



The Ghost Writer

OCTOBER 2015

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

EVENTS

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED!!!

for dates & costs, see
www.orchidswamp.org
and select Tours & Events

GHOST RIDER TRAM TOUR

starting Nov 19, Thursday at 10am

MOONLIGHT TRAM TOUR

Nov 25, Dec 24, Jan 23, Feb 22, Mar 22

TRAM TOUR & SWAMP WALK

starting Nov 17, Tuesday at 9:30am

BIOLOGIST'S SWAMP WALK

starting Nov 21, Saturday at 9:30am

GUIDED BOARDWALK TOUR

starting Nov 19, Thursday at 9am

FOF BOARD MEETING

Sunday, October 11, 10:30 a.m.
Ranger Station, Copeland

WELCOME-BACK DINNER

Sunday, December 13, 5:00 p.m.
Venue to be announced.

DISCOVER THE JEWEL OF THE EVERGLADES

Saturday, March 5, 5:00 p.m.
Naples Botanical Garden
see *President's Message*, page 3

ANNUAL APPRECIATION PICNIC

Saturday, March 12
Time and Venue to be announced.

ANNUAL MEMBERS' DINNER

Sunday, April 10, 5:00 p.m.
Venue to be announced.



START OF BOARDWALK EXPANSION ...

Friends of Fakahatchee Vice President Patrick Higgins checks out the silt fences on the north side of the Tamiami Trail at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. They were installed by the state to prepare for the installation of a deceleration lane that will eventually lead to a new paved parking area. The FOF, working with the Florida Park Service, have developed a multi-year Boardwalk Expansion Project to significantly upgrade the site.

NEW PARK RANGER

Welcome to Tom Mosley who has joined the staff of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park as a Ranger.

His previous position was with St. Andrews State Park in Panama City Beach, one of the most highly-visited parks in the state. He grew up in New Jersey and has been living in the Florida Panhandle for the last 14 years. His wife Denise and three children (Cadence, Blaise, and little Cruz) will join him here.

Tom said, "I've been trying to come to work at the Fakahatchee for the past few years and can't wait to get out there and experience what you call the Fak-a-Habit – I think I might already have it. I'm also excited to be working with all the staff and closely with the Friends and volunteers."

Bear Hunting Season

The FWC has licensed hunters to kill black bears starting on **October 24**. The territory includes the Picayune Strand. For info, see www.myfwc.com/hunting and click on Bears.

If you see an injured animal or any suspicious activity, call the FWC Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 8/27/15, at 11:19AM, Mike Owen, Biologist, observed 13 **Eastern Kingbirds** flying over Park Headquarters to the southeast. On 8/28/15 around 7:30PM, Steven Bass, Park Ranger, observed a **Florida Panther** on Jones Grade.

On 9/16/15, in the morning, Thomas Mosley, Park Ranger, observed a **Florida Panther** also on Jones Grade. On 9/5/15, in the afternoon, Dino Barone, Faka-Hacker/Volunteer, and Thomas Mosley while on Janes Scenic Drive observed a **Florida Snapping Turtle**, an adult **Barred Owl** and two **Great Blue Herons**.

On 9/12/15, in the early evening, Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, observed over 100 **Common Nighthawks** silently flying over the Firetower. On 9/16/15, at 9:27AM, Mike Owen heard 2 **King Rails** calling along Janes Scenic Drive. On 9/16/15, in the afternoon, Steve Houseknecht and Steven Bass observed a **Red-shouldered Hawk** feeding on waterfowl near the Firetower.

On 9/20/15, at 11:18AM, Mike Owen, while out on a swamp walk in a slough with a group from the University of Miami, observed a **Florida Water Snake** about 2.5 feet long. On 9/21/15, mid-morning, Robert Fisher, volunteer observed an adult Southern Bald Eagle loop over the shop area.

Lately, not as many butterflies have been seen, possibly with the initiation of the mowing along the edge of Janes Scenic Drive. **Palmades Swallowtails** have been seen puddling and flying about as well as **Eastern Tiger Swallowtails**, **Zebra longwings**, **White Peacocks** and a **Cloudless Sulphur**.

If you want to report sightings, contact Park biologist Mike Owen by phone at (239) 695-2886 or by email at FOF_90@hotmail.com



Thanks to member Terry Wilson for this photo of a redstart at the Boardwalk in mid-September.



Park Ranger Steven Bass took this dramatic photo of a sunset in the Fakahatchee.

MUSEUM EXHIBIT



If you are near Everglades City during **October**, stop in at the Museum of the Everglades (the pink building at 105 West Broadway) to see the photos of JohnBob Carlos, some of which were taken in the Fakahatchee. The Museum is open Monday-Saturday, 9am-4pm. For info, see www.evergladesmuseum.org or phone (239) 695-0008.

CLYDE BUTCHER EVENT

The famous photographer's Big Cypress Gallery at 52388 Tamiami Trail East in Ochopee will hold a fundraiser for Big Cypress National Preserve on Hallowe'en weekend, **October 31 and November 1**. For info, see the gallery website www.clydebutcher.com or phone (239) 695-2428.



President's Message

by Francine Stevens

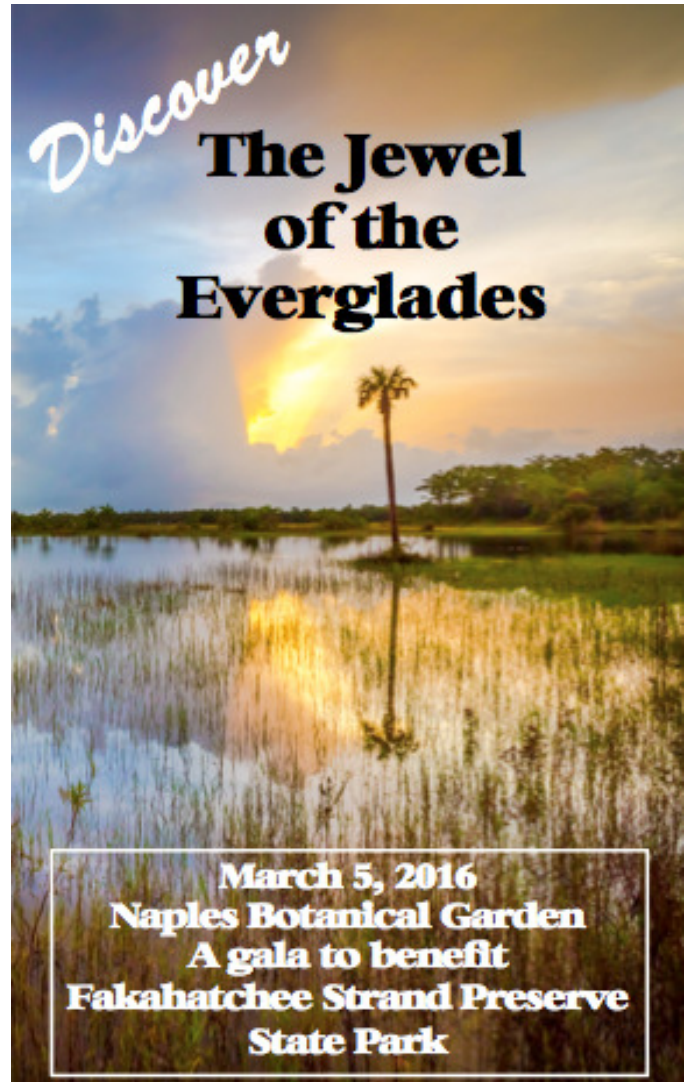
Save the 5th of March to attend "Discover the Jewel of the Everglades" dinner Gala at the Naples Botanical Garden.

In the coming months you will hear more and more about FOF's "Discover the Jewel of the Everglades" Gala. **The Gala Committee chaired by Pat Sherry and co-chaired by Ted De Groot** is in "organizing mode"; **Dave Elliot known for the Dave Elliot radio show** <http://www.daveontheair.com/> accepted Ted's invitation to **MC the Gala**, thanks to **Jimene Rinehart** bumping into **Shirley Calhoun** I was able to get her agreement to feature FOF in the new beautiful *EN Compass* magazine's **Jan/Feb issue** (the article will be written by **Patrick Higgins**), and **Jennifer Reed** accepted my request to feature FOF in **Naples famous Gulf Shore Life magazine**. Next is the **Naples Daily news**. Yes, we're on a roll – brochures are ready, meetings are taking place to obtain sponsorship for the Gala, **tickets will be posted for sale later in October on our Website with a link just for the Gala.**

The dinner at the Gala will be catered by Lurcat Catering born from the award winning company D'Amico & Partners well known for **Café Lurcat, Campiolo, MASA, and D'Amico & Son** in Naples, Lurcat Catering is the exclusive catering company for the Naples Botanical Garden. See what I mean at <http://www.lurcatcatering.com/venues.html> . **The Gala, scheduled for 5.30 to 10 PM**, will take place at the Event Plaza featuring a custom designed state-of-the-art Tent Pavilion adjacent to the Asian Garden where we will welcome our guests to a full bar cocktail hour and hors d'oeuvres service. They will have time before the dinner to walk around and meet the designated FOF volunteers who will help them discover; why the Fakahatchee is a Jewel of the Everglades, the accomplishments of the Orchid Restoration project, the ground breaking Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk Expansion project, the tours offered by FOF and, of course, why we are inviting everyone to help us raise funds to support the largest state Park in Florida!

Sadly, I have to stop bragging about the Gala to leave space for other matters I want to write about, **so please go www.orchidsawmp.org and click on News at the top of the home page to read more about it.** I have already squirreled away my \$195.00 for the all-inclusive dinner fundraising Gala because it will be worth every penny and the FOF is worthy of my time and money! I trust you will feel the same, please help me spread the word about the Gala, **for opportunities to buy a table or opportunities for your company to be recognized for your sponsorship of the Gala get in touch with Pat Sherry at 203-417-9854.**

FOF tours in the Fakahatchee are on sale now on our website and, as usual, our Moonlit Tram Tour tickets are already selling as well as the Swamp Walks. Have you heard about the new feature for the Boardwalk tours – we now have headsets so you will hear the guide's interpretation without being distracted by other visitors chattering away.



What are those black tarps lining the edge of US 41 when you arrive near the Boardwalk area? It's all about preparation for the deceleration lane near the new parking site for the Boardwalk and you will notice some surveying going on too; folks, the new parking site for the Boardwalk is expected to break ground in the first quarter of 2016.

In the next newsletter we'll have the location for the **Welcome-Back dinner** set for the 13th December.

We need more drivers for the Trams Tours! Please contact Glen Stacell 239-348-3455.

Safe travels to all who will be on their way back to south Florida – we look forward to seeing our friends back in the Fakahatchee soon!

TRAVELLERS' TALES

by Marya Repko

I set out at the end of August with my cousin for a trip to Peru but discovered that flights from Miami go through Panama so decided to spend a few days there. I had always wanted to see the canal, especially since it was said that the building of the Tamiami Trail was an equally impressive engineering feat. The canal was finished in 1914, about the time the road was started but then interrupted because of World War I.

We took a half-day guided cruise through the locks. It was very leisurely because we had to wait for much larger craft to get settled first, the gates to close, and the water to rise.

Panama City is mostly modern with huge apartment blocks and office skyscrapers. One of the most impressive buildings is the new Bio-Museum designed by architect Frank Gehry and filled with educational exhibits about the environment. See www.biomuseopanama.org for info.

We turned the clock back several thousands of years when we arrived in Lima. Peru is proud of its native heritage and full of archaeological sites, some of which can be traced to 3000BC. We trekked around on ancient temples, often decorated with carvings and painting. Adobe was the conventional building material then. As civilizations died out, new tribes built on top of the structures so digging progresses in historic layers.

The Inca were relatively new when the Spanish arrived in the early 1500s. Silver and gold had been used long before that to decorate the chiefs and for funeral finery. Besides exporting the precious metals to Europe, the Spanish lavished their churches with gold decoration.

We did not make much time for observing nature but I did see the near-threatened Peruvian Pelican, *Pelecanus thagus*, with its distinctive white-topped wings as they flew past our sea-front hotel each morning.



Where have you been this summer???

Send us your TRAVELLERS' TALES ... whether they be visiting nearby family or exploring exotic places. Email about 300 words (and a photo?) to FOF_90@hotmail.com

BOARDWALK REPORT

by Linda Koreny

Since we are still vacationing in the north, I thought you might enjoy some of the reports I have been receiving from friends and visitors this summer:

A group of individuals from North and South Carolina on an Eco-Tour stopped to visit the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk to do some birding. One of the highlights of that stop for them was to see a **Bobcat**. We thank Lou Skrabec for sharing his photo (*see below*).

Later, a couple visiting from Seminole, Florida, commented that our Boardwalk "is a genuine old Florida scenic experience you won't want to miss." We agree totally. They enjoyed reading the new interpretive signs and reported seeing an **American Alligator** both at the beginning of the walk and also at the 'Gator Pond at the end. We appreciate that they wanted to encourage everyone "not to forget to put what you can in the donation box if you want to help with the maintenance and preservation of this beautiful trail. The Boardwalk needs constant repair and replacement." This is true, Boardwalk repair is done by volunteers and your donated dollars – the conditions in the swamp are always a challenge to our materials.

Just last week, I received an email that "a Friend of Fakahatchee and Volunteer while at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk observed six **Juvenile American Alligators**, a **Five-lined Skink** about 6 inches long on a Sabal Palm, and a **Barred Owl**."

Six Juvenile American Alligators? Baby alligators? Awesome! I so much enjoy watching them grow over the season. And you can, too. Plan to spend some time strolling the Boardwalk; bring your camera and binoculars to expand your experience and maybe join me on one of our new guided Boardwalk tours which will begin in November. See our webpage www.orchidswamp.org for information on this tour and others.



The Combined Fakahatchee East Main, Pennington Post, Uplands Trails Loop

by Tony Marx

Apart from the opportunity to experience the interior of America's only tropical forest from the comparative comfort of the Boardwalk on Tamiami Trail, the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park contains dirt trails suitable for all interests, ranging from the 2.5-mile long West Main Trail to the 12-mile long East Main Trail. However, as overnight camping is not permitted the longer trails cannot be completed on foot and may only be visited by walking as far as possible then turning back. That is, if you are not one of the hardy marathon runners who take part in the annual tough 'Ultra' Marathon run each February or don't own a mountain bike.

In May 2015 I decided to attempt to attempt a circuit of the longest trio, East Main – Pennington Post – Uplands trail and back to the start by mountain bike before the summer rains curtailed it. Primed by past experience, "if anything can go wrong it will." I have a mountain bike with 2.1" tires, rear carrier and panniers containing anything I need on a long bike trip. I planned ahead by also printing out a topo map complete with map references and waypoints.

From long experience in South Florida I equipped with the following, especially necessary on a long trip and also because I was alone:

PERSONAL

1. Helmet – apart from a spill it protects you against low hanging branches. At least wear sturdy head covering of some kind.
2. Insect repellent in summer, sun lotion.
3. Long sleeved shirt and long pants – in May there are still few mosquitos or bugs but it helps prevent scratches especially from trackside thorns.
4. Lightly tinted eye shades – not for sun but to protect the eyes from low hanging branches and vines.
5. Protective foot wear – at least sneakers and better, light boots in case you end up pushing your bike through mud or over rough ground.
6. Knife.
7. Weather protection in summer.
8. Phone.
9. Food & snacks.
10. **Adequate water!** The amount differs with size, but as a rule of thumb you need at least a pint an hour. A liter weighs 2 lbs. but that's no problem if your bike is carrying it. Before you set off, pre-hydrate by drinking as much as you can – up to a liter. Carry at least 4 liters on this trip. Freeze a couple of pints overnight so they stay cool in your pack. On return to your car you will need to re-hydrate for some time after.

PREPARATION

1. It is a good idea to puncture-proof your bike as far as possible. At least, install a plastic liner strip between the tube and tire and/or Schwinn Self-sealing tubes. You can even buy Teflon reinforced tires to stop thorns in the first place. If not handy or not inclined to DIY, a bike shop will do this for you but you must know how to change a tube when you are miles from anywhere.
2. I recommend also carrying a can or two of bicycle tire inflator with sealant, obtainable at Walmart and most large stores. Purists

will may sneer but it saves time and works well with small thorn punctures.

3. Bicycle pump, 2 spare tubes (better than trying to repair with patches without a water source to locate the problem).
4. Tools to handle repairs.
5. First aid kit.
6. Trail map, GPS and/compass (Thick tree canopy may hinder satellite coverage) If you follow the blue ribbons remaining after the last Ultra marathon you could dispense with GPS but it helps to take a map reference or confirm your location – especially in emergency.
7. Let someone reliable know what route you are taking, with estimated completion time.

Start at Gate 12 on Janes Scenic Drive, 6.5 miles from the start of the dirt road in Copeland, and travel N. on East Main Trail. After Ballard Camp – 2 miles in from the start, the trail steadily deteriorates. Hazards are occasional washouts covered by a few planks of lumber, fallen trees and branches and vines which sometimes snake across at face height. Be especially careful not to ride over or brush against the Smilax vine which is armed with sharp thorns. I stop and carefully set them aside.

After 12.0 Miles you reach the junction with Jones Grade Trail N.26° 08.496 W. 081° 23.887 (that heads E. to Rt.29 in case of emergency). Continue north .5 miles and trail bends west at N.26° 08.849 W.081° 23.887 then runs parallel with I-75 which lies about a mile to the north and you hear faint traffic. The trail displays occasional blue ribbons. The tree cover thins but the overhead canopy remains for long distances, which can lose satellite coverage here and there if you are using a small or older GPS unit.

After 3.57 miles from the junction with Jones Grade you see the first less obvious Uplands trail section headed south at N26°08.828 W.081°26.146. Ignore it and continue on.

After a further 1.41 miles you reach the second Uplands Trail headed south, at N26°08.918 W.81°26.615. It should also still be marked with blue ribbons. Turn south here and follow the most clearly beaten trail marked with occasional blue ribbons, as there are several side trails. It tends to curve and zigzag both S.E. and S.W. through stretches of upland pine in the northern stretch changing to open marl prairie in the southern section which will become swampy in summer. There are also occasional sections of protruding rock above the trail surface which make for a bumpy ride.

After approximately 11 miles you reach Jane Scenic Drive opposite the entrance to Picayune State Forest at N. 26°053087, W.081°455758.

Now bike 5.0 miles back to the start at Gate 12 and you have completed approximately 33 miles.

With occasional stops, lunch and to change a tube it took me 7 hours. During that time I did not encounter a single person – hence the need to take the precautions I have detailed above.

Tony Marx is a Florida Master Naturalist. He is a volunteer interpreter for the Fakahatchee guided tram tours and frequently contributes articles to The Ghost Writer.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 312 current memberships including 34 in arrears from the 2nd and 3rd quarters. You can join or renew on our website www.orchidswamp.org, click on "Join Us". For info, call Jinny at (239) 695-1023.

The breakdown by membership category is:

Individual	97	Family	115
Supporter	39	Patron	40
Benefactor	1	Lifetime	12
Business Patron	6	Business Benefactor	2

There were no new members since our last newsletter.

EDITOR WANTED

If you like to write and design layouts, could you edit this newsletter? To learn about what's involved, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905 or email her at FOF_90@hotmail.com.

EVERGLADES ULTRAS

FOF member and generous donor Bob Becker of Ultra Sports has announced the popular Everglades Ultras trail runs which take place in the Fakahatchee on **Saturday, February 20**. Participation is limited to 300 and registration is now open. See www.evergladesultras.com for details.



BIKE RIDE

The annual Everglades Bike Ride, which includes a 27-mile "bumpy ride" on Janes Scenic Drive and benefits FOF, takes place on **Sunday, March 13**. To register and for more info, see <https://raceroster.com/events/2016/6573/everglades-bike-ride> or phone Patty Huff at (239) 695-2397.

What Are We? Who Are We?

The **Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.**, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation Citizen Support Organization, provides financial and volunteer support to preserve the unique ecology and cultural heritage of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and to educate the public about its importance. The Fakahatchee is 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 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 400 copies.

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- BOARD:** Jinny Ball Tod Dahlke Ted DeGroot Dennis Giardina Patrick Higgins
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Nathaniel P. Reed, Shurr Adventures, Tour the Glades
BUSINESS BENEFACTORS: Dragonfly Expeditions, Everglades National Park Boat Tours

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NEW 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) Supporter (\$50) Patron (\$100) Benefactor (\$500)

Business Patron (\$200) Business Benefactor (\$500) Extra Donation (\$ _____)

Youth (\$10) under 18 (birth date: month ___ day ___ year _____)

Lifetime Individual (\$1,000) Lifetime Family (\$1,500) Lifetime Protector (\$2,500) Lifetime Preserver (\$5,000)

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CITY _____

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PHONE _____

MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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