



# The Ghost Writer

## Newsletter of the Friends of Fakahatchee

*Swamp walkers photograph bromeliads in Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park.*

### Four award-winning ways to experience the Fakahatchee in 2017

The Friends of Fakahatchee have announced their 2017 schedule of four adventures to introduce visitors to Florida's largest state park, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve. For the second consecutive year, TripAdvisor®, the world's largest travel site, has named Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and its boardwalk a Certificate of Excellence winner. The award recognizes attractions that consistently achieve outstanding traveler reviews.



A two-hour Moonlit Tram Tour of the Fakahatchee on January 12 is one of the most popular offerings. The \$40 moonlit tours will also be offered Feb. 10 and March 12. These tours sell out rapidly.

Daytime naturalist-led Ghost rider Tram Tours from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. are offered for \$25 per person each Tuesday through March 28. The tours are named for the famous ghost orchid found in the park.

Original Fakahatchee Swamp Walks are scheduled on nine Saturdays from January through April when water levels in the strand are low. On these five-hour adventures, naturalists lead participants deep into the swamp in knee high water. Swamp walks begin at 9:30 am and are \$80 for adults and \$60 for teens.

The Combination Tram Tour and Swamp Walk is offered most Thursdays in January, February and March. This popular four-hour tour pairs a one-hour swamp walk with a guided tram tour for \$60 per person.

For directions and complete details for all Fakahatchee Adventures visit our [Tours and Events](http://orchidswamp.org/adventures/) webpage, <http://orchidswamp.org/adventures/>

## 2017 Marjory Stoneman Douglas Festival has Friends of Fakahatchee flavor

The 2017 Marjory Stoneman Douglas Festival takes place at the Museum of the Everglades in Everglades City Feb. 21-25 has a definite Fakahatchee flavor. The annual event honoring the environmentalist and River of Grass author, features talks by two Friends of Fakahatchee members, a Fakahatchee swamp walk and Ghost Rider tram tour of the park.

The five-day festival offers a diverse program of lectures and outdoor activities and attracts attendees from all over the country. Ghostwriter editor emeritus Marya Repko is scheduled to speak at 3 p.m. on Feb. 22 on "Women of the Everglades." On Feb. 23, park biologist Mike Owen will lead a Fakahatchee swamp walk at 1 p.m. Mike will also deliver a lecture on "Epiphytes and Wildlife" at 1 p.m. on Feb. 24. A Ghost Rider tram tour kicks off the final day of the festival on Feb. 25, 9 a.m.

To make required reservations for the outdoor activities, please call 239-695-0008. For more information, visit the museum's [website](#).



## From saltwater to swamp water: a new boardwalk volunteer's perspective

*Editor's note: Our newest Big Cypress Bend boardwalk volunteers are Dave and Patti Boesche. Dave filed this report shortly before the holidays.*



*Dave and Patti Boesche are naturals for the boardwalk volunteer team.*

What a great day on the boardwalk! We arrived a little after 9 a.m. and there were already cars in the parking lot. The walk was quiet and peaceful, with the welcome call of an osprey. We met and greeted folks as we walked along. In all, I had nice conversations with 19 guests. One couple was from the London area, but very familiar with South Florida.

The best question was a from fellow who asked if I would point out "one of those Florida cypress trees"? We had a great talk about that and an additional four guests stopped to listen. As for sightings, in addition to the ospreys calling about, hawks were communicating, kingfishers tweeting, and a big blue heron and a great white ibis were grunting. We had an anhinga to keep us guessing where it would pop up next! It finally got to a sunny branch and allowed us to watch the drying procedure. Later in the day, a yearling alligator laid on a log next the gravel walkway. There was also a crowd-pleasing gator right at the parking lot. I signed out at 2 pm after sweating off several pounds.

Having been a volunteer naturalist at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida for about 8 years, I had a head start on this boardwalk duty. I was also a Clam Pass naturalist for 5 years.

There are differences from earlier 'jobs' though! The boardwalk water tastes funny! No salt. Where are the sand and the lounge chairs? Well, I can see there is a lot of 'fresh water' learning on my plate. Patti, my best friend and wife of 43 years, was also with the Conservancy in the past, just not as long as I. She is more adventurous than I – she is always ready for a swamp walk or a night tram!

***You too can Volunteer at the Fakahatchee!***

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## Registration Open for Everglades Ultras



*Everglades Ultra 2016 participants get ready - photo by Jay Staton.*

**The 6th Annual Everglades Ultras will be held on February 18, 2017.** This race brings runners up close and personal with the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve! Specific race routes are designed each year in response to trail conditions.

Registration continues through January 31. There are three distinct trail races: 50 miles, 50 kilometers (31 miles), and 25 kilometers (15.6 miles). The overall runner limit for

2017 will be 300, so register as soon as possible if you are interested. Visit [evergladesultras.com](http://evergladesultras.com) for much more information and registration. Be sure to read Bob Becker, Race Director's entertaining [2016 race report](#).

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