

The Ghost Writer

JANUARY 2004

Newsletter of Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve
Home of the Ghost Orchid

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Star Gazing

Friday, January 23rd

Meet at Dusk, Park Office on Janes' Drive

ANNUAL MEETING & PICNIC

Saturday, January 24th, 11:00 a.m.

meet at Gate 12 for ride to Arthur's camp

bring side dish, folding chair

RSVP to 695-4593 before January 20th

Everyone Welcome – Bring a Guest!

Royal Palm Planting

Sunday, January 25th, 10:00 a.m.

meet at Preserve Office (Janes' Scenic Drive)

Guided Swamp Walks

JAN 6, 17, 27 • FEB 3, 21, 24 • MAR 2, 30

reservations: (239) 695-4593 • fee: \$15 (\$10 FoF)

Guided Canoe Trips

JAN 3, 24 • FEB 7, 28 • MAR 6, 27

reservations: (239) 695-4593 • fee: \$25 (\$20 FoF)

Equipment provided; limited to groups of 10

ADVANCE NOTICE

Seafood Festival, Everglades City, Feb 7/8

Miami Orchid Show, March 6/7

We need photos of orchids for our booth!

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A new entry into the Roadkill database was added on November 26th when Mike Owen and Karen Relish found a 10-inch long **South Florida Swamp Snake** on Janes' Scenic Drive. Unfortunately, another **Black Bear** (weight about 160 lbs) was also entered when Jimmy and Mike Owen found it on SR29 about 1.2 miles south of Janes' Scenic Drive on December 28th.

Dave Mueller (and the Naples Daily News, Dec 9) reported the **Florida Panther** hit by a car on US41. Although it was only thought to be suffering a broken leg, it died from internal injuries at the veterinary hospital about a week later.

Birds seen included a male **Painted Bunting** in early December plus a pair during the Christmas bird count. Mike saw a **Purple Gallinule** while he was sampling water quality on Checkmate Pond and **White Pelicans** southwest of Carnestown (US41 and SR29). A **White-crowned Pigeon** was observed near the Boardwalk, **Roseate Spoonbills** were seen south of US41 (west of SR29) and a female **Northern Harrier** was at Bridge 41-66 on US41 on December 15th.

Panther tracks were noted going west on K2 (Dec 3), and north on G15 tram (Dec 19). **Bear Tracks** were going south on G15 on the same day.

Dave Mueller saw an **adult otter** on Janes' Scenic Drive; another was seen by Buddy Griner north of Jones Grade near the borrow pits.

What Are We?

The Friends of Fakahatchee State Preserve is a Citizen Support Organization of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, an entity of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The Preserve comprises over 80,000 acres of land of the Big Cypress Swamp and is about 15 miles long by 5 miles wide, bordering US-41, I-75 and SR-29. The Fakahatchee Strand is the largest cypress strand in the world and its slough is the deepest in the greater Everglades.

OFFICERS

President: Patty Huff, Everglades City
Secretary: Kerrie Chobot, Everglades City
Treasurer: Jack Horner, Fort Myers

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Franklin Adams, Everglades City Jan Brock, Ochopee
Betty Foster, Bonita Springs Russ Reay, Everglades City
Bill Mesce, Copeland Greg Toppin, Copeland

contact us at FOF, P O Box 548, Copeland, FL, 34137 or email FOF_90@hotmail.com



Anniversary Cake

The Friends of Fakahatchee celebrated their fifth anniversary with a specially-decorated cake presented at the members' meeting on December 5th by Park Manager Greg Toppin.

Monthly gatherings of members on the first Friday of the month at the Seafood Depot Restaurant in Everglades City have become an enjoyable feature of belonging to FoF and the Annual Meeting will consider whether to make this a permanent fixture in our calendar.

Membership News

If you are still receiving your copy of The Ghost Writer by post, we would appreciate having your email address. Contact FOF_90@hotmail.com.

Nominations for the Board of Directors are still open. Please phone Greg at (239) 695-4593 or email to the above if you want to nominate someone before the elections at the Annual Meeting.

Welcome to new members:

- Eliz. & Don Brobst, Loch Haven, PA
- Bob Czarnecki, Naples
- Eric Gottlieb, Miami Beach
- Michele Hope, Key Biscayne
- Karen O'Neil, Bonita Springs
- Jean Stefanik, Manchester, NH

EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS

A small FoF committee is looking at the idea of a loose "twinning" of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve with the English nature reserve of Wicken Fen (see the article in the Winter 2003 issue of the *Ghost Writer*). A further connection ("tripling"?) with a similar refuge in Holland has also been suggested by the director at Wicken Fen.

Naardermeer is located near the town of Naarden, east of Amsterdam. It is the oldest nature refuge in The Netherlands, having been saved in 1904 when the city of Amsterdam proposed using it as a dump for garbage. Today, it is surrounded by ever-increasing urban development that threatens its water levels and quality.

Naardermeer hosts a variety of marshland plants and birds. Visitors can tour by boat or on footpaths that have observations points. Bicycles are available for rent at the nearby railroad station. From December to April, volunteers help with reed cutting.

To visit their website, go to www.natuurmonumenten.nl and then click North Holland on the map. The text is in Dutch but the photos are universal.

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If members are interested in a trip to Wicken Fen in England and Naardermeer in Holland during the last week in March, they should get in touch with Marya at (239) 695-2905 or email her at FOF_90@hotmail.com as soon as possible so that we can take advantage of low air fares.

BOARDWALK NEWS

After a relatively quiet summer, the boardwalk at Big Cypress Bend is busy again. Jerry Winter and Signe Backus reported visitors from as far away as Sri Lanka. On the first weekend in January, there were more people than parking places. In all, the boardwalk had over 15,000 visitors last year, according to the automatic counter at the gate.

The current animal population includes the mother alligator with babies in the pond at the far end of the walk and some blue herons that almost pose for photos (they do not seem to be shy around people). There is also evidence of the eagle.

More volunteers are needed to greet visitors at the entrance. Please get in touch with Jerry or Signe at (239) 389-7384 if you can spare a morning or afternoon each week.

Thanks

Don Harmon, of Harmon Brothers Rock Quarry, for preparing the ground so that we can plant Royal Palms. This will take place on Sunday, January 25th, and volunteers are welcome. The trees were raised from seed that was collected in the Park about five years ago.

Jerry Winter & Signe Backus for their donation of photocopy paper at the Park office.

Jean Stefanik for ski poles and her invitation for members to visit the New Hampshire orchid society during the summer.



Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Inc.
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