

# The Ghost Writer

MAY 2013

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee, "Home of the Ghost Orchid"

## EVENTS

### GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

*will resume in the fall*

### GHOST RIDER TRAM TOURS

*will resume in the fall*

### COASTAL CRUISES

*will resume in the fall*

### VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

*call the Park at (239) 695-4593*

### BOARD MEETING

**Sunday, May 19, 10 a.m.**

Ranger Station, Copeland

*For info, phone (239) 495-6744*



Francine Stevens received the Presidential Walking Stick from Interim-President Jimene Rinehart. Francine explained that "I wore my hiking boots with my dinner dress to demonstrate my ability to work effectively in diverse environments."



**CONGRATULATIONS TO MIKE OWEN AND DONNA GLANN-SMYTH!** Mike was feted at the Annual Dinner (see report on page 3) for having been park biologist for 20 years. The couple, who met in front of a Ghost Orchid in the Fak, are soon to be wed.



### **THANKS FOR 5 YEARS OF HARD WORK!**

Renee Rau might not have received a scroll or plaque at the Annual Dinner but she has been steadfast in her devotion to the Fakahatchee during the five years since she was appointed Park Manager in March 2008. Our thanks to her!

## ELECTION RESULTS

The results of the election for Directors were announced at the Annual Meeting & Dinner on April 14. Jim Woodard, chair of the Nominating Committee, wrote: *154 ballots were returned out of the almost 400 ballots mailed. This is, by far, the highest member response in memory. One ballot was disqualified due to an over-vote and one ballot posted on April 16 was also disqualified. Congratulations to the winners and a sincere expression of gratitude to all 9 candidates. The member-driven nomination process worked extremely well and resulted in overwhelming member interest and participation. Democracy works.*

At the Board meeting that afternoon, Francine Stevens was elected President. Other officers are Jimene Rinehart as Vice President, Jinny Ball as Secretary, and Kathy DaSilva continues as Treasurer. The full list of Directors is on the back page.

New committee chairs and members will be decided at the Board Meeting on Sunday, May 19. If you would like to help, phone Francine at (239) 495-6744.



*This is the last newsletter until the fall. Have a great summer!*

## *M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand*

On 3/30/2013 between 7:30 and 9:30am Bente Torvund, Administrative Assistant, heard about 10 **Eastern Meadowlarks** singing in the western part of Dan House Prairie, from ½ mile to 1 mile east of Well Grade from the road to about ¾ mile north in the prairie. There were 16 **American Goldfinches** eating Horrible Thistle seeds between 9am and 10am about ½ mile south of Well Grade and about ¾ mile east. The males were in breeding plumage. Between 9 and 10am, four **Sedge Wrens** were viewed in separate areas near this spot. Two **Northern Waterthrush** were along the canal about ¼ mile to ½ mile east on Well Grade.

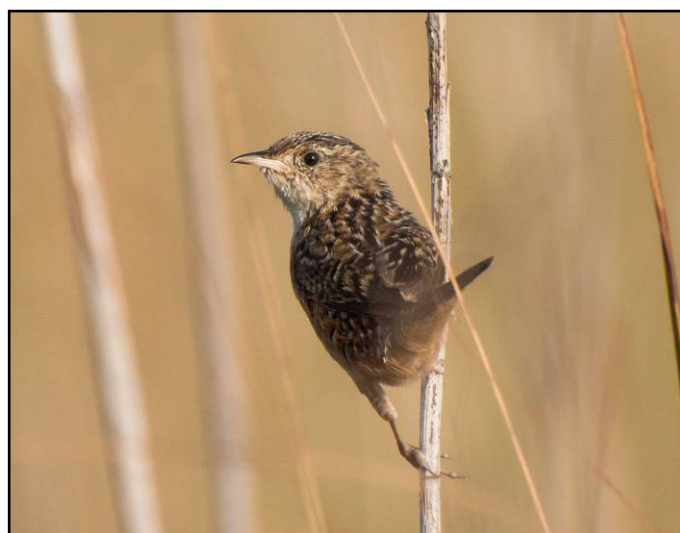
On 3/31/2013, a **Barred Owl** and **Chuck-Wills-Widow** were heard calling ¼ mile east on Well Grade at 6:45am. There were also about 9 **Eastern Meadowlarks** singing between 7:30 and 9:00am in the western half of the prairie about ½ mile north and south of Well Grade. 25 **Double-Crested Cormorants** flew northwest over Dan House Prairie at 7:20am. 15 **Savannah Sparrows** were also in the western ½ of the prairie ½ mile north of Well Grade, in saw palmetto hammocks between 8 and 9am, as well as 4 **Grasshopper Sparrows**. One **Grasshopper Sparrow** was flushed from the northern side of the road from bushes about ¾ mile east of Well Grade. One male **Grasshopper Sparrow** was singing in a Bald Cypress about 6 feet off the ground. One **American Kestrel** was seen flying at 8:10am to a bald cypress about ½ mile and ½ mile north in Dan House Prairie. There were also 2 **Loggerhead Shrikes** in brush 20 feet northeast of a large cypress dome which is about ½ mile east and ½ mile north in the prairie. At 10:30am a **Northern Harrier** was spotted flying north over Well Grade at about 1/3 mile east. A female **Painted Bunting** flew into brush at the north side of the road at ¼ mile east on Well Grade.

On 4/1/2013, Bente Torvund saw 40 **White Pelicans** flying north over US-41 at 8:20am at about 5 miles west of the SR-29 / US-41 intersection. At 9:15am there was one male **Black-and-White Warbler** in oak trees about ¼ mile east on Well Grade. At 9:30am there was one **Swallow-Tailed Kite** 1/3 mile east on Well Grade, and at 10am, 2 **Sedge Wrens** ¼ mile east (about 100 feet apart from each other) on Well Grade and 1/3 mile south in the prairie.

On 4/2/2013 at about 2:45pm there were 2 **Black-Necked Stilts** off the south side of US-41 in the ponds about 3 miles west of the SR-29/US-41 intersection, and the next morning at 8:20am there were 3 **Black-necked Stilts** in the same location. On 4/3/2013 there were 13 **Cedar Waxwings** in a fruiting Strangler Fig at 8:30am south of the Fakahatchee SPSP sign on Janes Scenic Drive (JSD). On 4/9/2013, an **American Bittern** was seen at 8:26am flying northeast over marsh about 1/6 mile west of the SR-29 / US-41 intersection. An 8-foot **Alligator** was seen walking out of Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk (BCBB) approaching US-41 at about 4:15pm.

On 4/10/2013 a male **Indigo Bunting** was seen at 8:27am 20 feet west on JSD. 11 **White Pelicans** were viewed flying north 0.3 miles west of the East River. On 4/11/2013 another male **Indigo Bunting** was spotted flying west over JSD at Gate 1 at 1pm. On 4/15/2013, two **Swallow-Tailed Kites** were seen flying within 1/3 mile of each other at 4pm at the intersection of SR-29 and JSD. On 4/18 a **Swallow-Tailed Kite** was spotted flying east over the prairies off of JSD ¼ mile north of the ranger station. On 4/19/2013 there were 2 **Black-Necked Stilts** at 8:18am in the ponds south of US-41 3.5 miles west of the US-41 / SR-29 intersection.

If you want to report sightings, contact Park biologist Mike Owen or his assistant Karen Relish by phone at (239) 695-2886 or by email at [FOF\\_90@hotmail.com](mailto:FOF_90@hotmail.com)



Thanks to Bente Torvund for this report and photos.





## *Annual Meeting & Dinner/Talk*

by Marya Repko



FOF members and guests had a great time on April 14 at the Annual Dinner, catching up with old friends and making new ones over delicious food at the Everglades Seafood Depot. As park manager Renee Rau said, "The FOF is among the elite of Citizens Support Organizations in spirit, dedication, and togetherness."

Interim President Jimene Rinehart listed our achievements (eg, orchid restoration, amazingly-successful tram tours, Boardwalk survey) before introducing new President Francine Stevens who expressed gratitude to fellow Board members for welcoming her into the group.

Bob Becker of Ultra Sports thanked the FOF and presented a generous check. He also thanked Renee for her support during the Everglades Ultras and gave her an award.

Then it was Renee's turn to give out awards. She said that Fakahatchee staff are the best as she presented plaques (supplied by FOF) to Steve Houseknecht for 10 years service as a ranger and to Mike Owen for 20 years as biologist. Ranger Jeff Kneisley announced that Dino Barone had been named by the park as "volunteer of the year" and proved that it is even possible to work outside in the summer.

Another award was presented by Tom Maish, former President and FOF stalwart. He explained that Mel Finn, an attorney from Miami and orchid enthusiast, fought to have the Fakahatchee preserved from development. Coincidentally, Jane Parks, who was fighting for the same cause in Naples, was at our dinner. Tom introduced this year's winner of the Mel Finn Award as someone who is an excellent speaker, reaches out to other groups to explain the Fakahatchee, talks knowledgeably about flora & fauna on the Coastal Cruises and Tram Tours (which were his idea), and spends a phenomenal amount of time promoting the wonders of the Fak. The award went to Glen Stacell who modestly said it was lots of fun and that he enjoyed talking.

After all that seriousness, the cake was brought out. This marvelous piece of confectionary was in honor of Mike Owen's 20 years and cut for everyone to have a slice as guest speaker Jeff Klinkenberg began the highlight of the evening's program. Jeff paid tribute to Mike by saying he "teaches me to read nature" each time they go out together.

Jeff spoke humorously about his adventures as a youngster fishing and collecting snakes in the Everglades, his ventures to the Loop Road, the amazing diversity of people in Florida, and his meeting with Marjory Stoneman Douglas when she was 102 years old. He also talked about beloved characters he has met in his wanderings around Florida in search of unusual individuals. You can read about Jeff's books and articles at his website [www.jeffklinkenberg.com](http://www.jeffklinkenberg.com). Look for his new book *Alligators in B-flat*.

Our thanks to Jeff for joining us on the evening and to the Ivey House Bed & Breakfast for accommodating him. And, to Cynthia Peters as FOF Events Chair for organizing this and our other gatherings during the season so successfully.

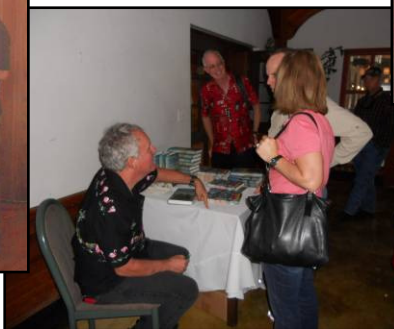


Glen Stacell with wife Laura (who was thanked for supporting his efforts) received the Mel Finn Award from Tom Maish.

Dino Barone was named "volunteer of the year" by Ranger Jeff Kneisley as park manager Renee Rau read out the plaudits.



Jeff Klinkenberg signed books before and after speaking to our group about his experiences in the Fakahatchee and his life looking for "Real Florida" that he writes about in his *St Petersburg Times* articles.



## President's Message

by Francine Stevens

### FIFTEEN FOF YEARS IN THE MAKING!

In a blink of an eye the 2103 FOF Annual Members Dinner was upon us.

It was with sincere applause that Glen Stacell, Mike Owen, Steve Houseknecht, and Dino Barone were recognized with their respective awards for their dedication to the Fakahatchee and in the process of a well deserved celebrations I had a light bulb moment; our FOF organization would not exist without the dedication of our members and volunteers.

Just imagine for a moment that without the FOF members working in concert with Park staff and park volunteers who all put their boots on to be out "in" the Fakahatchee the trails/tram would become impassible, Jane Scenic and Jones Grade would erode, and the boardwalk would become unsafe for our visitors who eventually turn into members and supporters. Furthermore, without the patience and dedication of our interpreters who don't mind repeating over and over again the same educational information on the Boardwalk, the Fakahatchee Island Cruise, the Ghost Rider Tram, and the Swamp Walks, we would not be educating the public about the importance to preserve this unique ecology and cultural heritage, all the while in the background and out of site the Board of Directors is seeing to the day-to-day business of keeping a not-for-profit corporation in good standing both financially and administratively.

In case you haven't notice I just gave you the long version of our FOF mission that might not have caught your attention on the last page of the newsletter: *"The Friends of Fakahatchee provide financial and volunteer support to preserve the unique ecology and cultural heritage of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and to educate the public about its importance"*.

And, so I will close my first letter as President by saying that our mission is not just a poetic statement on a piece of paper – our mission is energy kept in motion by the members of the Friends of Fakahatchee and if all of the above is not a "tour de force" from folks who don't expect a single penny in return I don't know what is! In my humble opinion it's a remarkable testimony of selflessness and sincere dedication to be the voice of the Fakahatchee. Congratulations to all who came before us and all who are with us now; it's been fifteen years in the making!

### NEW BOOK



If you enjoyed Elam's presentation on March 14, have a look at the book *Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition, Everglades to Okefenokee, 1000 Miles in 100 Days* with photographs by Carlton Ward, Jr, and essays by Mallory Lykes Dimmitt, Joe Guthrie & Elam Stoltzfus.

## ANNUAL FUND

The first annual Friends of Fakahatchee fundraising campaign started last November with a letter from former President Ray Carroll to 350 members. The theme of the campaign seeking tax-deductible donations was *"Now's the time to help the park – and yourself."*

The campaign raised more than \$8,000 from 55 donors.

The letter gave donors the opportunity to fund specific park needs and a number of members took advantage of this option.

**Robert and Jimene Reinhart** donated \$750 for membership software and their gift will be matched by the GE Foundation.

**Tom & Judy Maish** made a \$500 contribution toward a tram for the park. **Donna Day** donated \$300 for a trail camera kit.

**John Kaiser** provided \$195 for office supplies. **Rita Lassiter** gave \$100 for a Blu-Ray player, as did **Tina Streeter**.

The most generous donor sent in a check for \$1000. Besides those above, there were 3 other donations of \$500, 3 of \$250, 1 of \$150, 22 of \$100, and 10 of \$50 plus smaller amounts.

Overall, about 15% of the membership took advantage of the opportunity to make a tax-deductible contribution to fund park needs. The goal for the 2013 campaign is to involve 25% of our members and raise more than \$15,000.

Please make plans now to include the Friends of Fakahatchee in your charitable giving. Letters for this year's campaign will be mailed in the fall.

### Annual Fund 2012 – Donors

Adams, Franklin	McCurdy, Jacke & Arden
Amb, Stefan & Anita	McElwaine, Andrew
Ball, Jinny	Moyer, Dr Ivan
Barone, Dino	North American Canoe Tours
Blow, Warner	Norton, Gayle & Tom
Butcher, Clyde & Niki	Parks, Jane
Caridad, Miguel	Pearsall, Robin
Coffey, Sharon & David	Perrault, Mark & Karen
Day, Donna	Peters, Cynthia
DeGroot, Pat & Ted	Rackley, HC & Jane
Dix, Nancy & Box	Reed, Nathaniel
Easton, John	Rinehart, Robert & Jimene
Finefrock, Don	Sanborn, Jo Ann
Fish, Durland	Sayler, Van & Jane
Harmon, Don	Schmelz, Gary & Bernice
Howard, William	Schulman, Louis & Barbara
Jackson, Joanne & Michael	Sekura, Carol
Kaiser, John	Shamrock Bank
Keller, Margaret & Thomas	Stacell, Glen
Kelly, Dan	Staton, Jay
Krier, Elinor	Streeter, Tina
Larson & Campbell	Taylor, Sharon
Lassiter, Rita	Thomas, Gary
Lee, Christine	Walton, Bob & Becky
Legette, Caroline & Charles	Weaver, Fay
Lindquist, Dale & Randy	Winn, Ernie
London, Dan & Louella	Wissell, Michael
Maish, Tom & Judy	





The Cuban Anole (left) and the Skink that Linda reported at the Boardwalk (see right column).



This big cat was roaming around near where Bill & Pam Mesce live on the fringe of the Fak. Her truck is in the background.

## Calling All Photographers



The Merchandise Committee would like members with pictures they have taken in the Fakahatchee Strand to pick three of their best pictures and submit them for consideration for the new "Fakahatchee Note Cards" we will be selling next season. We want a wide variety of pictures, birds, animals, flowers, and landscapes that will convey the beauty of our park. The pictures must be sent by email to Jimene Rinehart at [jimbobrinehart@yahoo.com](mailto:jimbobrinehart@yahoo.com). The deadline is **May 30** but please don't delay.

## EMAILS FROM MEMBERS

**Tom & Cyndy Jones** wrote: I have to say, having made a Tram ride last week, that those rides will clearly become the most effective outreach to the public (other than the Boardwalk) that the FOF has ever put in place. In fact, I would venture that with the informative interactions between the tram riders and the FOF volunteers during every ride, the FOF cause is more effectively communicated than via the Boardwalk

**Jurg Furrer** from Switzerland emailed: A friend of mine who went on a swamp walk with Bill Mesce last year told me that the Fakahatchee was for him the most impressive experience in Florida, because it was one of the rare REAL things.

**Tony Marx** said: I was biking on March 31 down the North end of the trail (from Jones Grade) leading down the west side of the Preserve and pleasantly surprised by the great job that the volunteers and staff did to clear it for the marathon. The extended benefits being it will remain open the next few months for those of us wanderers who venture off of JSD with additional dozens of miles of access, until Nature once again blocks the way.

## BOARDWALK REPORT

by Linda Koreny

My last stroll along the Boardwalk today created much reflection. It has been a delightful winter season.

Since November I have watched the water level change and along with that the wildlife which frequents the area. I have observed the open look of "bald" bald cypress trees (the trees without their leaves) give way to shade from the bright green sprouting of new leaves. I have watched Florida Bald Eagle activity in the nest and the young eagle grow and finally fly. More than once I observed bears, deer, raccoon, otters, various birds and, of course, our American Alligators, adult and juveniles. Any given day or time something can be seen but as the times spent on the Boardwalk add up so do the number and variety of what is seen.

The **Rabbits Foot Fern** are now in full bloom and the **Shiny Shield Fern** have been pointed out which increases our fern count from last month to 13.

I have met many incredible and interesting people who have shared information, observations, and photos of their Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk experience. Today a birding couple from Miami reported that they saw a **Yellow-Billed Cuckoo** and a **Hummingbird** in its nest. During the month **Turtles**, **Black Racer Snakes**, **Catbirds**, **Anhinga**, **Barred Owl**, **Red-Bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers**, and **Red Shouldered Hawk** have been seen and heard.

Up to the middle of April we have only been able to observe 2 young **Osprey** in the nest at any one time but on April 19 when Brenda and Bill Coiner were visiting, Brenda caught this photo which appears as if we may have 3 young Osprey this season. That same day Mike Owen, the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve biologist, noticed several **Chimney Swifts**.

In addition to spiders, the **Brown Cuban Anole** and **Southern Five-Lined Skinks** can be seen often right on the Boardwalk.

Enjoy your summer, share your BCBB photos and experiences; we'll meet again in the fall. [Lkoreny@gmail.com](mailto:Lkoreny@gmail.com).



Thanks to visitor Brenda Coiner for the photo of three osprey on the nest at the Boardwalk (see report above).

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have exactly 400 memberships including 35 who are now in arrears for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter and have been sent reminders. Renewal letters for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter will be sent by post this month.

Do not confuse your donation in December to the Annual Fund with membership! All Annual Fund money is spent directly on Park needs. Membership income is used for FOF expenses (eg, postage, printing) and may also include some park support. Renewing your membership entitles you to a vote in the election of Directors to the Board.

The breakdown by category is:

Individual	138	Benefactor	2
Family	195	Business	5
Patron	48	Lifetime	6

### Welcome to new members since our last newsletter:

Mark Combs, Melbourne  
Denise Hart, Melbourne  
Anne Isbister, West Hartford, CT  
Sue & Dick Jagels, Winterport, ME  
Todd Macklin, Weston  
Monica Schneider, Naples



The Fakahatchee tram carried dignitaries during the Tamiami Trail 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary parade on April 27 in Everglades City. Also in the convoy was FOF historian Franklin Adams with his swamp buggy. The next big celebration in ECity is the Independence Day Parade on June 29. The theme is "Stars & Stripes". If you want to join in, with a chance to win a prize, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905.

## What Are We? Who Are We?

The **Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.**, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation Citizen Support Organization, provides financial and volunteer support to preserve the unique ecology and cultural heritage of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and to educate the public about its importance. The Fakahatchee is the largest cypress strand in the world and the deepest slough in the greater Everglades. Its 80,000 acres are bordered by I-75 (Alligator Alley), US-41 (Tamiami Trail), SR-29, Fakahatchee Bay, and Picayune State Forest.

**The Ghost Writer**, named after the endangered Ghost Orchid which blooms in the Preserve, 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.

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OFFICERS:	President – Francine Stevens		Vice-President – Jimene Rinehart			
	Secretary – Jinny Ball		Treasurer – Kathleen DaSilva			
BOARD:	Jinny Ball	Bruce Bunch	Kathleen DaSilva	Frank Denninger	Shaun Floyd	Rose Flynn
	Dennis Giardina	Patrick Higgins	John Kaiser	Howard Lubel	Tony Marx	Jimene Rinehart
	Ken Shapiro	Glen Stacell	Francine Stevens			

LIFETIME MEMBERS: Warner Blow, Peter Haffenreffer, Tom & Judy Maish, James Nici, Ken Shapiro

LIFETIME PRESERVERS: Bruce & Janet Bunch

BUSINESS PATRONS: EarthTech Environmental, Naples Bicycle Tours, North American Canoe Tours, Shamrock Bank, Shurr Adventures

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## NEW 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)      ☐ Patron (\$100)      ☐ Benefactor (\$500)  
☐ Lifetime Individual (\$1,000)      ☐ Lifetime Family (\$1,500)      ☐ Protector (\$2,500)      ☐ Preserver (\$5,000)  
☐ Business Patron (\$200)      ☐ Business Benefactor (\$500)      ☐ Extra Donation (\$ \_\_\_\_\_)  
☐ Youth (\$10) under 18 (birth date: month \_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_ year \_\_\_\_)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET / P.O.BOX: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_  
ALTERNATE ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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