



The Ghost Writer

SEAFOOD FESTIVAL, FEBRUARY 2005

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

October through March
1st & 3rd Tuesday, 2nd & 3rd Saturday
phone (239) 695-4593 for reservations

GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

October through March
1st & 3rd Saturday
phone (239) 695-4593 for reservations

Seafood Festival

Sat/Sun, Feb 5/6
Everglades City

Volunteer Clean-Up Day

Saturday, Feb 19
phone Rosi at (239) 695-4593

Native American &
Pioneer Festival

Sat/Sun, Feb 19/20
Collier Seminole State Park

Marjory Stoneman Douglas

FESTIVAL: Feb 21-26

Museum of the Everglades
phone (239) 695-0008

STAR GAZING

Friday, March 4 at dusk.
Park Office, Copeland

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 5 at 7:00p.m.
Seafood Depot, Everglades City
RSVP to (239) 695-2905

Members' Picnic

Saturday, March 26 at 11a.m.
Preserve Office, Copeland
RSVP to (239) 695-2905

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SEEN AROUND THE STRAND

It was a busy month for Mike Owen who saw an **Everglades Mink** crossing the road at K2 on Jan 3, eight juvenile **Lubber grasshoppers** at the office on Jan 6, a **Red-tailed Hawk** west of Janes' north of Gate 1 on Jan 11 and at least 500 **Tree Swallows** flying over the office on the same day. He also watched a **Question Mark Butterfly** laying eggs on a False Nettle in the Strand. Tommy Owen saw a **Black Bear** under the Live Oaks near the Biologist's home at 10:20pm on Jan 24.

Panther tracks were found at the west end of West Main by Mike, Jill Waisley and Tera Galante. Bob Czarnecki saw four **River Otters** on Jones Grade on Jan 23 and an **Oven Bird**, also on Jones Grade, on Jan 27. A **coyote** was reported on Janes' around Gate 12 on Jan 22 and Park Ranger Steve Houseknecht saw two **Brown Water Snakes** basking along the shore of the Fire Tower pond near the office on Jan 28.

Former assistant Karen Relish is now at the Florida Panther Refuge, just across Alligator Alley, and she has been watching three **Turkeys** (one Tom and two Pea Hens) throughout the month. She has also seen a **Black Bear** feasting on acorns. Robbyn Drake saw a **River Otter** in the Refuge on Jan 8.

Finally, confirming the Boardwalk observations (see next page), Mike saw an adult **Bald Eagle** fly to the next and another fly to the south at Big Cypress Bend.

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

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JANUARY MEETING A GREAT SUCCESS

A big 'thank you' to the Oyster House restaurant for accommodating and cheerfully feeding over 60 FOF members for the January 21st meeting. And a very special 'thank you' to Fakahatchee Park Manager, Ralph Smith for his educational and entertaining portrayal of the black Seminole, Abraham.

Ralph, dressed head to toe in traditional Seminole costume and carrying an authentic rifle, knife, and turtle shell powder case, helped the audience understand the troubling history of the Seminole wars. He explained how blacks fleeing slavery were allowed to join the Seminole tribe, and how the Seminoles, employing guerilla tactics, successfully fought the U.S. soldiers, and how the Seminoles that remain in the Everglades today are the only Native People never conquered by the United States government.

If you missed Ralph at the meeting, he will be participating in the Native American & Pioneer Festival at Collier Seminole State Park on February 19 & 20. The Battle of Royal Palm Hammock, with gun battles, canon-fire, and death, will be re-enacted both days.

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 Orchid 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)

STAR GAZING

Mark your calendar to go star gazing on Friday, March 4th. No, Meryll Streep is not coming back to look for Ghost Orchids so that we can gaze on her. The Star Gazing Parties are hosted by the Everglades Astronomical Society and are held near the tower on Janes' Scenic Drive. In a dark sky spot, the EAS sets up telescopes so that all participants can view the night sky. Starting on the eastern horizon and using a sky laser, they will point out all of the constellations in the heavens.

According to Rick Piper, president of the EAS, the program for the particular evening depends on the time of the year or month. For example, during a new moon a deep sky program would be appropriate. With no moon in the sky it is possible to see planetary nebulas and even other galaxies. A lunar program would be good during a full moon and a planetary program works well during January, February and into March. March 4th should be good because Jupiter and Saturn should be visible as well as some deep sky objects.

Everyone is welcome at the star parties, from those who are knowledgeable about the solar system to those who have a hard time picking out the Milky Way. Rick just asks that you don't use aerosol bug spray anywhere near the telescopes (they provide pump repellent) and suggests that you bring a flashlight (a red light is preferable), a sweater, and drinking water. There is no charge for the event but donations are gladly accepted.

BOARDWALK NEWS

The water level is very low for this time of year – almost at May levels. But still the everyday challenges of swamp life continue at the boardwalk. The **mama alligator with her babies** are frequent stars of the boardwalk. Recently, the **eagle's nest** has shown some activity with a baby wing sighting as well as a parent dropping a fish into the nest.

Two volunteers from the Seven Mile Slough in Ft. Meyers were lucky enough to see **river otters** diving for fish near the entrance. And, the Caryl & Nelson Tilden reported seeing a **bobcat** on the boardwalk.

Visitors have been numerous and generous. Two new countries, Korea and Estonia, were added to the list of places traveled from.

Donations of binoculars are needed, as well as some new display photos. Also, anyone who would like to volunteer their time at the boardwalk would be welcomed with open arms. The four current volunteers do a fantastic job but would appreciate some help. Phone Gerry & Signe at (239) 389-7384 if you can spare a few hours to greet visitors to our special Everglades amenity.

BEER, BEER and more BEER

The volunteers who helped pick up trash at the rock pit lakes and along Jones Grade near I-75 were amazed at the amount of beer obviously consumed by visitors to this area. Beer bottles, beer cans and cases of empty beer topped the list of retrieved garbage. Bud Light seems to be the beverage of choice, however Natural Light came in a close second. Styrofoam bait containers, dirty diapers, car parts, a cell phone, a pager and an air conditioner were some of the other items hauled away in the park dump truck. The weather cooperated with the volunteers' efforts by providing a beautiful blue sky, a comfortable temperature and a nice breeze to keep the bugs off.

Mark your calendars for February 19, which will be the next volunteer clean-up day. The object of our attention will be Jane's Scenic Drive which, surely, will provide even more interesting trash. For more information call Rosi McCluney at the Park office (239) 695-4593.

THE CHALLENGE OF WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Join us at dinner on Saturday, March 5th for a photography workshop by noted photographer, author, naturalist, and adventurer Saul Friess. Saul's photos have illustrated books and magazines and are unique in their life-like vitality. His scientific expeditions with groups such as The American Museum of Natural History and the New York Zoological Society have taken him through caves and jungles, across plains and to the barren reaches of desert.

The workshop will consist of four parts:

1. Saul will give a slide presentation and discuss his photos, many of which will be of the flora and fauna of the Fakahatchee swamp.

2. Saul will offer his real-world-tested techniques of taking better wildlife photographs, include close-up photography, how to effectively use flash, and the essential equipment for the serious nature photographer.

3. Saul will take us out the next day in the Fakahatchee. It will be a great opportunity to try out the new techniques with the benefit of having Saul nearby to answer any questions.

4. Saul will be available the following week to offer supportive critiques of our photographs.

Reservations are required. Dinner and lecture on March 5th cost \$15 (\$20 non-members) and the field trip on March 6th is \$10 (\$25 non-members). Email FOF_90@hotmail.com or phone (239) 695-2905.

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

FOF 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)

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MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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