

The Ghost Writer

SUMMER ISSUE, JULY 2004

Newsletter of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve

HOME OF THE GHOST ORCHID

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

ADVANCE NOTICE: booking starts in October
October 9th 2004 through March 2005
1st & 3rd Tuesday, 2nd & 3rd Saturday and 11/23 & 12/28

GHOST ORCHID WALKS

to be scheduled in July/August (\$40/person)
contact biologists at (239) 695-2886

Clyde Butcher Weekend

Sept 4, 5 & 6 (Labor Day)

guided swamp walks, exhibits, food, music
see www.clydebutcher.com for details

Members' Meeting

Friday, October 15th at 7:30p.m.

Seafood Depot Restaurant, Everglades City
meet the new Park Manager, Ralph Smith!

"FakaPanther" Volunteers' Day

Saturday, November 6

pig roast picnic, free T-shirts

start the season - sign up to volunteer!

IN MEMORIUM

Ray Porter, a founding member of FOF, died on March 25th. He had been a visitor to the Fakahatchee since the early 1950's when he photographed the logging there. A native Miamian and professional nuclear physicist, he loved the Glades which he explored extensively with his ever-present camera. Our sympathies to his family and to the friends with whom he shared his knowledge of the Fakahatchee.

SEEN AROUND THE STRAND

M

On Saturday May 1, Jim Fisher had two sightings of a **Florida Panther**: one at 9:20 AM and the other at 6:30 PM around Gate 17 area on Janes Scenic Drive

O

On May 10, Mike Owen saw a two foot **Florida Cottonmouth** envenomating a seventeen inch long **Striped Crayfish Snake** at 5:45PM 100 feet North of Gate 1.

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Z

On May 20, the first *Bufo marinus* or **Marine Toad** was documented and collected by Mike Owen from Janes Scenic Drive near the Park Headquarters. It will be given to the University of Florida's Museum of Natural History-Herpetology collection.

O

On May 25, Mike Owen observed a live **Everglades Mink** on Janes Scenic Drive about 3 miles North of Gate 1. Steve Houseknecht collected a roadkill Everglades Mink from Janes Scenic Drive on June 26. It will also be given to the University of Florida's Museum of Natural History-Mammal Collection.

N

In the morning of May 27, an Immature **Bald Eagle**, a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, four **Purple Martins** and a **Swallow-tailed Kite** were observed flying by Mike Owen, Steve Houseknecht and David Henley over the Fakahatchee shop area. On June 4, Mike Owen observed four **Rough-winged Swallows**.

E

On June 8, a **River Otter** was observed by Mike Owen on Jones Grade.

On June 10 at 10:15AM, a **Black Bear** was observed by Mike Owen crossing Janes Scenic Drive to the North near Gate 2. The bear weighed approximately 270 pounds.

To volunteer for wildlife observation or to report sightings, phone Fakahatchee's resident biologist **Mike Owen** or **Karen Relish** on (239) 695-2886

Visit our website www.FriendsOfFakahatchee.org for a schedule of events and other newsletters.

What Are We? Who Are We?

The **Friends of Fakahatchee State Preserve**, a 501(c)3 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 and SR-29.

OFFICERS: President – John Elting Vice-President – Allen Caldwell
Secretary – Betty Foster Treasurer – Jack Horner

BOARD: Franklin Adams Signe Backus Jan Brock Elsa Caldwell
Patty Huff Allison Nist Jerry Winters Niki Woodard
Jim Woodard Brian Call (Friends of the Panther Refuge)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT by John Elting

On May 7th, pursuant to the amended by-laws, the Friends of Fakahatchee held its Annual Members' Meeting followed by a Board Meeting at the Seafood Depot Restaurant in Everglades City. Thanks to the efforts of FOF Secretary Betty Foster, the turnout was excellent. The topics of discussion were far-reaching, but I want to mention a few which I feel are most important.

As many of you are now aware, Park Manager Greg Toppin resigned to move to Hillsboro River. Greg has been a great asset to the Fakahatchee and a very good friend to FOF. We are sorry to see him go and wish him the very best in his new position.

The closure of Janes Scenic Drive during the evening and night hours had been discussed at previous meetings. The consensus among members was that this would be a poor idea because: 1. it would not deter poaching; 2. members like to be in the Park during the early morning and late evening; 3. it would not be appreciated by local inhabitants. We put the issue to a vote of the members present at the meeting and agreed unanimously that Janes Scenic Drive should stay open all hours. There remain, however, the problems associated with common access through the Picayune State Forest.

Jim Woodard, an ever-caring and active member of our Board, presented certificates of appreciation to some of our deserving officers, directors and members. This was a thoughtful gesture and, of course, the gratitude applies to everyone who cares about and devotes time to the Fakahatchee. Thanks to Jim and to all of you!

Through to the efforts of our Boardwalk guides and Park rangers, work on the renovation of the walk has begun. Railings have been tightened and boards replaced where needed. The entire deck at the terminus by the water hole has been replaced. Thanks is due to the rangers and volunteers who worked on this project.

NEW PARK MANAGER

On behalf of FOF, as well as the biologists and rangers, I was glad to hear that the new Park Manager will be Ralph Smith. We commend the Park Service for moving swiftly with this appointment. Ralph was an outstanding candidate and we are as excited as he is. Ralph is a self-proclaimed team player, a leader who knows and

loves the Fakahatchee. He grew up as an "army brat" living in California, Illinois and elsewhere. He has been with the Parks Department for 15 years: five at Hillsboro River, seven as a ranger at Myaka and, for the past two years, as Assistant Manager at Collier Seminole. We are fortunate to have such a well-qualified manager and welcome Ralph, his wife Marcela and two sons Marcko and Marcelo to the Fakahatchee.

ALLIANCE WITH PANTHER REFUGE

The Friends of Fakahatchee (FOF) and the Friends of the Panther Refuge (FOPR) have formed an alliance to better serve their members and their respective State and Federal agencies. The Panther Refuge and the Fakahatchee share the same watershed and environmental conditions. If it were not for the arbitrary positioning of I-75, they would in essence be one and the same.

I am very pleased and excited as President of FOF to announce together with Brian Call, President of FOPR, that both CSO's will be combining resources to provide additional events, activities, speakers and volunteer opportunities for their members.

Commencing in October 2004, FOF members whose memberships are up for renewal will be given the option to purchase a combined membership for an additional \$5. Similarly, a FOPR member may become an FOF member with the same privileges for a like sum. We think this is an exciting development, one which will offer members of both organizations new educational opportunities, social events and outings to explore their respective environments. The Panther Refuge is, in fact, in the process of clearing a nature trail which should be completed by year end.

As the population and development of Southwest Florida continues to grow at an alarming rate, the issues of preservation and the importance of education become more and more critical. Combining the resources of FOF with still other CSO's will provide a more unified and forceful voice to deal with the many problems that threaten what remains of our natural environment.

Keep an eye on this newsletter and our web site for upcoming FakaPanther news and events!

NEW MEMBERSHIP

date _____

Please make check payable to "FOF" and send to: FOF Membership, P.O.Box 548, Copeland, FL, 34137

Individual (\$15) Family (\$20) Business (\$40) Patron (\$100) Benefactor (\$500)
 associate membership with Friends of Panther Refuge (add \$5.00)

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