



The Ghost Writer

MAY 2007

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, "Home of the Ghost Orchid"

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

will resume in the fall

GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

will resume in the fall

AMAZING ADVENTURES

"Swimming with Whale Sharks"
Mike Owen, Fakahatchee Strand

Friday, May 11, at 6:00pm
reservations (239) 417-6310
see www.rookerybay.org

"ETERNAL EVERGLADES"

an exhibit of photos by Rick Cruz
at the Naples Depot
phone (239) 774-8476



Photo of adult lubber emerging, taken by Dennis Giardina. See report on next page by Jason Jannot about the variation in size of lubbers.

Everglades Restoration

by Dennis Giardina



An old photo of the area taken in 1940.



The canal before restoration.



As I mentioned at the membership meeting on April 22, the Prairie Canal Restoration is nearing completion. The bridge over the canal on Janes Scenic Drive at the Picayune border is gone. If you stand where it used to be and look north and south, there is a wide open strip punctuated with swimming pool shaped ponds for as far as the eye can see. The canal footprint will eventually convert to wet prairie vegetation and we will assist with periodic burning and exotic plant control there to ensure that high quality wildlife habitat is established.

**SEE THE FULL MANAGER'S REPORT IN THE
SUPPLEMENT TO THIS NEWSLETTER**

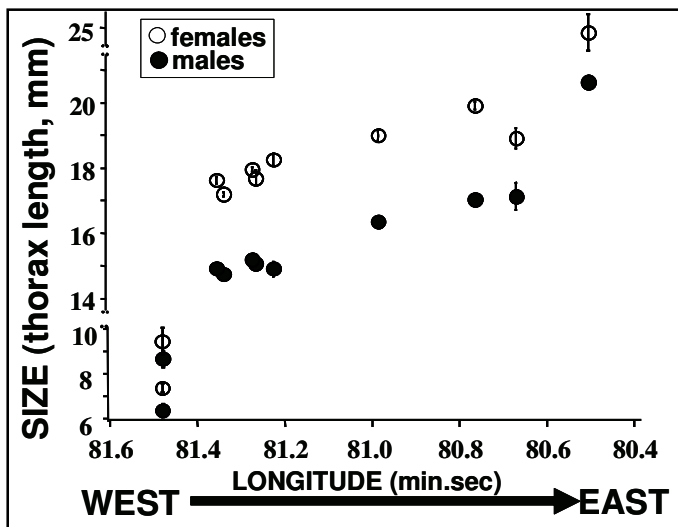
Visit www.FriendsOfFakahatchee.org for events, newsletter archive, color tram map, history, and more.

GRASSHOPPERS

by Jason Jannot

I am an ecologist with Illinois State University (ISU) and collaborate with a population geneticist, a life historian, a mathematician from ISU, and a physiologist at the University of Central Florida. We are currently using molecular genetic, physiological, ecological and mathematical techniques, in combination with field and laboratory experiments, to examine spatial and temporal variation in body size of the lubber grasshopper (*Romalea microptera*) in south Florida.

We have demonstrated that adult lubbers exhibit a west-east cline in body size (see Figure below) and tested whether variation in life history traits could result in this cline. As you can see the smallest grasshoppers are found at our western sites located in the Fakahatchee Strand. As one drives from Port of the Islands east toward Miami, the average body size gradually increases. At our eastern-most sites, adult lubbers are over 30% larger than in the Fakahatchee Strand.



The pattern described in the figure above represents the results from the last two years of research in the Fakahatchee, Big Cypress, and the Everglades. This year, we plan on trying to understand the mechanisms and processes underlying this pattern. To this end, we are conducting two different types of experiments.

In one, we transplant individuals from Burns Lake and Francis Taylor to the Fakahatchee Strand and vice versa. All animals are kept in escape-proof cages to prevent genetic exchange among populations. This transplant experiment will provide us with information about how the local environment influences growth and reproduction in the lubbers.

In the second, individuals will be collected along routes 41 and 29 as well as from areas inside Big Cypress, Fakahatchee and the Everglades to compare the genetic sequences which will allow us to determine the degree of isolation among populations, dispersal patterns, and history of the populations. Information from the transplant and genetic experiments together will provide a picture of the processes that produce this interesting west-east cline in lubber body size.

If you would like further information on this project, please email me at: jjannot@ilstu.edu.

BOARDWALK REPORT

by Nelson & Caryl Tilden

The winter crowds of visitors to the Boardwalk are over, but the five month "winter" season saw large numbers of people enjoying the Fakahatchee from the vantage point of the Boardwalk. Over **48,000 people** passed through our electronic counter from November 1 through the end of April. The number of foreign visitors was very high again this season, especially coming from many parts of Europe. Several German tourists told us of learning about the Fakahatchee in a guidebook they obtained while still in Germany. We remain a favorite stop for many eco-tour groups that bring visitors nearly every day.

Two significant accomplishments also marked this winter season. The first was the installation of 21 new interpretive signs and the cleaning, repairing and reinstalling of 21 others. Also added were two new signs giving the distance from the parking lot to the end of the Boardwalk, and also from the midpoint of the walk to the end. The new signs were installed using heavy gauge aluminum brackets which will hopefully discourage some of the vandalism which has occurred in the past. The other accomplishment was the installation of new bracing supports on some of the railings, and the replacement of about 700 feet of railing tops. The construction manager of FSP District 4, Rick Warner, made several trips to assess the condition of the Boardwalk and provided his assistant, Tommy Eaton, to help our volunteers with the repairs. The wood was purchased by our Park, which also provided a truck and most of our tools. Special thanks go to volunteers Bud Scott, Jerry Winters, Tom Maish, and Dick Hughes who assisted me with the repairs.

Visitors were treated to all of our usual wildlife this winter, including somewhat of a rarity, three **bald eagle chicks**. The chicks were born around the middle of January and became visible on the nest around the middle of March. Until almost 12 weeks after birth, we observed only two chicks and visitors, including experienced birders, reported seeing only two chicks. Suddenly around the middle of April a **third chick** became evident. It has been several years since our bald eagle pair has produced three eaglets. The eaglets were seen flying for the first time on April 13. They will likely remain in the area of the nest for another month before leaving on their trek northward.

Visitors benefited from the **volunteer services** of Signe Backus, Jerry Winters, and Bud and Margaret Scott, who acted as greeters at the beginning of the Boardwalk several days during the season. They were joined by new greeters, Tony and Laurie Trayling. The **greeters** welcome visitors, tell them what to expect on the Boardwalk, tell them about area attractions, and make available merchandise offered by the Friends of the Fakahatchee. Caryl and I continued to provide interpretive services for visitors several days per week.

If you have not had a chance to visit recently, you are invited to experience a **very special part of the real Florida**. Many visitors tell us that they come to the Boardwalk several times during the year, always being assured of seeing something new every time



MEL FINN AWARD 2007

The Mel Finn award this year went to John Elting (right in photo). In a moving tribute, Franklin Adams thanked John for his dedication and involvement. Not only did John serve for an unprecedented three years as president of FOF, he drove the 80 miles each way from Sanibel to guide swamp walks, negotiate with the State, mentor our leaders, and represent the Friends.

In his introduction, Franklin (who knew Mel Finn and was involved in the establishment of the Preserve) talked about the history of the Fakahatchee and the logging which he, as our official historian, is trying to document. He played an audio tape of the men leaving at 6:00 a.m. on the train that carried them out to the edge of the forest where they would cut down trees ... there was the whistle of the locomotive (#4), the bosses talking, the singing on the way. That is why we have “trams”, paths branching out vertically from Janes’ Drive; they were the original rail routes to the logging areas.

The Fakahatchee attracted the attention as early as 1922 when Ford and Edison visited and wanted to preserve it but the government at the time was not interested. It was not until 1974 that Mel Finn, a Miami attorney and avid naturalist, pressured the State into buying some of the land and proclaiming it a Preserve.

The Friends of Fakahatchee was founded in 1998 and has awarded the Mel Finn award to deserving supporters since then. Previous recipients have been: Roger Dykstra, Elsa Caldwell, Barbara Lewinski and Franklin Adams.

NEW OFFICERS

At the Board meeting which followed the Members’ meeting, the following officers were elected by the Directors: Nelson Tilden (President), Tom Maish (Vice-President), Jenifer Adams-Mitchell (Secretary) and Cathy Hatch (Treasurer).



MERCHANDISE ORDERS

You can order Fakahatchee hats or T-shirts (cat not included) by mail if you fill in the ORDER FORM and send it with a check payable to FOF. This is a new service for members for which we have to thank our merchandise supervisor, Vicky Nagle, who keeps meticulous track of our inventory as a willing volunteer.

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

by Marya Repko

The Members’ Annual Meeting was held at City Seafood, Begonia Street, Everglades City, (thanks to our host, Richard Warenberger) on Sunday, April; 22.

The results of the election for members of the Board of Directors were announced by Jim Woodard, co-chairman with Allen Caldwell of the nominations/election committee: Jenifer Adams-Mitchell (72), Rick Cruz (66), Frank Denninger (63), Cathy Hatch (64) Bud Scott (65), Nelson Tilden (74), Brian McMahan (16), Byron Maharrey (16), Sam Snell (13), Shane Snell (9), Mike Sorrell (21), and he proclaimed that the first six were elected. He also said that of the 277 ballots sent to members, 82 were returned (a response of almost 30%) and thanked everyone for participating.

After the presentation of the Mel Finn award (see column at left), Dennis Giardina, Manager of the Preserve, gave his report which is summarized in the attached supplement to this newsletter.

The other business conducted was a report on volunteers’ liability which is being looked into by the Department. It appears that volunteers are covered by the general policy and would not be individually liable for injuries suffered by visitors at one of the Preserve’s locations. However, a new document is expected from the DEP to clarify this.

MEMBERSHIP

We have a total of 279 members, including 14 who have not renewed since January. We dropped 11 members who were in arrears since September.

We do not like to delete members from our list but it gives a false impression to include lapsed payers, who may no longer be interested in what we do. If you have not renewed, please do so quickly because our membership tally is an important statistic for the State Parks Department; it reflects how much support there is for the Fakahatchee.

The newsletter, in full color, is emailed to 242 members, a saving of over \$99 in new postage rates for each issue.

Welcome to new members:

- David & Sherri Bryant, Orlando
- Howard Lubel, Miami
- Dottie Sauer, Lake Bluff, IL
- Shapiro, Ken, Washington, DC
- Charles & Vicky Wright, Everglades City



FIRST GHOST OF THE SEASON!

Thanks to member Jay Staton of Naples who sent us this photo and email:

I was out on Sunday, April 22nd, and came across this fully opened ghost flower. Mike Owen said it is a record for being open so early in the season. I counted 14 flower shoots during the day exploring. It will be a great summer for ghosts.

THANKS to all the donors who contributed in memory of Gary Nederveld.

Over \$2,000 has been collected and much of it was spent on new floatation devices for use on canoe trips. Gary was scheduled to lead the trips this season but unfortunately had a fatal accident last September.

What Are We? Who Are We?

The **Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Inc**, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit 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, SR-29, Fakahatchee Bay, and Picayune State Forest. The mission of the Friends of Fakahatchee is to aid in the preservation of this ecologically unique area and to educate the public about its importance.

The Ghost Writer, named after the endangered Ghost Orchid which blooms in the Park, is edited by Marya Repko with contributions from members and friends. It is issued at least six times a year and has an average circulation of over 300 copies. (c) 2007, FOF. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter, including pictures, may be reproduced without permission.

OFFICERS:	President – Nelson Tilden	Vice-President – Tom Maish			
	Treasurer – Cathy Hatch	Secretary – Jenifer Adams-Mitchell			
BOARD:	Jenifer Adams-Mitchell	Signe Backus	Allen Caldwell	Elsa Caldwell	Rick Cruz
	Frank Denninger	John Elting	Cathy Hatch	Tom Maish	Bill Mesce
	Bud Scott	Nelson Tilden	Jerry Winters	Niki Woodard	Jim Woodard

NEW ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

date _____

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

Individual (\$20) Family (\$30) Business (\$50) Patron (\$100) Benefactor (\$500)

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CITY _____

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MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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