



The Ghost Writer

MAY 2014

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

EVENTS

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS
for our activities at
www.fofreservation.eventbrite.com

WET WALK & TRAM TOUR
will resume next winter

GHOST RIDER TRAM TOURS
will resume next winter

COASTAL CRUISES
will resume next winter

BOARD MEETING
Sunday, May 11, 10:30 a.m.
Ranger Station, Copeland

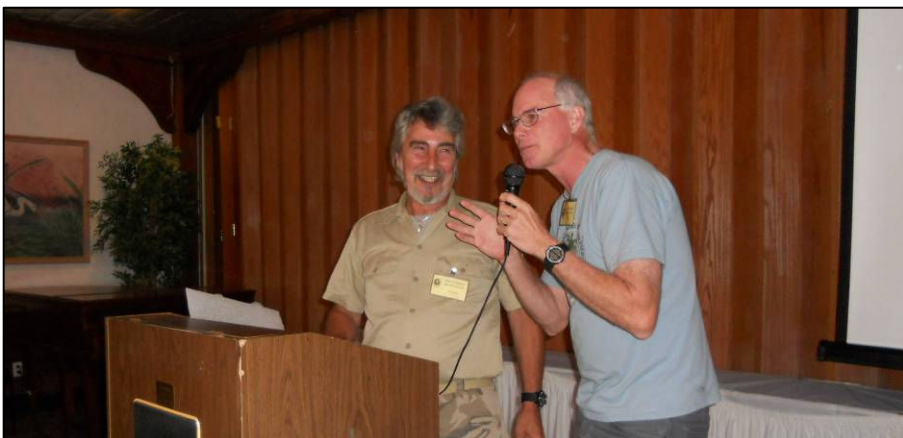
COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Board Development (Governance) – Francine Stevens
Finance – Ken Shapiro
Resource Management – *vacant*
Boardwalk Vision – Tom Maish
Fundraising Development – Tom Maish
Education & Outreach – Patrick Higgins
Communication – Bruce Bunch
Signature Events – Tina Streeter
Traditional Events (dinners, picnic) – Francine Stevens
Membership – Jinny Ball
Merchandise – Jinny Ball
If you would like to serve on any of our committees, contact Francine Stevens at (239) 495-6744.

Treasurer Needed!

Although Jinny Ball volunteered to fill in temporarily as Treasurer, the Board would like to hear from a member with financial experience to take on that position. To learn more, call President Francine Stevens at (239) 495-6744.



Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens (who took this photo) represented FOF at the "Party for the Planet" at Naples Zoo on April 5. Francine says that people were attracted to FOF because they were right in front of the Malayan tigers who had their own party playing in the pool.



After Bill Mesce won the prestigious Mel Finn Award, Fakahatchee biologist Mike Owen paid tribute to him and said jokingly that the greatest tip photographer Mesce ever gave him was "hold the camera still". See the *President's Message* on page 4 for more photos and awards.

Independence Day Parade

The next public outing for the Fakahatchee tram will be to carry dignitaries in the Everglades City Independence Day parade on **Saturday, June 28**. The theme of the parade is "Celebrating Our Heritage" and there are prizes for the best float in different categories so decorate your swamp buggy or golf cart or ATV or Jeep. To enter, just phone Elaine at (239) 695-2695.



M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 2/10/14, around 5PM, Tommy Owen observed 4 **Florida Panthers** (1 adult and 3 kittens) west of Gate 7/West Main (*see photo below*). On 3/16/14, in the late afternoon, Tom and Deb Trotta observed an **American Bittern** along Janes Scenic Drive between West and East Main. They also saw an **American Bald Eagle** sitting in the Marsh off of US-41. On 3/26/14, in the early morning, Melissa Miano, Park Ranger, observed 2 **American Swallow-tailed Kites** flying over Jones Grade and SR-29. On 3/30/14, at 9:24AM, Bente Torvund, Administrative Assistant, observed 13 **White Pelicans** flying in formation in circles over US-41 West.

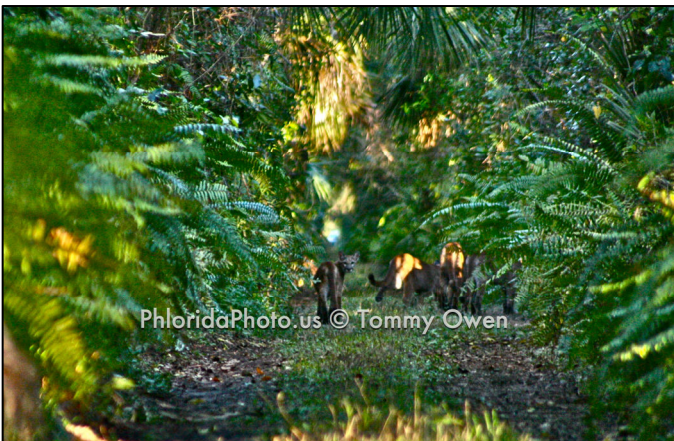
On 4/4/14, at 8:37AM, Mike Owen, Biologist, heard 2 **American Crows**, 1 **Pileated Woodpecker**, 1 **Red-shouldered Hawk**, 1 **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, 1 **Downy Woodpecker**, 2 **Common Grackles**, 2 **White-eyed Vireos** and 2 **Northern Cardinals** as well as observed a **Great Blue Heron** and a **Black Vulture** along Janes Scenic Drive (JSD).

On 4/6/14, at 8:15AM, Bente Torvund observed 2 **Roseate Spoonbills** at 3.5 miles west of SR-29 in a pond on the south side of US-41. On 4/7/14, at 9:25AM, Bente Torvund observed an immature male **Merlin** perched on a tall Cypress and preening off of Coastline Drive. On 4/9/14, at 9:22AM, Mike Owen observed an **American Swallow-tailed Kite** over SR-29 and at 9:36AM observed a **Short-tailed Hawk** (White Morph) and an **American Kestrel** over Jones Grade.

On 4/10/14, at 9:05AM Mike Owen observed 70 **Cedar Waxwings** near Park Headquarters and later he also observed 3 **Indigo Buntings**, 1 at the beginning of Janes Scenic Drive along with a **Hummingbird** and an **Eastern Kingbird**, then 2 more Indigo Buntings East-Northeast of Gate 12/East Main entrance. On 4/10/14, in the evening, Donna Glann-Smythe observed a **Florida Panther** on East Main.

On 4/14/14, in the morning, Mike Owen observed a **Florida Black Bear** near Gate 12 and later a **Florida Panther** near Gate 7/West Main. Lucy Lasseter observed and photographed (*see below*) an **Everglades Mink** and Ginny Roseberry observed 3 **Barred Owls** (1 adult and 2 young) perched on a tree branch along JSD. On 4/19/14, around 9AM, Dave Pickering, volunteer and Fearless Faka-hacker, observed two **Deer** along Janes Scenic Drive while clearing trams and vistas.

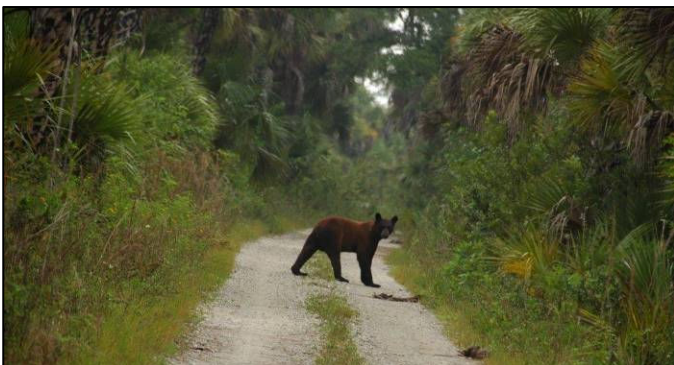
If you want to report sightings, contact Park biologist Mike Owen or his assistant Karen Relish by phone at (239) 695-2886 or by email at FOF_90@hotmail.com



Thanks to Tommy Owen for this photo of 4 panthers taken in February, as reported in the *MOZone* above.



Thanks to Lucy Lasseter for this photo of an Everglades Mink, as reported in the *MOZone* above.



This photo of a Black Bear on East Main was taken by Malee Earl.



Thanks to Jim & Niki Woodard for this photo of cute fuzzy babies taken beside their home in Miami in mid-April.

BOARDWALK REPORT

by Linda Koreny

The **Florida Bald Eagle's nest** was quiet when I approached the viewing area on the Boardwalk on Easter weekend. While standing there, I thought that perhaps they have already gone for the season when, right then, one of the juveniles gracefully flew into the nest. It was a pleasant sight to see. The size of the bird and the wing span seemed almost amazing to me when I stop to realize that they had hatched out of their eggs less than 4 months ago.

My 18-year-old granddaughter spotted a small **green tree frog** hop from the boardwalk to become almost impossible to spot on a fern of the same color while my 4-year-old granddaughter delighted in her attempts in trying to catch a **brown anole**.

A walk on the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk never disappoints as there is always something of interest there. Due to the shade, the temperature is cooler, it is peaceful and relaxing and I will look forward to coming back here again next season.

If you take a walk there this summer, send me an email update (lkoreny@gmail.com) of what you see and maybe we can share your experience in one of the articles in next season's *Ghostwriter* Boardwalk Report. Enjoy your summer!



And the Winner is ...

Kit Kitchen-Maran admires the beautiful quilt made by Suzanne Becker before past-president and founding member Elsa Caldwell draws the raffle ticket from the bowl held by Jinny Ball. The winner was Cyndy Jones who spends some of her time in upstate New York where the warmth will be welcome.

Boardwalk Vision Report

by Tom Maish, Chair

The Friends of Fakahatchee are proud to announce that we are now offering familiarization tours for local and state decision makers. The goal is to invite these community leaders to the park where they will be given a personalized tour of the Fakahatchee Strand. Collier County Commissioner Donna Fiala became our first public official to experience a Ghost Rider Tram Tour into the Fakahatchee. Glen Stacell lead the trip and it was very well received. Mrs Fiala next traveled to old US-41, site of our Boardwalk Vision, to see the "picture window" into the Fakahatchee Strand. Commissioner Fiala was so taken that she wrote a glowing article about the beauty of the Fakahatchee which appeared in the Marco and Naples newspapers after her visit in mid-April. What a great first step!

On April 23rd the Boardwalk Vision committee listened to a presentation on the benefits of hiring an Interpretative Master Planner to complete planning of graphics and displays for the Boardwalk Vision site. Board member Patrick Higgins had been a student of Kris Whipple, National Association for Interpretation (NAI) Certified Interpretative Trainer, and asked Kris to explain the reasons, benefits, and process of using Interpretative Master Planners. A Master Interpretative Plan will tie together all the individual pieces of our vision that the Friends have been formulating. Kris gave such a compelling presentation on what the Friends could expect from proper planning that committee members Jimene Rinehart and John Kaiser offered to fund the consulting fee to prepare a scope of work and pursue Requests For Proposals (RFP) for our project. This request to send out RFPs will now be presented to the FOF Board for approval. Sending out RFPs, reviewing the responses, and selecting a planning firm will take several months. Then the actual planning process may take an additional 6 to 12 months. With this completed plan, our Boardwalk Vision will be ready to reveal to the public.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

by Karen Relish

JoAnn Payton has been married 70 years, according to her, "to her real hot driver" Dr. Hugh Payton (seen below with ranger Karen Relish). While wintering in Florida, they have been visiting and picnicking as well as volunteering, including clearing trams in the Fakahatchee. JoAnn has also helped in the office, mounting botanical specimens onto sheets for our herbarium. She turns each botanical specimen into a work of art! *Photos thanks to Renee Rau, Park Manager.*



President's Message

by Francine Stevens

Camping in the Fakahatchee with good friends was just what I needed to restore my balance from a very busy FOF year of Board duties; peace and tranquility forced my mind to relax and enjoy nature in the company of all the creatures big and small who depend on this fragile environment to survive. The weekend reinforced my conviction that, while we are promoting the Fakahatchee, we have a collective responsibility to keep the message of conserving this unique natural resource at the forefront of educating the public about the Fakahatchee.

On the subject of education, as we closed the FOF season of the Ghost Rider Tram Tours I want to bring to your attention that the tours gave FOF the opportunity to educate over 600 folks who expressed interest in being introduced to the Fakahatchee but would not have ventured on Janes Scenic Drive on their own. Taking these folks just 2½ miles on Janes Scenic Drive is just enough time for the FOF interpreters to get their point across about the importance of the Fakahatchee. So much positive feed back and additional donations from our visitors assured us that while we are not taking these folks into the heart of the Fakahatchee they leave with the Fakahatchee in their hearts!

The Annual Members' Meeting & Dinner on 13th April gave our Board and members the opportunity to recognize the contribution of **Bill Mesce** through the years and, although he expressed uneasiness for public speaking, he was a real natural with his message of appreciation for his **Mel Finn Award** and was very deserving of our standing ovation. *See photo on front page.*

It was with feelings of gratitude and separation anxiety that I presented Certificates of Appreciation to outgoing Board members: **Glen Stacell six years on the Board, Howard Lubel four years, Frank Denninger four years, Bruce Bunch two years, Shaun Floyd two years, and Kathy DaSilva a little over a year.**

Moving forward, I introduced new Board members elected by the membership **Ted DeGroot, Ginny Roseberry, Tina Streeter**, and re-elected for a second term **Dr. John Kaiser**. See the last page of the newsletter for the entire Board roster as well as the result of the officers elected by the Board. New Committee Chairs are listed on the front page.

I took a few minutes to brag about the FOF accomplishments and at the top of my list how the FOF increased its Direct Park Support with **financial** support of 60% more than Fiscal Year 2012/2013. It was also easy for all members at the dinner to applaud our most generous donors: **Tom & Judy Maish, Glen & Laura Stacell, Bruce & Janet Bunch, Bob Becker, The Ebert Foundation, and all who donated to the second Annual Fund reaching over \$15,000.**

I ended my announcements with a reminder that over and above all this "money talk" the volunteers recorded **7,800 hours which in my opinion is absolutely priceless!**

In closing, I extend again my most sincere gratitude to the Board and all FOF volunteers who are responsible for the success of the 2013/2014 FOF season; you are all the principal reason why I walk around with a sense of pride representing the Friends of Fakahatchee.



Certificates of Appreciation were presented to retiring Board members Glen Stacell, Bruce Bunch, and Frank Denninger by FOF President Francine Stevens. Other recipients were not in attendance and will be sent their awards by post.

Bob Becker presented a generous check to Park Manager Renee Rau and FOF President Francine Stevens in appreciation for help with the Everglades Ultras marathons in the Fakahatchee in February. Photo below by Suzanne Becker.





Speakers Take Dinner Attendees on World Tour

by Bruce Bunch

Two globe-girdling British-born Board members took Annual Dinner attendees on a whirlwind trip around the world on the evening of April 13. Speaking at the FOF Annual Dinner & Meeting, Patrick Higgins and Tony Marx detailed their international wanderings that ended at the Fakahatchee.

Patrick described his days as a teen naturalist in New York City as exciting – like the time he was detained by the bomb squad while carrying chemicals to anesthetize the insects. Or the night a dragonfly pinned through the thorax miraculously rose from his collection to zoom around his bedroom.

Tony said movies about Africa and Tarzan stories fascinated him from a young age. After graduating from high school, he joined the British Colonial Service with postings in Kenya and Ethiopia. He learned that all was not as it seemed in the Tarzan tales. Cheetahs were relatively docile, while the placid looking water buffalo was a fearsome killer capable of great violence and cunning.

Patrick, meanwhile, jobless after a corporate shuffle, bought a boat and embarked on a round-the-world cruise with his ever-understanding wife Martha and sons aged three, nine, and eleven. Patrick promised to share four gaffes Martha would never forgive him for. Number two was removing his youngest son from his shoulders and setting him in the path of an approaching Komodo dragon. Patrick wanted to get a photo of the slobbering giant lizard.

Out of Africa in the Sunshine State, Tony grew curious about the origins of the Everglades. With the help of www.EvergladesTrail.org he started south of Orlando and hiked or biked the entire trail of the waters all the way to Flamingo. While some scenes in the Fakahatchee remind him of Africa, he said Florida has something in abundance Africa is sorely lacking – water.

En Plein Air

by Karen Relish



Art in the Preserve took place at the white-painted and preserved Copeland Baptist Church built in 1946. John Gilmore has been the pastor for 12 years. The event attracted young community artists and a touching art exchange took place between the generations.

According to Marya Repko's book *A Brief History of the Fakahatchee*, as well as talking with the pastor, the town of Copeland was bought from the J.C. Turner logging company in 1975 by Douglas McGoon. His intention was to farm tomatoes. He let residents buy the lots they were living on and donated land near the Baptist Mission for the community.

To learn how to support Copeland Baptist Church please contact Pastor John Gilmore at 239-695-2900.



Photos thanks to Helen Homer, a talented artist who spent the winter here.

What is a Snag?

by Sam Peters

There is some debate about what constitutes a Snag. Is it a dead tree? Is it on the ground? Is it in the water? Is it a loose thread? The Urban Dictionary defines snags as a “sensitive new age guy.” So, there are many definitions ... For our purposes, a Snag is a standing dead or dying tree.

A Downed Tree is a log lying on or near a forest floor; however, a downed tree in a body of water is called a snag in certain areas of the South and Midwest. In Alaskan rivers it can be called a preacher. Other areas it is called a sawyer. Both sawyer and preacher derive from the tree or log rising and falling and bowing in a current of a river.

To some people, Snags are ugly and should be removed from a forest. After all, they are not classic, formal beauty; they're dead. However, trees are the gift that keeps on giving. As they grow, they provide habitat and shelter for many different species; when they die, they still provide shelter and habitat, but now for different animals. Depending on the specie of tree, it can last for as long as 70 years. They start out as Hard Snags, which means that they still have the bark and their cambium layer; as they lose their bark and decay further, they become Soft Snags. This is when the most animals begin to move in.

Some of the birds which use Snags are woodpeckers, wrens, barred owl, vultures and hawks. Also many insects, reptiles and amphibians call a dead tree home.

As the tree ages, different animals make use of it. For instance, woodpeckers will make use of an area of a snag and when the woodpeckers move on, other birds will enlarge the holes and move in. As they move on, more birds or other animals will make use of the cavity. This can go on until the cavity becomes large enough to house a squirrel, or a raccoon nest.

Some fungi, moss, and lichen live their entire lives on dead trees. Bacteria live in decaying wood, creating fertilizer which will mix with the soil when the tree falls. Shelf mushrooms make use of Snags and Downed Trees. Snags provide food and habitat for almost 1/3 of our wildlife. Over forty different types of birds use Snags at one time or another.

Snags should be protected and left standing for reasons of habitat and forest health. They are used for foraging, nesting, perching, hunting and roosting.

We need Snags to be maintained in a variety of sizes, shapes and ages. A group of larger Snags is more valuable as it provides habitat for a greater variety of species. Small clumps of snags will provide nesting and foraging sites. Snags should exist in various stages of decay, as they support different plants and animals at different stages of their existence. So, different stages for diverse species and different sizes and shapes for the same reason.

A single large Snag is rarely used by more than one pair of the same species.

Forest management now includes Snags. This would include not cutting down dead trees and culling trees in a crowded area, but leaving them standing and creating new Snags. Fire may also be used as fire can both create new Snags and destroy old ones.

What can we do? Depending on where we live, we can maintain Snags and/or create new ones. Please don't use fire in your neighborhood. However, if a tree dies, leave it alone if it is not a danger to anything or cut it to a size where it will not hurt anything if it falls. You may also kill an unwanted tree yet leave it standing. Some of the ways to kill it would be to gird the tree, top and trim it and of course poison always works. Girding does weaken the tree and if done will rot the tree from the outside in. This will cause the tree to rot and fall much more quickly than when it dies and rots from the inside out, which is the natural way.

The Fakahatchee has many Snags in various states of decay. They occur naturally and are of great service to the forest community. If you look closely, you can see that the Snag is occupied by many animals and if you look twice you may even come to believe that they are beautiful in their own natural way.



Photo of a snag by Peter McClure.

Sam Peters is an FOF member from Miami Beach.

The Wetland Neighbors

by Anthony (Tony) Marx

Once considered as useless and a noxious, snake and insect infested source of fevers which must be drained and developed, half of the wetlands that existed at Florida Statehood have been destroyed. However Collier County is blessed with over 72% of its land acreage designated as conservation land – more than twice that of neighboring counties.

There is a stark difference between the 85,000-acre Fakahatchee State Preserve and the adjoining Picayune State Forest, which at 78,000 acres is almost as large. The Fakahatchee is a vibrant, natural world pulsating with life and home to a huge variety of rare plant life and endangered animals; whereas the Picayune, once also a similar wetland, was logged, cleared and partially developed, then abandoned. This transformed it into a dry landscape with upland trees and vegetation. Non-native vegetation including Brazilian Pepper, always present when land is disturbed, also moved in. Over two hundred miles of elevated roads acted as levies to further stop natural water flow between the canals. The difference is most noticeable when you access the Picayune State Forest through its back entrance at the end of Janes Scenic Drive in the Fakahatchee State Park. Outdated maps show a grid of streets which are mostly non-existent. The massive Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is changing the landscape in every respect. The bridge, on entering over the former Prairie has gone and the canal plugged, so it is now a series of small ponds.

Heading west, the partial dirt and paved road still shown on maps as Stewart has been leveled flat with the surrounding landscape, and on either side large swathes of scrub have been bulldozed clear of all vegetation and leveled to start sheet water flowing. Progress is occasionally blocked at the next canal bridge, but if you can proceed you'll find that the formerly paved Everglades Boulevard section leading to Naples has also had its surface removed and the last time I was there it was gated closed. Heavy equipment is seen working here and there, bulldozing and trucking away debris. Close to I-75 instead of water flowing south down canals to the estuaries, the new and powerful pumping stations under construction will send water flowing fanlike south through spreader channels in an east-west direction while the remaining three canals running north to south will be plugged to varying degrees.

If you plan to try and reach Naples from the Picayune be prepared to turn back, as the road may be blocked by either a closed gate or sheet water in summer. In time it will return to a wetland environment and the interior will be mostly be inaccessible to vehicles. The full transformation will take several decades but soon the Fakahatchee will benefit from the additional water flowing southeast.

Tony Marx is a Florida Master Naturalist and a Board Member of Friends of Fakahatchee. He is one of the speakers at our Annual Dinner on April 13.



Photo of Stewart Boulevard in the Picayune taken by Tony Marx in 2011.



Photo of equipment filling in a canal by Dennis Giardina.



Aerial photo of the "south blocks" in the Picayune by Marya Repko taken several years ago.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 380 memberships including 61 whose renewal was due during the 1st quarter.

Welcome to new members since our last newsletter:

Susan Antos & Edward Fallon, Chatham, NY
Thomas DesFosses, Naples
Everglades National Park Boat Tours, Everglades City
Martin & Gretchen Fallon, Naples
Sherry Geiger, Naples
Robert & Mary Randall, Naples
James Ring & Merita Hopkins, Boston, MA
Megan Stoll, Plantation

NEW BUSINESS BENEFACTOR

The first business to join as a Benefactor is Everglades National Park Boat Tours operated by Sammy & Brenda Hamilton in Everglades City. Our thanks to them.

FEEDBACK

We received this email from a new member after the April issue of *The Ghost Writer* was sent:

I see my name mentioned in the newsletter as a new member. I joined right after enjoying the tram tour on 3/1. It was a great tour in a wonderful place.

I see the Friends as an extremely dedicated group working to preserve an incredible wilderness and its wildlife. I am very proud to be a member.

Thank you all.
Robert Keiser
South Miami

This is the last issue of The Ghost Writer until the fall – unless we have exciting news to announce.

HAVE A GOOD SUMMER!

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 400 copies.

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OFFICERS:	President – Francine Stevens	Vice-President – Patrick Higgins				
	Secretary – John Kaiser	Treasurer – Jinny Ball				
BOARD:	Jinny Ball	Ted DeGroot	Rose Flynn	Dennis Giardina	Patrick Higgins	John Kaiser
	Tony Marx	Ginny Roseberry	Ken Shapiro	Francine Stevens	Tina Streeter	

LIFETIME PRESERVERS: Bruce & Janet Bunch

LIFETIME FAMILY MEMBERS: Tom & Judy Maish, Van & June Sayler, Glen & Laura Stacell

LIFETIME INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS: Warner Blow, Peter Haffenreffer, James Nici, Ken Shapiro, Carol Vartanian

BUSINESS PATRONS: EarthTech Environmental, Everglades Adventure Tours, Naples Bicycle Tours,
North American Canoe Tours, Shurr Adventures, Tour the Glades

BUSINESS BENEFACTOR: Everglades National Park Boat Tours

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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) ___ Supporter (\$50) ___ Patron (\$100) ___ Benefactor (\$500)

___ Business Patron (\$200) ___ Business Benefactor (\$500) ___ Extra Donation (\$ _____)

___ Youth (\$10) under 18 (birth date: month ___ day ___ year ___)

___ Lifetime Individual (\$1,000) ___ Lifetime Family (\$1,500) ___ Lifetime Protector (\$2,500) ___ Lifetime Preserver (\$5,000)

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