



# The Ghost Writer

MARCH, 2009

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, "Home of the Ghost Orchid"

## EVENTS

### GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday

Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child  
**Reservations Required.**

Phone (239) 695-1023 or email  
[islandgirm@msn.com](mailto:islandgirm@msn.com)

### GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

March 21, April 18

Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child  
**Reservations Required.**

Phone (239) 695-1023 or email  
[islandgirm@msn.com](mailto:islandgirm@msn.com)

### VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Sat, Mar 14      Tues, Mar 17

Sat, Apr 11      Tues, Apr 21

For info, phone (239) 695-1023.

### MEMBERS' ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER

Sunday, April 5, 5:30 p.m.

Everglades Seafood Depot  
See invitation on page 4.

### FOF BOARD MEETINGS

Sunday, April 5, at 2:00 p.m.

Big Cypress Preserve Pavilion  
**Members Welcome!**

### AMAZING ADVENTURES

Friday, April 3, at 6:30 p.m.

Rookery Bay, Naples  
"Adventures in Panama"  
by Randy McCormick  
See [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org)

Read about More Events on the enclosed Calendar which is also available on our website.

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

On 2/5/09, it was 31°F that morning and two **green anoles** were rescued by Terrance Craig, Park Ranger. On 2/5/09, in the early afternoon, about 200 **tree swallows** were seen hitting the Firetower pond surface. On 2/11/09 a **Burmese Python** approximately 8 feet long, was collected off of SR-29 and US-41. On 2/11/09, around noon, Dave Moore, FPP, observed a juvenile **Florida Panther** on Jones Grade.

On 2/13/09, around 1:00PM, a **chicken turtle** was observed basking on the East Main tram. On 2/16/09, around 2:30PM, Virgil Allmond, volunteer, observed one immature **Bald Eagle** flying over the Harmon Brothers building. On 2/16/09, Ron Kotliar, volunteer, observed on Janes Scenic Drive a **Black Crowned night heron** in the south ditch, a **Red-shouldered hawk**, **banded water snake**, juvenile **cotton mouth**, and two **American alligators**. On 2/17/09, an **American kestrel** was observed flying over Four Stakes Prairie by Mike Owen, Terrance Craig, and volunteer Richard Fagan on the return from treating melaleuca.

On 2/19/09, at 10:22AM, Mike Owen observed one **Swallow-tail kite** flying north over Lake Harmon. On 2/22/09, Jo Allmond observed a 3-4 year old **Bald Eagle** flying over Harmon Lake North. On 2/22/09, 13:55 Ron Kotliar saw a **black bear cub** crossing Janes Scenic Drive around Gate 12. A visitor had also noted the cub as well as an Adult Black bears around the same time.

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



Thanks to Ralph Arwood for this photo of panther kittens taken in the Big Cypress on February 25 when they were only a few weeks old

Panther Week is being celebrated on March 14-21 with lots of interesting events, culminating in an Open House at the Panther Refuge. For a full schedule, see [www.floridapanther.org](http://www.floridapanther.org).

Visit [www.friendsoffakahatchee.org](http://www.friendsoffakahatchee.org) for events, newsletters, colored tram map, history, and more.

## A Vision for Fakahatchee's Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk

by Dennis Giardina

In the last issue of *The Ghost Writer* (Feb 09), I wrote about my first visit to the boardwalk and some of the reasons why I think it is so special. At the end of the article I mentioned that there are inadequate facilities for the approximately 60,000 people who visit the boardwalk every year and the likelihood of that number doubling over the next 50 years. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the FOF Vision Committee met to discuss the issues and produced the following outline of priorities for the development of visitor facilities at Big Cypress Bend. The Vision Committee, the Board of Directors, and the Park Manager are unanimous in their commitment to an ecologically sound, sustainable ethic and will endeavor to build these facilities with materials and technologies that will minimize any associated negative impacts to the local and global environment.

- I. Improve parking by providing a better, safer entrance and increasing the number of marked parking spaces on a paved or other firm surface.
- II. Provide permanent, universally accessible rest rooms that provide electricity and lighting, water and waste treatment, recycling and trash collection and landscaping and irrigation in the most environmentally sound manner possible.
- III. Enhance the Boardwalk experience by improving its entrance and access, repairing its support structure, building additional viewing platforms and developing a plan to replace the boardwalk by 2030.
- IV. Increase passive interpretation by developing interpretive materials like the recent self-guided tour brochure and constructing new signage and kiosks with updated information.
- V. Increase active interpretation by developing new programs and tours, recruiting additional volunteers and increasing the level of staff participation at the boardwalk.

I would like to thank the individual Friends of Fakahatchee who devoted an entire Sunday out of their lives to the Board of Directors and Vision Committee meetings. Their dedication and stewardship is an inspiration to me and I am honored to work with them. I would also like to thank Big Cypress National Preserve for the use of their pavilion and conference room for these meetings.

If anyone has a comment or suggestion, we'd like to hear it. Email [FOF\\_90@hotmail.com](mailto:FOF_90@hotmail.com) with "Vision Committee Suggestion" in the subject field or write to FOF at P.O. Box 35, Everglades City, FL, 34139.



Producer Elam Stoltzfus spoke at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Festival on February 25 about the background leading up to the new film portraying Big Cypress which will be released in July and shown on public broadcasting stations. The Fakahatchee features in several snippets and FOF is one of the sponsors. For more info and a preview, see [www.bigcypresswamp.org](http://www.bigcypresswamp.org).



Almost 100 members and guests enjoyed the Annual Picnic in the Mesce Pavilion at Copeland on March 1 where they were entertained by musicians Joe Stem and Terri Rementeria. Thanks to Bud Scott, Phill Lawry, Terrance Craig, Vicky Nagle, John M. Wilson, Caryl Tilden, Elaine Mason, Marg Scott, Patty Huff, Elsa Caldwell, Tom Leonard, Signe Backus, Jerry Winters, Billy Herrera, Bill Mesce, and Billie Mesce for their help on the day. Door prizes were donated by Rick Cruz, Hannah Ineson, Bill Mesce, Elam Stoltzfus, WinCar Hardware, ESHP, Ivey House B&B, and ECity Publishing.



**CALOOSAHATCHEE  
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3836 Hidden Acres Circle N  
North Fort Myers FL 33903  
(239) 997-2237

Two articles from *The Ghost Writer* were reprinted with permission by the CBS in their March newsletter. See [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org) and click on Member Societies.



## President's Message

Spring is much in evidence in the Fakahatchee.

Water is receding rapidly, trees are in bud, and the sounds of nature awakening are heard everywhere!

If you haven't been on Janes Scenic Drive lately you owe yourself a trip. Our Volunteers have spent many productive hours clearing brush from around the culverts for Visitors to peer into the swamp. Park volunteer Virgil Allwood has been on the Boom Mower (purchased with help from the Friends) cutting back the tall grasses that have obscured the view of the Prairie from Janes Scenic.

Speaking of Volunteers; please track and submit all time that you work in any capacity for the Park. The Florida Parks Dept places great weight on the hours that Volunteers contribute. Since there is no entrance fee to the Park; this is especially important to the Fakahatchee! Just email your time to Renee Rau, Park Manager, at [Renee.Rau@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:Renee.Rau@dep.state.fl.us) or send them by post to her at P.O. Box 548, Copeland, FL, 34137.

Elections are near. There is a slate of very qualified and interested members who have agreed to serve. Please come to our Annual Meeting & Dinner on Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, and meet them.

All the Best,  
Tom Maish

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## Clean up for the Love of Birds

by Karen Relish

For the Friends of Fakahatchee work day on a beautiful Saturday Valentine's morning (2/14/09), the Townsends and Caldwells pitched-in. Thank you!



We cleaned up the borrow pit area which is a resting or loafing, nesting, feeding, swimming, and roosting area for birds just south of I75. Over the time of the clean-up (9-12PM), Fred Townsend documented 20 species of birds including Killdeer, Warblers, Osprey, Herons, Kingfishers, Double-Crested Cormorants, Great Egrets, Anhingas, Pied-billed grebes, Crows, Grackles, Vultures, Vireos, Red-winged Black birds and an Eastern Meadowlark. We picked up lots of bottles, cans, plastic, paper, fishing line and even an old back pack.

It is now a much more inviting place for both visitors and birds.

## BOARDWALK REPORT

by Nelson & Caryl Tilden  
Volunteer Naturalists

Almost 13,000 visitors came to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk during February. Several of them were treated to appearances by a **Florida black bear** and her cub. The bears seem to be unaffected by onlookers and come to within 50 feet of the boardwalk.

The **two eagle chicks** are almost two months old at this writing and are often seen sitting near the top of the nest and have been observed stretching and flapping their wings. At their current age they appear to be nearly full grown, and draw nearly as much attention from photographers as the alligators at the end of the boardwalk. In future years we hope to add a small observation area that will make it easier for photographers and those with spotting scopes to view the eagle's nest without obstructing the boardwalk.

**Red-shouldered hawks** have again appeared at the nest near the twin bald cypress trees and have at least one chick, which appears to be about a foot tall. The **great horned owl** that has been frequently seen near the beginning of the boardwalk was recently joined by a smaller owl, perhaps a juvenile. Unfortunately the owls are too far from the boardwalk to make detailed observations possible.

The **bald cypress trees** are nearly leafed out after their winter down-time. Despite the lack of rainfall and the usual winter dry-down, the vegetation along the boardwalk looks lush and thick. The gator hole is rapidly growing smaller, making it even more attractive to the **wading birds**. The appearance recently of a second adult **alligator**, larger than ones typically seen at the gator hole, has sparked a lot of speculation about whether a male alligator has arrived several weeks ahead of the usual mating season.

Each different season brings interesting sights for visitors. If you have not seen the boardwalk recently, we invite you to come soon.

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## LECTURES

The Clyde Butcher Big Cypress Gallery Lecture Series includes two of interest to FOF members:

March 19: "Fakahatchee – The Amazon of the North" by Mike Owen

May 9: "Florida's Extremely Rare and Endangered Plant Species" by Rick Cruz.

The lectures begin at 1:00 p.m. For more info, see [www.clydebutcher.com](http://www.clydebutcher.com) or phone 695-2428.

### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 267 members. Thanks to all of you who replied promptly to your renewal notices!

**Welcome to new members:**

- Carol & Barry Berger, Naples
- Craig Britton, Tavernier
- Cathy & Steve Cevoli, Englewood
- David Denham & Polly Zalvidar, Miami
- Claudia & William Dishong, Homestead
- Nancy & Bob Dix, Bonita Springs
- Ed & Nancy Hanenburg, Bonita Springs
- Pete Lauren, Englewood
- Rob & Linda Miertschin, Naples
- John & Sally Quinn, Englewood
- Fred & Alyce Townsend, Naples

### CREW FESTIVAL

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a wildflower talk and walk on March 27/28 featuring FOF member Glen Stacell. For more info, see [www.crewtrust.org](http://www.crewtrust.org) or phone (239) 657-2253.

**If you suspect illegal activity in the Park, contact our full-time DEP Park Police Officer David Moore on his cell phone: 239-821-2870.**



**Friends of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve**  
P.O. Box 35, Everglades City, FL, 34139  
[www.friendsoffakahatchee.org](http://www.friendsoffakahatchee.org)

*Join us at the*

## MEMBERS' ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER

**Sunday, April 5, 2009**  
**Seafood Depot, Everglades City**

- 5:30 PM - Registration
- 6:00 PM - Annual Meeting & Awards
- 6:45 PM - Buffet Dinner
- 7:30 PM - Guest Speaker

*"Fakahatchee ... More Than Just Orchids"*  
an illustrated talk by Glen Stacell

Cost: \$25/person includes door prize ticket  
Menu: fish or beef, veggies, salad, dessert, coffee/tea  
RSVP: (239) 695-2905 or [FOF\\_90@hotmail.com](mailto:FOF_90@hotmail.com)

*Please let us know if you will attend so we can tell the restaurant how many people to expect.  
Deadline for replies is Friday, March 27.*

### 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 mission of the Friends of Fakahatchee is 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  
                  Treasurer – Vicky Nagle                      Secretary – Marya Repko
- BOARD: Rick Cruz              Frank Denninger              Dennis Giardina              Cathy Hatch              Tom Maish              Susan O'Farrell  
                  Karen Relish              Bud Scott              David Shindle              Glenn Stacell              Nelson Tilden

## 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