managing forests and safeguarding their wildlife, died in August, aged 67. He taught at the University of Florida School of Forestry and lectured to the public about conservation.

## What Does It Mean?

FOF historian Franklin Adams and Collier-Seminole's Chris Kimball are having an ongoing email discussion about the derivation of the word *Fakahatchee*. We assume that *hatchee* is *water* or *river* (as in Caloosahatchee, etc) but what about the first syllables? Opinions vary among *hunters'*, *muddy*, and *forked*. If you have an idea, email FOF\_90@hotmail.com.

## NEW DIRECTOR

Donald Forgione has been named Director of the Florida Park Service. He grew up in Palm Beach Gardens and joined the park service in 1984 as a ranger. We look forward to meeting him soon.



## HISTORY TALK

"The History of the Fakahatchee" is the title of a talk to be given by Marya Repko on **Friday, November 19**, at 3:00 p.m. at the Naples Preserve (1690 Tamiami Trail North, corner of Fleischmann Blvd). For info about this and other talks, phone (239) 261-4290.



## MEET OTHER PARK VOLUNTEERS

The annual State Parks Citizens' Support Organization (CSO) workshop will be on **Friday, December 3**, through **Sunday, December 5**, at the Sanibel Harbor Marriot Resort & Spa. This get-together provides opportunities for CSOs to learn and share best practices in topics like fundraising, partnerships to benefit the parks, event development, management and support, board and member recruitment, management and retention, promoting and marketing your CSO and your park using social media and technology. Cost is \$25 which includes dinner on Saturday. For info, phone Elaine at 239-292-0218.

## Welcome-Back Dinner/Talk

Our first members' event of the season will be on **Sunday, December 12**, when we can catch up with each other after the summer and listen to an informative speaker over dinner at Port of the Islands (US-41 about 10 miles west of SR-29). The evening starts at 5:00 p.m. with a wine reception which is followed by a sit-down meal. Final details are being arranged and will be announced in our next issue. For info and to book your places, phone (239) 695-2905.

## SWAMP WALKS THIS SEASON

We think we offer the best swamp walks in the area! The long walk is an all-day affair on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday and last Tuesday each month from November 13 until the spring when the water dries up. It costs \$60. The shorter swamp walk takes place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday and costs \$50. FOF members get a \$10 discount and children are \$15. For info and reservations, phone Pam at (239) 695-1023.

## SAFARI PLANS

The committee have been working over the summer to make the Fakahatchee SAFARI on February 26 buzz with excitement and enjoyment. Merchandise chair Jay Staton has put out a plea for donations to the Silent Auction. If you can help, contact him at (239) 298-0039.

## President's Message

A HUGE THANK YOU to all of our loyal members who supported our Boardwalk campaign!!

The Park Service Bureau of Design & Construction is currently preparing plan concepts for the Friends' consideration.

Deputy Secretary Bob Ballard personally called to tell us that the replacement of the Boardwalk along with the addition of restrooms and a parking area is a priority with the Park Service. He also stated that the Fakahatchee was one of his favorite places in Florida.

Our Partnership in Parks Grant application has been approved. The Board has set aside \$100,000 in the bank for use on the Boardwalk project. The State will match our amount with \$66,666 to start planning and permitting. The Design Bureau has already been in touch with Collier County Planning to start the approval process.

Mark your calendar for the 2nd Fakahatchee SAFARI on **Saturday February 26, 2011**. Chair Elsa Caldwell with co-chairs Glen Stacell and Jay Staton have been working diligently to expand the program on the Friends' signature event. If you want to experience the REAL Florida be sure to save the date and invite your friends. You are guaranteed a great time!

See you at the Welcome-Back Dinner on December 12.

All the best,  
Tom Maish

## GUIDED BOARDWALK TOURS

Friends of the Fakahatchee will offer guided Boardwalk tours on **Saturday, December 11** and **Saturday, January 8**. The Boardwalk is just over a half mile in length and is one of the best examples of an old growth bald cypress swamp in southwest Florida. The tours will take approximately 90 minutes and will begin by the front entrance of the boardwalk at 11:00 a.m. Tour leaders will be Nelson and Caryl Tilden, naturalists who have been volunteering at the Boardwalk for about 8 years. Included in the tour will be information about the history of the Boardwalk, the various kinds of wildlife commonly seen, and some of the flora of the area, especially the large number of very old bald cypress and native royal palm trees.

The cost of the tour will be \$15 for adults (\$10 for FOF members). Children under the age of 12 accompanied by a paying adult will be free. The boardwalk is located on US-41, 7 miles west SR-29 or about 15 miles east of CR-951. Places are limited. For reservations, phone (239) 695-1023.



## BOARDWALK REPORT

Each Fall Nelson and I manage to slip away from western New York just a day or two before the first snow flurries are predicted. On our return to trip to Florida we like to anticipate what it will be like at the Boardwalk this year.

Upon arrival, the hurricane shutters are still on, we have no food, and suitcases and boxes litter every surface in the house, but we are off to the Boardwalk to see how it looks! This is our 10<sup>th</sup> year visiting the Boardwalk, and our 8<sup>th</sup> year of active involvement. What we see on this first visit will give us a clue about the conversations we might have with visitors this year.

The Port-a-Potties were cleaned this morning. Good start! The water level along the path is good and two turtles are basking on their favorite log. When we get to the Boardwalk Nelson keeps up his pace but I find myself walking almost in slow motion. It fascinates me that the things I love most about this place seem so soothingly constant, while so many other things about it change almost every day. I do see it, but I also feel it.

Everything looks good. The leather fern has completely recovered and is flourishing on the final turn of the boardwalk. Several big cypress trees that came down in Hurricane Wilma have blended into the forest floor with plants growing all around and over them. Each year since Wilma the boardwalk gets increasingly shady as our canopy begins to fill back in. There is some pickerel in bloom and berries on the dahoon holly. We probably won't see the eagles at the nest for another week or two, and it might be even later for the red shouldered hawk to nest, but we look forward to them returning as they have so many of the past years. There is a pile of scat on the boardwalk, possibly left by a bobcat that is seen occasionally, and spotted by Nelson one afternoon last winter.

It is always exciting to arrive at the alligator hole on the first visit of the season. We were happy to see our two adult gators as well as some ibis, egrets and a noisy green heron. Our bee's nest across the pond has doubled in size and is quite a sight through a spotting scope or binoculars. Fortunately they do not seem to be venturing over to the boardwalk platform. We could not see any alligator juveniles again this year, but the water level is pretty high and they may be on higher ground somewhere.

For our first day back we had visitors from Australia and Germany and had a good conversation about invasive species. In Australia there is a major problem with a particular variety of toad, and in Germany a crab that is working its way up the Rhine River. We learn a lot of interesting things from our visitors throughout the season, and we always enjoy a day with the park staff. Mike, Renee and the rangers are so knowledgeable about the Fakahatchee. The information they share is really important to us so that we can try to answer the myriad of questions we get out there, but my first reaction is always that it is fun to have them there.

It looks like it will be another good year on the Boardwalk and we look forward to seeing all of you out there. Bring your friends and family and be sure to introduce yourselves.

Caryl Tilden  
Boardwalk volunteer

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 291 fully-paid memberships plus 14 lapsed members who are being sent reminders and 22 Introductory members. The Boardwalk Expansion campaign brought in 5 new members.

Renewals for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter are being sent with this newsletter. *The Ghost Writer* is emailed to 295 members, saving almost \$130 per issue in postage costs plus printing.

### Welcome to new members:

Julie Appleget, Miami  
 Patricia Auffhammer, Miami  
 Mike Cullinan, Naples  
 Clare Dana, Jupiter  
 EarthTech Environmental, Naples  
 David Egger & Julie Cullman, Madison, WI  
 Robert Jason, Cape Coral  
 Evan T. Jones, Bergen, NY  
 Jane Parks, Naples  
 William & Clare Power, Sarasota  
 Sonny Scott, Everglades City

## SECRETARY NEEDED

The Board would like a volunteer to be recording secretary at their meetings to write up the minutes. Other secretarial functions are not involved in this position. If you can spare a few hours once a month during the winter season, please contact FOF president Tom Maish at (614) 361-9494.



*Jim Woodard emailed this report: June was a good month for the Ghost Orchid. At least five flowers, a spike and a seed pod on one tree simultaneously. The tree was discovered by Niki Woodard.*

## THANKS!

The total Boardwalk Fund as of November 1 was \$37,758 contributed by 141 members, plus a few non-members. We had single donations of \$10,000 and \$5,000 plus a number of \$1,000 checks and 47 people who sent in \$100.

One man phoned after he saw an article the Marco Island *Coastal Breeze* and asked where he could send money because he always took visitors to the Boardwalk; his envelope contained a check for \$100.

Thanks to everyone for supporting this project! Even small amounts are a vote of confidence.

### 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.

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OFFICERS:	President – Tom Maish	Vice-President – Dennis Giardina				
	Secretary – vacant	Treasurer – Saul Friess				
BOARD:	Allen Caldwell	Elsa Caldwell	Julia Cardenas	Frank Denninger	Saul Friess	Dennis Giardina
	Cindy Hackney	Howard Lubel	Tom Maish	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