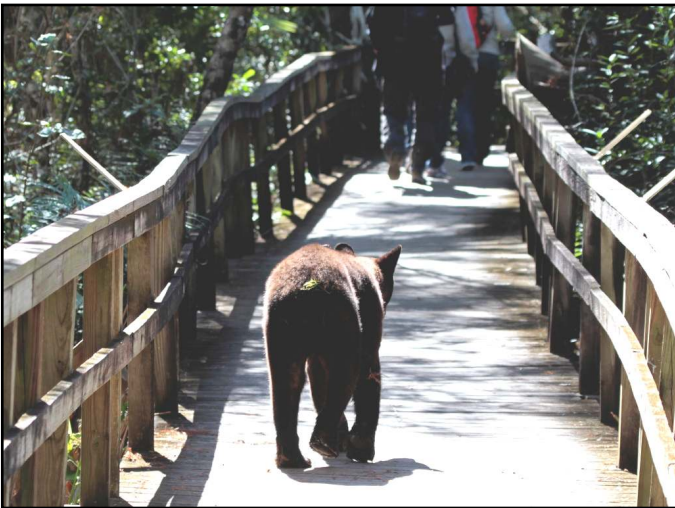
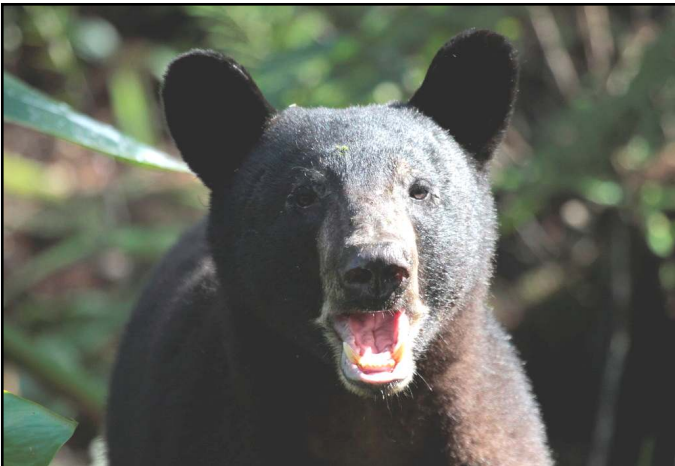


BOARDWALK REPORT



Thanks to Steve Paddon who sent these photos taken on December 8 of a bear on the Boardwalk "having fun with visitors".

During December we have had several documented sightings of the black bear ambling along the Boardwalk during the day while visitors are in attendance.

The Ghost Writer provides a good opportunity to review safety tips to follow if you have a close encounter with a bear. "Be Bear Aware" is an interagency education campaign designed to prevent and reduce conflicts between people and bears in our communities. If you experience bear problems, please contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 561-625-5122.

This agency recommends that if you have a close encounter with a bear:

- * Remain standing upright
- * Avoid direct eye contact
- * Back away slowly
- * Speak in a calm, assertive, assuring voice
- * Make sure the bear has an escape route
- * Do not run from the bear

For information go to www.myFWC.com and click on "Wildlife & Habitats", "Living with Wildlife".

Hundreds of visitors are enjoying the Boardwalk during this holiday season. The eagles have been observed changing places on the nest suggesting that we may have eggs. The osprey pair is tending their nest high on a bald cypress on the east side of the boardwalk out about 100+ yards. It can be seen from near the Pond Apple sign.

Our two resident alligators are usually found in the same sunny spot across the pond from the observation platform. Behind them is a well-traveled opening in the brush where the bear has been seen foraging for food. Susan and Jim Snyder, experienced volunteers with the Conservancy, observed the bear walk up to one of the alligators and touch it with its foot. The bear then sniffed the alligator and returned to the thicker undergrowth. The alligators do not appear to react at all when the bear is present.

A variety of wading birds is seen daily at the pond. A great horned owl is often heard on the west side near the beginning of the Boardwalk. It sits on the same limb of a large cypress tree about 100 yards out. On one occasion, two owls were sitting on the same limb of a tree and calling to one another in the same cadence but at different pitches. We were able to observe them through binoculars and share the experience with many visitors. Binoculars really enhance your experience at the Boardwalk.

We are keeping a close eye on the red shouldered hawk's nest and hope that it will be used again this year. It is cleverly located on a branch between two large trunks of a bald cypress tree. Overhead a large bromeliad provides some shelter from heavy rain. The nest is marked by a sign along the Boardwalk.

We look forward to meeting you at the Boardwalk and hope that you will introduce yourselves as members of the Friends of the Fakahatchee. We appreciate your support of the Boardwalk.

Caryl Tilden, Volunteer Naturalist