



The Ghost Writer

APRIL 2005

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

by special arrangement
phone (239) 695-4593 for information

GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

by special arrangement
phone (239) 695-4593 for information

Work Day on Interpretive Trail

Saturday, April 2

Panther Refuge, SR29/I75
see www.floridapanther.org

Volunteer Clean-Up Day

Saturday, April 23

meet 9:00a.m. at Park Office
phone Rosi at (239) 695-4593

Canoe Training Day

Friday, April 22, 9:00am

Collier Seminole State Park

“Bobber” license needed to qualify
apply at County Offices
phone Ralph at (239) 695-4593

Members'

Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 7 at 10:30am

gather at 10:00am for coffee

Egret Room, Port of the Islands

RSVP to (239) 992-9359

ALL MEMBERS WELCOME!

M • O • ZONE

SEEN AROUND THE STRAND

A **deer** and 2 **spotted fawns** were seen by volunteers Jean Pekarok and Ruth Pawlak near the Port of the Islands RV area on March 6 and a single **spotted fawn** was seen by biologist's assistant Jill Waisley on March 10 in East Prairie. Three **deer**, one with **antlers in velvet**, were seen near the Faka Union Canal on March 16. An **Everglades Mink** was seen by volunteers Ken and Helen Harris 5.2 miles north of Gate 1 on March 23 at 6:15pm. Two **otters** were reported by Mike Owen at the Prairie Canal on March 15.

On the same day, he also saw 4 **Swallow-Tail Kites** over Dan House Prairie and **Rough-Winged Swallow** on a wire near the Fire Tower. On the next day, he saw a **Loggerhead Shrike** perched on a cabbage palm .6 mile north of Gate 1. George and Cathy Hatch saw a **White Crowned Pigeon** on the west shore of the Faka Union Canal about 1 mile south of US41. Kathy is a volunteer who reads water gauges. Mike uses the data to monitor how the Everglades Restoration Project is changing the levels along Janes' Drive. She will be leaving for the summer and Mike would like to hear from anyone who wants to take her place.

Mike saw a **bat** with an 8-inch wingspan on March 7 and a **brown water snake** basking on a rock near the Fire Tower on March 14. He also watched a **green anole** lizard which had turned brown while on the porch of his office. Karen Relish reported a **coyote** road-kill on SR29 north of I75 on March 14.

Mike has a “wish list” of items he needs in the office:

- o books – field guides (birds, mammals, insects, reptiles & amphibians)
- o computer disks – 3.5-inch floppies, re-writable CD's
- o ink cartridges for HP DeskJet 692C (#51649A and #51629A)
- o furniture – filing cabinet, bookcase, etc.

Please let him know at 695-2886 if you can donate any of them.

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

EXOTIC REMOVAL. Brazilian Pepper is being removed around Gate 20 by contractors under a grant awarded to the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park.

THANKS to Everglades Island Properties and Snook Publications for printing our newsletters and membership brochures.

CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD

Ballots are included with this newsletter and should be returned by April 22. There are six vacant places on our Board of 15. Directors must retire after serving for two consecutive terms of two years each.

Jenifer Adams-Mitchell, born and educated in Nebraska, spends her summers in Delaware where she and her husband own a non-motorized (eg, kayak, sail) boats rental and guide service. Of the Fakahatchee, she says: "Whenever I walk along a tram ... I forget about nagging responsibilities and just enjoy being in this beautiful place". Likes to write and is a major contributor to this newsletter.

Connie Bransilver, photographer and author, was born and studied law in New Mexico before working in London, England. Has traveled to all seven continents but latest book "Wild Love Affair" is subtitled "The Essence of Florida's Native Orchids". She is also on the advisory council of our neighbor, Picayune Strand.

Rick Cruz, born in Havana and transplanted to Miami as a baby, worked as a veterinarian technician but gave that up in 2001 to become a full-time photographer. Has a passion for the Fakahatchee and hopes "to motivate others to see the beauty and fragility of this rare and endangered piece of nature right at our doorstep".

Frank Denninger was brought up and still lives in Hialeah where he owns a metal fabrication business. Has "enjoyed the beauty, sounds, scents and resources" of the Glades and Fakahatchee for over 40 years and is concerned with Glades restoration and conservation, particularly with communicating our wishes to authority.

Richard "Bud" Scott was an administration specialist in his native Canada. He and wife Margaret winter in Naples where they enjoy walking the beach and observing nature. Regretting the loss (to "progress") of woods he explored as a boy in Northern Quebec, he likes "the concept of a preserve, such as the Fakahatchee, and would like to do my part to help nature recover from the logging of the 1940's".

Nelson Tilden, with a background in biology and healthcare, recently completed the Master Naturalist program at Univ of Florida. He and wife Caryl devote their winters to the Boardwalk, greeting visitors and caring for it lovingly. During the summer, he is an active volunteer for civic organizations in upstate New York.

Remaining Board Members

Signe Backus, from Illinois, has a degree in park design and owned fine arts & crafts galleries in Minnesota and Wisconsin, where she & Jerry Winters spend their summers.

Allen Caldwell, from Southern Florida, is a founding member of FOF. He was a microbiologist but now spends time volunteering in Miami for the homeless, studying local history and supporting the arts.

Elsa Caldwell, from Miami, is another founding member. Held high positions as a clinical chemist and educator. Fluent in French and Spanish, interested in historic preservation and our ecology.

John Elting, from New York, was an investment banker and still holds corporate directorships. Also active in Sanibel community and naturalist causes, leads swamp walks through the Fakahatchee.

Bill Mesce, a commercial photographer around New York City, came here to take pictures of the wildlife and "fell in love with the area and stayed". He is a swamp walk leader and lives on the fringes of the Fakahatchee.

Allison Nist, MD, from Buffalo, NY, is Clinical Director of Collier County Health Dept in Naples and Immokalee, specializes in HIV/AIDS, but continues to write poetry and appreciate the arts.

Jerry Winters, from New York City, had a career in welfare and health care, eventually moving to Minnesota where he met Signe Backus.

Jim Woodard, from Southern Florida, is attorney specializing in criminal defense; was Assistant State Attorney. Now has a practice in Coconut Grove.

Nicole (Niki) Woodard, from Michigan, was a police officer for the Metro Dade Sheriff.

Retiring Board Members

Capt Franklin Adams
Betty Foster
Jack Horner
Patty Huff

The President of Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge will become an ex-officio director.

BOARDWALK NEWS

We have lift-off! The eagle chicks are beginning to flutter their wings. And, there have been plenty of people to watch them. If you drive by on US41, you can see that cars can hardly find a place to park. Tour buses are also stopping; one group had over 50 people, all gathered at the end of the Boardwalk to watch the baby alligators. The good maintenance work which was done last fall ensured that the platform didn't collapse under such a crowd.

More work will be started at the beginning of April using the remaining timber to make repairs at the entrance this time. Rotten boards will be replaced and nails that have come loose will be hammered in. There has also been some vandalism at the far end but, fortunately, the "kids" who were causing the damage were chased away by one of our members before they caused too much harm. He rather quick-wittedly told them that it was a "federal offence" to destroy public parks.

We are making the Department of Transport aware of the traffic congestion near the Boardwalk and asking them to change the road markings. It would be much safer for visitors turning back onto the highway if there were a "no passing" zone on both sides of the Boardwalk entrance.

Phone Jerry & Signe at (239) 389-7384 if you can spare a few hours to greet visitors to our special Everglades amenity or would like to help with repair work. They would also still like to hear from anyone with a wheelchair or binoculars to donate.

Members' Picnic

It was a beautiful day for the Members' Picnic on Saturday March 26th. The strong sun and high humidity kept everyone looking for shade, but it didn't stop the picnickers from enjoying delicious BBQ sandwiches along with a host of other treats, many brought by the attendees. Over 30 members and guests, including quite a few from the East Coast, came to the headquarters office on Janes' Scenic Drive for the event. It was a great opportunity to put faces to names and to get to know more of the friendly people in our organization.

Gator Hole Camp

by Jenifer Adams-Mitchell

At the January volunteer clean-up day, FOF member Ray Carroll told me about his Gator Hole Camp in the Four Stake Prairie in the Fakahatchee and invited me to visit it any time I wanted. Although intrigued, it wasn't until late March that I finally took him up on his offer.

My husband and I decided to bike to it because, as usual, we got a late start. We parked at the East Main area and rode down Janes' Scenic to Gate 7, or West Main. The ride along the tram through the cypress was easy going and, of course, incredibly beautiful.

After about three miles, the cool shade of the cypress abruptly stopped and the trail continued on into the sun-scorched prairie, dotted with islands of pines and palms. We thought that we'd be able to fly along on our bikes since the trail was so wide open. But the ground was spongy and we had to use new muscles to keep our tires moving.

We passed one camp in a hammock and went in to investigate. It didn't fit the description that Ray had given me so we continued on. After two miles on the prairie, we found Ray's heavenly little camp.

His hammock is shaded and peaceful. He has it outfitted completely with nearly all the comforts of home. And just a short distance away is the crowning jewel of his oasis – a willow and rush lined gator hole. If you're brave, he has built a one-plank bridge out to a platform in the middle of the pond. From it we had a bird's eye view and counted sixteen baby alligators lazily floating near the surface. We looked and looked for the mama gator but never did see her. But I am sure she was watching us

Ray has invited any FOF member to stop, rest, picnic, and enjoy his Gator Hole Camp. When you leave the cypress area, be sure to continue north on the trail. The camp is on the west side of Four Stake Prairie.

The Naples Preserve

1690 Tamiami Trail North, Naples, (239) 261-4290

Wed. April 6, 10 am. Lisa Andrews, Outreach Education Specialist from Big Cypress National Preserve: program on cypress forests and sawgrass marshes.

Friday April 8, 8:30 am-2:00 am. guided tour at Turner River Road. Please call for reservations

Wed. April 20, 10 am. Carolyn Shaw, Park Service Specialist: secret beauties of Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park.

This notice was sent in by FOF members Ron & Mary Echols.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have reached the magic number of 300 members! Unfortunately, we shall have to drop some delinquent payers who have not sent in their renewals and that means struggling again to meet our goal.

Final notices are going out with this newsletter. If you get one, please send in your renewal NOW!

We save almost \$90 on each issue of the newsletter because 238 members receive their copies via the Internet. If we do not have your address, please send it by email to us at FOF_90@hotmail.com

OLD PHOTOS WANTED. We would like copies of photos of FOF events that we can include in our scrap book. It is important to keep a record of our activities, not only to preserve our history for new members, but also to present when we apply for grants to show that we are a serious and dedicated support organization.

Newsletter Production

We welcome articles or ideas from members. Let us know what you would like to read about: more nature observation? organizational matters? developments at the Park? news from other State and Federal Parks?

If you have read a book that you recommend, please write a short review for us. Or, if you have been on an interesting trip, write an open letter describing what you saw that may be relevant to Fakahatchee members.

Contact Marya at our email address or by phone on (239) 695-2905 or send your article to P.O.Box 35, Everglades City, FL, 34139.

WEBSITE. We need an experienced volunteer to work on the website www.FriendsOfFakahatchee.org which is based on "Front Page" software. We are fortunate to have the pro bono services of Suzi Griffis but we cannot impose on her all the time. If you can help, please phone Patty Huff at (239) 695-2397 or email to our address.

What Are We? Who Are We?

The **Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve**, a 501(c)3 corporation, is the Citizen Support Organization of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, the largest cypress stand 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. Its neighbor north of I-75 is the Florida Panther Refuge, with whom Friends may share associate membership.

The Ghost Writer newsletter is edited by Jenifer Adams-Mitchell, Patty Huff and Marya Repko with contributions from members and friends. It is issued at least six times a year and has an average circulation of approximately 400 copies.

OFFICERS:	President – John Elting	Vice-President – Allen Caldwell			
	Secretary – Betty Foster	Treasurer – Jack Horner			
BOARD:	Franklin Adams	Signe Backus	Connie Bransilver	Elsa Caldwell	Patty Huff
	William Mesce	Allison Nist	Jerry Winters	Niki Woodard	Jim Woodard
	Brian Call (FOFPR)				

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

date _____

Please make check payable to "FOF" and send to: **FOF Membership, P.O.Box 35, Everglades City, FL, 34139**

Individual (\$15) Family (\$20) Business (\$40) Patron (\$100) Benefactor (\$500)

associate membership with Friends of Florida Panther Refuge (add \$5.00)

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

STREET / P.O.BOX: _____ ALTERNATE ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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