

The Ghost Writer

JANUARY 2005

Newsletter of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve
HOME OF THE GHOST ORCHID

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

October 16th 2004 through March 2005
1st and 3rd Tuesday, 2nd and 3rd Saturday
phone (239) 695-4593 for reservations

GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

October 2004 through March 2005
1st and 3rd Saturday
phone (239) 695-4593 for reservations

Black Seminoles in the 1830's

a dinner talk by Ralph Smith at the
Members' Dinner & Lecture

Friday, January 21, 7:00p.m.

Oyster House, Everglades City

Everyone welcome ... bring a guest!

RSVP to Marya at (239) 695-2905

Volunteer Clean Up Day

Saturday, January 29, 9:00a.m.

Jones Grade Rock Pit, near I75/SR29 (Exit 80)
phone Rosi McCluney at (239) 695-4593

Seafood Festival 2005

Sat/Sun, Feb 5/6, Everglades City
volunteers for FOF booth needed!
phone Patty Huff at (239) 695-2397

Native American & Pioneer Festival

Collier Seminole State Park

Saturday & Sunday, February 19 & 20

volunteers for FOF booth needed!
phone Patty Huff at (239) 695-2397

SEEN AROUND THE STRAND

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There was puzzlement on Dec 8 when Lisa Andrews and Jeff Schindle found a **non-native snake** West of SR29. Mike Owen suspects the 8'2" roadkill is a green anaconda and will send it to Gainesville for identification.

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Mike watched a **river otter** crossing Janes' Scenic Drive to the east around Gate 12 on Nov 20. On the same day he saw a **Monarch butterfly** winging its way south over Janes' Scenic Drive about 4.2 miles north of Gate 1. Several weeks later, on Dec 15, a **bobcat** was seen by Dick Brewer on Jones Grade.

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A **Roseate Spoonbill** was seen on the top of a cypress tree about 60ft east of Janes' Drive by Dave Henley on Dec 2 and Mike Owen observed a **Red-tailed Hawk** in a cypress tree about 50 yards east of Janes' Drive on Dec 9. During the cold snap on Dec 12, Mike saw an **Eastern Phoebe** on the wire about 30 feet north of the Biology Office Trailer.

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

THANKS to **Snook Publications and Everglades Island Properties** for photocopying our membership brochures and newsletter.

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 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.

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)

HAVE YOU TAKEN THE PLUNGE YET?

If you haven't gotten wet in the Fakahatchee yet, what are you waiting for? There is no better way to experience the swamp than to get off the higher ground and join a swamp walk.

Taking the first step into the water is the most difficult. But then, as you realize that the bottom is sandy (not mucky) and the water is clean and clear (not murky) and the knowledgeable guides in front and in the rear will satisfy the gator's hunger way before it reaches you, you begin to relax and take in the beauty.

If you take your time and stay alert, you may be lucky enough to glimpse a limpkin snacking on an apple snail, or a fish-eating spider the size of your hand, or you may experience the delicate blossom of the clamshell orchid. But even if the swamp doesn't yield up any special surprises, you can always enjoy the layer upon layer of lush, tropical vegetation, the splatted octopus-looking tentacles of the mysterious wild orchids, and the simple serenity of being off the beaten path. It won't take very long at all before you develop the "Faka-habit" - the need to return time and again to this very special place.

If you've already participated in a swamp walk, come again and bring a guest. The more people that experience the Fakahatchee, the more friends we will have that will know the value of this treasure and will work to preserve it.

Notes about Swamp Walks

There will be four swamp walks each month this season through March, weather permitting. John Elting and Bill Mesce will lead the walks on the first and third Tuesdays and second Saturdays; Mike Owen will lead walks on the third Saturday. Other walks for special interest groups can be arranged on request.

The walks are limited to 15 people and must be booked in advance. Phone the office at (239) 695-4593 and make sure your reservation is confirmed - don't just leave a message and assume you're on the list!

The cost is \$25 (\$15 to FOF members). The group leaves from the Park office on Janes' Scenic Drive at 10a.m. and will be out for five to six hours. Wear runners and long pants. Bring drinking water, lunch, sunscreen, bug repellent, camera, binoculars. You will probably get wet so it might help to have a towel and a change of shoes and pants in the car.

Fakahatchee Manager Ralph Smith to Talk about Black Seminoles

Be sure to attend our next Members' meeting on January 21st. The highlight of the evening will be a presentation given by Park Manager Ralph Smith who will share with us his vast knowledge of the Black Seminoles and will even be dressed in authentic Seminole costume. He has participated in numerous re-enactments of the Seminole Wars and will be able to shed light on a period of Florida and American history that many of us know too little about.

The event will be held at the Oyster House Restaurant in Everglades City (on SR-29 opposite Everglades National Park). *Arrive early for dinner (5:30 to 6:00 p.m.)* which you will order off the menu and pay for yourself. Ralph's lecture will start at 7:00p.m. Contact Marya at (239) 695-2905 or FOF_90@hotmail.com to make reservations so she can let the restaurant know how many people to expect. Space is limited, so do phone or email right away!

BOARDWALK NEWS

The boardwalk area is drying out but there has been a steady stream of visitors, mostly European, and interesting sightings of bobcat, deer and the eagles in their nest.

Volunteers Signe Backus and Jerry Winter would be glad to talk to anyone who wants to help welcome visitors. Enthusiasm is more important than knowledge of nature and, initially, you won't be left on your own. They are also looking for donations of binoculars that visitors can borrow. Please phone (239) 389-7384.

Caryl and Nelson Tilden, who joined FOF last year, attended a Master Naturalist course this fall and produced a guide to the Boardwalk as their final project. We hope to have copies available for the public soon.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

At time of going to press, we had 270 members including 36 who opted for the association with the Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge (FOFPR). Welcome to the more than 30 new members (too many to list individually) who joined this fall, mostly during swamp walks. Renewal notices for first quarter 2005 will be sent with the February newsletter.

Although it seems early, we need to think about nominations for the Board. Our Annual General Meeting is in April this year and several directors will be replaced, having served two terms. If you have any suggestions, let FOF Secretary Betty Foster know at (239) 992-9359.

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)

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