



The Ghost Writer

NOVEMBER, 2009

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

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Saturday
4th Tuesday

starting November 14 through April
Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child
Reservations Required.
Phone (239) 695-1023 or email
islandgirm@msn.com

GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

1st Saturday

Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child
Reservations Required.
Phone (239) 695-1023 or email
islandgirm@msn.com

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Tuesday

If you can help, phone (239) 695-1023.

BOARD MEETING

Sunday, December 13, 2:00 p.m.
Port of the Islands

COASTAL CRUISE

Saturday, November 21, 1:00 p.m.
See page 2.

"SEASON STARTER"

DINNER/TALK

Sunday, December 13, 5:00 p.m.
Port of the Islands
See page 2

CALENDAR

The attached calendar might change as we firm up dates. Check our website for the latest news.

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 10/1/09, around noon, Ann and Michael Karr, visitors, reported seeing an adult **Florida Panther** cross JSD just before K2. On 10/1/09, around 9:30AM, Mike Owen, Biologist, observed 1 **Red-tailed Hawk** perched on a snag about 90 yards west of Janes and about a half mile north of Gate 1. On 10/1/09, about 10:30AM, Mike Owen, Dave Westervelt, Environmental (Apiary) Scientist, and Jason Graham, University of Florida PhD student, observed one female **Redstart** on a Laurel oak north of Gate 7. On 10/1/09, about 5:30PM, Dave Westervelt and Jason Graham observed a large **bobcat** cross JSD at 2.5 miles past the office. On 10/1/09, in the late evening, one **crayfish snake** about 16 inches was seen in the first two miles of JSD by Karen Relish, OPS Park Ranger, and Dave Westervelt. They also heard 6 King rails calling to each other from the prairies in the beginning of JSD.

On 10/6/09, in the morning, Alicia Mumford, Park Ranger, and Laura Skinner, AmeriCorps member, observed a **Florida BlackBear** approximately 150 pounds within the first two miles of JSD. On 10/6/09, Renee Rau, Park Manager, and Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, observed a large adult **Bald Eagle** south of Jones Grade perched on a Pine Snag. On 10/7/09, around 10:15AM, one **black and white warbler** was observed in a slough by Mike Owen. On 10/9/09, Mike Owen, saw a female **Cooper's Hawk** flying over the drive just past Gate 3.

On 10/19/09, in the early evening, Don Leonard, volunteer, saw a **Florida Black Bear** weighing about 200 pounds near Gate 16. On 10/22/09, in the mid-afternoon, while reading the wells, Mike Owen saw 3 **American Bitterns** in Four Stakes Prairie. On 10/22/09, in the area of the Park office, during the morning, Misty Miller, Administrative Assistant, noted a **belted kingfisher** perched in a tree near the pond next to the Fire tower, a **tri-colored heron** walking along the edge of the same pond, and a **black vulture** perched in a Bald Cypress just outside the entrance to the office.

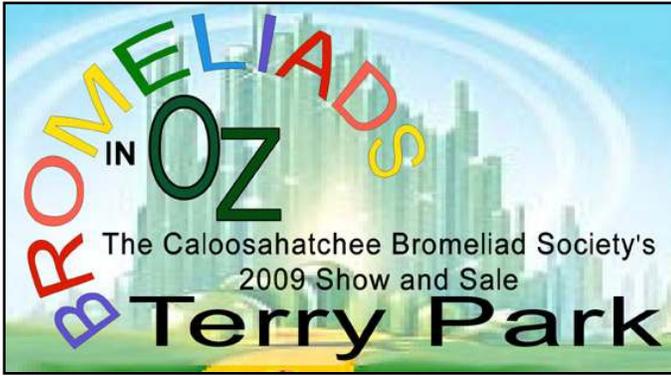
On 10/23/09, Mike Owen and Karen Relish observed a **Ruby-throated hummingbird** female (white throat) flying north to south across JSD. He also noted near the end of the drive, in the mid afternoon, a **Florida Panther** around 50-70 pounds walk to the North crossing the North ditch behind a clump of Fakahatchee grass and into the strand. On 10/28/09, in the morning, Robert Czarnicki, volunteer, observed both a male and female **kestrel** flying near the western boundary of Fakahatchee.

We are seeing **Chicken turtles** digging holes to lay their eggs. Ron Kotliar is monitoring chicken turtle activity weekly along JSD while reading the JSD staff gauges. Both Steve Houseknecht and Don Leonard saw one on 10/12/09 between Gate 2 and 3 and Steve Houseknecht and Mike Owen saw one near the park headquarters.

Correction On 6/2/09, Alicia Mumford, Park Ranger, not Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, saw the 10-inch-long Diamondback rattlesnake on Janes Scenic Drive (JSD) not along Prairie Canal.

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

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



The Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society will have a Show and Sale on **Saturday & Sunday, December 5 & 6**, at Terry Park in Fort Myers. Opening hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. For info, contact Steve Hoppin at (239) 997-2237.

COASTAL CRUISE

The boat tour on **Saturday, November 21**, to Fakahatchee Island is almost booked out! The event starts at 1:00 p.m. at the National Park in Everglades City with lunch and a lecture about history. The boat departs at 2:30 p.m. for its trip to the islands, where we get off for an exploratory walk, and returns via the rookery.

For info and reservations, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905.

"SEASON STARTER"

Pythons in Our Midst

We're kicking off the winter season with an exciting talk about Pythons by a dynamic speaker. If you haven't heard Larry Perez, you're missing something. He has worked for local and national parks in a variety of technical roles but he is basically a knowledgeable and attention-holding communicator.

Our Dinner/Talk will be held at Port-of-the-Islands on **Sunday, December 13**, starting at 5:00 p.m. with a chance to get together over drinks. The sit-down meal is at 6:00 p.m. followed by Larry's lecture at 7:00 p.m.

Formal invitations and reservation forms will be sent later in the month but don't forget to mark your calendar.

FOF SCHOLARSHIP

The Friends are offering a scholarship to seniors in high schools in Collier County. Students should apply by April 1 and must have done some volunteer work in the Fakahatchee. More info is available on our website.



MARSH TRAIL OPENING

On an unseasonably torrid **October 10**, the Friends were present at the official opening of the Ten Thousand Islands NWR parking lot and trail on US-41. Glen Stacell chatted in front of his new FOF display with Takako Sato from the Panther Refuge while Dennis Giardina greeted old friends. Among the dignitaries at the ribbon-cutting were Collier County Commissioner Jim Coletta and Everglades City Mayor Sammy Hamilton.



IN THE NEWS

The public television documentary "Big Cypress Swamp: The Western Everglades" which FOF helped to sponsor is part of the Naples Film Festival. It will be shown on **November 7** and filmmaker Elam Stoltzfus will be present to answer questions.

A friend in Jupiter sent this email:

There was a segment on "Florida Today" on Public Radio the other day about Fakahatchee – the ghost orchid, how people are stealing orchids; swamp walks where the water is cold now in summer but much warmer in winter. The naturalist who spoke mostly was named Owen.

"Bobber" Card

Anyone who is guiding a group canoe or kayak trip needs to pass a boater safety course. This can be done on-line at http://myfwc.com/boating/safety/ID_card.htm. You will receive a "bobber card" in the mail. The card has no expiration date.

NEW T-SHIRTS & CAPS

The Friends have new T-shirts and hats for sale in earthy colors. An order form is included with this newsletter and is also available on our website.



President's Message

Your Board met on November 8th and passed motions on the following issues.

PayPal will be instituted to make it easier for our Members and Visitors to register and pay for activities, dues, and events. This program has been successfully used by other park volunteer groups

Big Cypress National Preserve has asked the Friends to contribute funding toward the displays in their new Visitor's Center on US-41 just east of SR-29. Since the Fakahatchee is a major part of the Big Cypress eco-system the Board voted to help pay for a permanent display. Look for it when the Center opens in February 2010.

Jay Staton has filmed a new DVD to aid in the promotion of the Friends Scholarship. It is designed to be shown in Collier County High Schools to develop student interest in the wonders of the Fakahatchee. You will be able to view the show at the Welcome Back dinner December 13th.

Allen Caldwell, Chair of the Finance committee, is preparing our "Partnership in Parks" Grant request. The Florida Parks System has a program that if a Friends CSO will contribute \$60,000 for Park Improvements the State will give a \$40,000.00 match. The FOF has the amount set aside in a CD for our portion. We plan to use this grant to implement the planning and permitting for the Boardwalk renovation and expansion plus the new Visitor's center.

HELP NEEDED:

A candidate is needed to fill a Board vacancy.

Also needed is someone to take over Merchandise sales. Vicky Nagle has successfully guided our sales for the last several years, but her duties as Treasurer are taking more of her time.

If you have interest and would like more details please call me at 614-361-9494

*All the Best,
Tom Maish*

Volunteer Hours Count!

by Marya Repko

The Park can use their record of volunteer hours to show how much support it has. And, if FOF ever apply for a grant, each hour is worth about \$17.00 in "matching funds" (ie, if we have to contribute 50/50 to the grant money, those hours count as money from FOF).

So, please send in your report each month. The deadline for the Fakahatchee is the 5th day after the end of the month.

It's easy to keep track; I have a little notebook on my desk in which I record what I've done each day for the Friends or the park and then summarize at the end of the month to send to Renee and Misty. Or, you could have a clipboard in your car.

However you keep track of your hours, don't forget to report them! You'll be helping the Fak in two ways – the actual work and the credit that the park gets from having such willing and active volunteers.

BOARDWALK REPORT

The Boardwalk Committee (Nelson Tilden, Dennis Giardina, Bud Scott, Dick Hughes and Kathy Hatch) will meet later in November. They will consider regular Boardwalk work days, signage for major trees and plants, the restrooms, and the iron ranger. A good complaint is that our donation box is not large enough for all the contributions we receive from visitors to the Boardwalk during the winter months.

Editor's Note: The Boardwalk is very pleasant these days. More cars are being seen in the parking lot and the iron ranger is yielding higher bank deposits.



Our thanks to English visitor Steve Paddon who sent this photo with an email:

Saw another cool and unusual sight today from the boardwalk, always something amazing going on down there.

BOARDWALK HISTORY

Not everyone notices the sign at the Boardwalk which announces that Big Cypress Bend was declared a National Natural Landmark in 1966 by the National Park Service. It is described as "probably the best sizeable example of a tropical swamp remaining in the Southeast. It contains the largest royal palm stand in the country."

The property, including Weaver's Camp across the Trail, was bought by Naples conservationist Lester Norris when it was threatened with logging in the late 1950s. He built the Boardwalk so people could enjoy the rare plants and trees.

In 1976, the State bought the parcel, excluding Weaver's Camp, and Mr. Norris donated \$10,000 for maintenance. We should all be grateful for his insight into what was worth saving and his generosity.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 248 fully paid-up members. *The Ghost Writer* is sent by email to 219 members, saving about \$96 per issue. If we do not have your email address, please send it to us. We will only use it for official FOF business and will never divulge it.

Welcome to new members:

- Julie Cardenas, Naples
- Howard Goldman, Delray Beach
- Tracy Stokes, Everglades City

HISTORY TALK

Members of the Friends of Fakahatchee have been invited to attend a lecture hosted by the Everglades Society for Historic Preservation about the "History of the Fakahatchee" on **Friday, November 20**, at 5:30 p.m. in the Everglades City Community Church (on the circle).

The illustrated talk will be given by Franklin Adams and Marya Repko. Franklin was involved with Mel Finn in the effort to save the Fakahatchee from development. Marya Repko is a local historian who has just completed a book about the Fakahatchee islands, the logging in the strand, and Gulf American's Golden Gate Estates ("the blocks") and Remuda Ranch (now Port of the Islands).

There is no charge for the event and light refreshments will be served before the formalities begin. For more info, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905 or see www.evergladeshistorical.org.



FOF member Captain Franklin Adams captured this photo of a panther in his back yard in north Naples at 1:30 p.m. He later saw a mother with a youngster.

STOP PRESS – JSD CLOSED

We have just heard that Janes Scenic Drive will be closed to all traffic from November 16 through December 11, Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. while culverts are being installed. The road will be open on weekends and over Thanksgiving (11/26 and 11/27).

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 | | | |
| | Secretary – Susan O'Farrell | Treasurer – Vicky Nagle | | | |
| BOARD: | Allen Caldwell | Elsa Caldwell | Saul Friess | Dennis Giardina | Tom Maish |
| | Susan O'Farrell | David Shindle | 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