



The Ghost Writer

NOVEMBER 2012

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

EVENTS

GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Saturday
starting November 10

Cost: \$70 (\$50 for members)

Reservations Required.

Phone (239) 695-1023

or email FOF_90@hotmail.com

or book online at our website

See article on page 4.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2nd Saturday, 3rd Wednesday

Saturday, November 10

Wednesday, November 21

See article on page 6

BOARD MEETING

Sunday, Nov 11, 10:00 a.m.

Ranger Station, Copeland

For info, phone (239) 370-2654

Welcome Back Dinner/Talk
with Dr Roger Hammer

Sunday, Dec 2, 5:00 p.m.

Everglades Seafood Depot

See article on page 2.

MORE EVENTS

Nov 3: Swamp Buggy Parade

Nov 10: Florida Panther Fest

Dec 1: Swamp Heritage Festival

Dec 8: Art-in-the-Glades

For info, see page 2.

You can download an events calendar for the 2012-2013 winter season by clicking "Events" at our website www.orchidswamp.org.

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 9/21/12, at 11:04AM, near Gate 16/Mud Tram, Stephen Bass, Park Ranger, observed 2 **Black Bears** a mother ~250 pounds and a cub ~20 pounds running South across Janes Scenic Drive (JSD). At 11:16AM he saw another bear about 350 pounds coming out of Gate 15 and cross JSD to the other side. On 9/25/12, at 5:30PM, Howard Lubel, FOF member, reported seeing a Black Bear cub about 20 feet up a tree on the south side of Gate 7/West Main about 0.8 mile from the gate.

On 10/3/12, in the afternoon and early evening, according to Karen Johnson, volunteer, after working on mink data with Mike Owen, Biologist, in the morning had "clearly conjured up some good mink juju by seeing an **Everglades Mink** demonstrating his/her inspection technique as it strolled down West main checking one ditch and then the other." They also observed a **Red-tailed Hawk** soar and head north over Four Stakes Prairie. Furthermore, a **Virginia Rail** was spotted in Four Stakes Prairie in 7.5-inch deep water. Upon returning to Headquarters, a **Peregrine Falcon** was seen flying South over Headquarters toward the Firetower.

On 10/6/12, Stephen Bass and Dino Barone, volunteer, observed an approximately 12-inch juvenile **Cottonmouth** on the drive, and later a perched soon-to-fly **Red-shouldered Hawk** and 2 **American Bitterns** fly up from the marsh grass of Four Stakes Prairie. On 10/7/12, at 10:32AM, Mike Owen observed a **King Rail** run then fly a short distance over the beginning of JSD to the Prairie. At 14:15PM, near Gate 7, a male **Painted Bunting** was observed just past Gate 7 over the West ditch.

On 10/7/12, at 11:40AM, Cyril Marks, volunteer, observed a **Monarch Butterfly**, flying over the entry to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. Later in the afternoon, along JSD, he saw a **Red-shouldered Hawk** on the north perimeter of the ditch then fly into the trees, a **River Otter** lop across from north to south along the drive and an **Osprey** perched on a cypress looking over the plugged Prairie Canal at the end of the drive. On his return down the drive, another **Red-shouldered Hawk** was observed perched to the east side of JSD on a cypress tree.

We also had this email from Francine Stevens, FOF member:

Sunday 16th Sept after a heavy downpour Shaun Floyd and I walked East main trail. Shaun's sharp eye alerted me to a cottonmouth who was sunning him/herself on the trail; as it moved over she quickly spotted it, it didn't re-assure me but we slowly passed it on the trail, it never budged an inch and we moved onward to the Hilton ... on our return after 6 PM on Janes Scenic we lucked out and saw two deer crossing the drive.

And an email on Sept 27 from Jimene Rinehart, FOF member:

Rene, Francine, Ray and I saw a chuck-will's-widow just off the boardwalk and a Limpkin out at the pond at the end of the boardwalk.

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

Welcome Back Dinner/Talk

We are honored to have Dr. Roger Hammer talk about “Endangered Flora of Florida” at our traditional Welcome-Back Dinner on **Sunday, December 2.**



Roger is the author of *Everglades Wildflowers*, among other books, and knows the Fakahatchee well.

He is a native Floridian who retired as a senior naturalist from Miami-Dade Parks Department and now leads field trips for Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. He received an honorary Doctorate in April from Florida International University.

The dinner will take place at the Seafood Depot Restaurant in Everglades City starting at 5:00 p.m. The menu is a roast beef buffet with a seafood pasta or vegetarian alternative.

Reservations are required! The deadline for registering is November 19, and the cost is \$30 for members, \$40 for non-members. You can send in the form with a check or book online at our website (click on Events) with a credit/debit card.



There were about 80 people at our first event of the season, Celebrating Fakahatchee Orchids, on October 27 at the Players Club & Spa at Lely Resort, Naples. Besides a showing of Jay Staton’s *Catching the Fak-a-Habit* DVD and a presentation about Cigar Orchid Restoration, our new shirts and calendars were on sale. Thanks to Jimene Rinehart for organizing everything, to the Players Club for hosting us, and to Jinny Ball (right) for helping out.

MORE EVENTS

SWAMP BUGGY PARADE

Saturday, November 3 (10am) in downtown Naples. *We have an entry in the Parade and would like members to march with us, including youngsters.* Contact Jimi Rinehart at (239) 293-8142 to let her know you’ll take part in the parade.

SWAMP HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Saturday, December 1 (10am to 3pm) at Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center in Ochopee. Speakers include:

Elam Stoltzfus - filming in the Big Cypress
 Marya Repko - Marjory Stoneman Douglas
 Bob DeGross - Monroe Station & Tamiami Trail
 Maureen Sullivan-Hartung - Hidden History
 Marion Nicolay – portrayal of Deaconess Bedell

There will also be exhibits, demonstrations, and interesting food for sale. Fakahatchee Strand Preserve is one of the participants. Admission is free. For info, contact the center at (239) 695-4758.

ART-IN-THE-GLADES

Saturday, December 8 (10am to 2pm) at McLeod Park, Everglades City. Arts & Crafts Sale, Live Music, Hotdogs for lunch. FOF merchandise and calendars will be on sale. For info and to help out, contact Marya at (239) 695-2905.

Ten Good Reasons to Buy FOF Merchandise

by Jimene Rinehart

1. We put our profits to good use in the Fakahatchee. Our efforts make a big difference.
2. We sell quality products, something you would be proud to give as a gift or to own yourself.
3. 100% of our profits go to FOF funding, there are no administrative costs.
4. Your grandchildren will love our new kids’ tee-shirt.
5. Wearing our new polo shirts, fishing shirts and tee shirts is a great way to let the world hear about the Fakahatchee Strand.
6. Give a gift calendar and you will be remembered every day of the year.
7. You can save lots of time by ordering on line, we have items for everyone on your list.
8. We will include a gift card and mail out your gifts – no standing in line at the Post Office.
9. Our new polo shirts can be worn on golf courses around the world or to “resort casual” occasions at your club.
10. You can order now and we will hold your merchandise and ship in time for Holiday Delivery.

SEE OUR WEBSITE WWW.ORCHIDSWAMP.ORG FOR EVENTS AND ORDER FORMS

A Career in Conservation

by Dennis Giardina

I think everyone would agree that finding a career that suits you, finding your “right livelihood” is one of the most important things anyone does in life. I must admit that when I got to the age when a young person is expected to know what they want to study or do for a living, I was clueless. Where I grew up, in Suburban Boston, Massachusetts, in the 1970’s, no one around me knew that the career I have in wildlife conservation was even possible. No one could even point me in a direction. I talked to a lot of adults, especially during my senior year of high school and none of the career alternatives that were mentioned really appealed to me at all – and neither did college. Most of my friends just went off to college without any idea what they wanted to study as I was expected to do. I was tired of being in school, sitting indoors under florescent lights, speed-studying a lot of subjects that really didn’t interest me much at all. Fortunately for me, the part time job I got working for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts while I was in high school turned into a full time job when I graduated and that allowed me to support myself while I gave my future some serious thought.

What I realized over time was that since I can remember, I have had a connection to nature and to living things of all kinds. When I was in elementary school I discovered the book “The Silent World,” in my school library. I spent years sitting by myself reading that book, dreaming about the ocean, scuba diving, Jacques Cousteau and his research vessel, the *Calypso*. It would be hard for me to explain just how meaningful “The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau,” television specials were to me in the 1970’s. Compared to today, there were hardly any nature programs on television and his were so well done and inspiring. If you had asked me when I was seven or eight what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would have said an oceanographer or marine biologist because of his influence. In sixth grade when I had to choose between Italian, German or French classes to study the next year, I chose French. Italian is the language of my grandparents so when my mother asked me, “Why French?” I said that I was going to work on the *Calypso* some day. However, as I wound my way through high school, I lost touch with that dream and by the end of it, the deck of the *Calypso* seemed about as reachable to me as the bottom of the ocean.

During the eight years that passed between the time I graduated from high school and the beginning of my career, I worked a few different jobs and I went to college for a while in Massachusetts but I still felt like a fish out of water. The pivotal moment came for me during Thanksgiving in 1981 when my family invited me to go on vacation with them to Puerto Rico. My aunt and uncle had a condominium on the beach there and I couldn’t believe how beautiful it was. I snorkeled around coral reefs for the first time and then we went up to the Caribbean National Forest. As I walked along the rainforest trails, rivers and waterfalls I thought, “This is it; this is exactly the kind of place I’m looking for.” So, I started

going back to visit my aunt and uncle every winter, staying for longer and longer periods of time. I eventually met a guy my age who was a biologist. He worked up in the National Forest with the endangered Puerto Rican parrot and we became good friends. In 1989, Hurricane Hugo hit Puerto Rico and made a mess of the place. My friend asked me if I would be interested in a temporary job, working with the CNF Wildlife Program on that parrot project and now, almost 23 years later I can say this; I really lucked out, I found in a way not only a career but also an ecological niche!

In a way, I do what I do because I am who I am. My life and my work overlap substantially. Regardless of how many mistakes I made when I was young, I did try to heed a sort of calling that I felt from the time I was a very little kid: To learn about nature, to be close to nature and like Captain Cousteau, to do whatever I can to give a voice to the plight of species and ecosystems that suffer from the selfishness and short-sightedness of human beings. Whenever I am asked to talk to young people, I do it. I sympathize with the anxiety many of them feel about their future. I know how much it would have meant to me if the me I am today could have talked to the me I was then, especially during my senior year of high school. A few years ago I gave a talk to the entire graduating class of Tampa High School. There were hundreds and hundreds of seniors listening to my presentation about my work and the potential for a career in conservation. After I finished and walked down off the stage, one young man came over to me and shook my hand. He looked me in the eye and said that my talk really inspired him and helped him make the decision to study biology. That kid made my day. Someone said, “If you do what you love you’ll never work a day in your life.” I don’t know if it’s true or not but I wish that experience for everyone. To those who’ve wrapped up their careers, I wish you a retirement of endless possibilities.



Dennis Giardina is the Everglades Region Biologist for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and was formerly the Park Manager of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve. He is seen here with Park Biologist Mike Owen (left) during the Cigar Orchid Restoration project.



Thanks to Francine Stevens for the email below and this photo of Lilya Wagner, Jimene Rinehart, Renee Rau, and Ray Carroll.

Email from Lilya Wagner:

When I had the privilege of having Francine Stevens and Tom Maish in my fundraising course last July at Hodges University in Naples, I was impressed by their commitment to the Boardwalk project which they serve, the Friends of Fakahatchee. I subsequently visited the Fakahatchee and thoroughly enjoyed the tour by Renee Rau Park Manager in the company of Ray Carroll President and Jimine Rinehart VP as well as Francine . . . This is a treasure in Florida and also for environmentalists, those who love nature and preservation, and those who simply enjoy the beauty and peace of the outdoors. I commend the Friends for their efforts to not only maintain but also improve this wonderful jewel of American wilderness, with all its rich history and significance to our appreciation and understanding of the wetlands.

SWAMP WALKS



Don't know what to do with your energetic visitors? Send them on a Swamp Walk in the Fakahatchee. If they are relatively fit and don't mind getting wet to the waist while wondering at the marvels of this primeval environment, they'll have memories and photos to take home of a Florida far from concrete condos and shopping malls.

The first Swamp Walk of the season is on November 10. They continue until April (or until the swamp dries up) on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Saturday of each month.

Reservations are required! You can now book online by downloading a form to send with a check or by using your credit/debit card. For info, call Pam at (239) 695-1023.



Thanks to visitors Cindy & Rudy Wheeler of Venice, FL, for this photo of a little gator seen on September 25 near the start of the Boardwalk.



Thanks to Dusty Rhodes for these photos of a Tropical Checked Skipper and Cloudless Sulphur seen in the Fakahatchee.

Taking Stock of Butterflies

by Karen Relish and Laurel Rhodes

On October 13, Butterfly Chasers Laurel and Dusty Rhodes from Venice, Florida, joined our team and lent their expertise to the 15th Annual October Fakahatchee Butterfly Count. The team included Mike Owen, Donna Glann-Smythe, Skip Fisher, Karen Johnson, Cyril Marks, Karen Relish, and Lauren Sheppard

It was mostly cloudy with light wind and occasional light rain, not the most favorable conditions for seeing butterflies. Our goal was to identify and count the number of butterflies, including skippers, we observed at pre-designated locations in Fakahatchee.

Twenty species of adult butterflies were counted and 2 larvae. Conversation among participants included words such as foraging, basking, courting, and puddling. Along Janes Scenic Drive, butterflies were seen sipping moisture from mud puddles to obtain salts and minerals from the soil or "puddling". Popular plants used by the butterflies for nectaring were Spanish Needles and Lantana.

We saw several Zebra Heliconian butterflies, including one laying its yellow egg on a passion vine. Other Butterflies observed included the Ruddy Daggerwing, Cloudless Sulphur, Little Yellow, Sleepy Orange, White Peacock, Palamedes Swallowtail, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (even a dark phase female), Cassius Blue, Gulf Fritillary, Tropical Checkered Skipper, Queen, Viceroy and a Monarch. Skippers seen included the Long-tailed Skipper, Eufala skipper, Clouded Skipper, as well as Brazilian Skipper larvae on the aquatic Alligator Flag plant.

Other wildlife also seen were American Alligators, Great Egrets, Red-shouldered Hawks, a Merlin, and fresh Florida Panther tracks left by an adult and a kitten.

GUARDIANS OF THE EVERGLADES

A new documentary film is being made about the men and women who work so hard to keep the greater Everglades such a special place. Among the "guardians" are Franklin Adams (FOF historian), photographer Clyde Butcher, Senator Bob Graham, environmentalist Nathaniel Reed, and panther biologist Deb Jansen. The project is headed up by FOF member Connie Bransilver and she's asking that we all help with funding the production. To learn more, see <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1991620124/guardians-of-the-everglades-the-documentary>



Farewell to a Friend

by Marya Repko

FOF has lost a great supporter in the passing of **Allen Caldwell** on October 1. Allen and his wife Elsa were founding members of FOF back in 1997. Both served as directors and officers and volunteers. Right up until this spring, at age 83, Allen gave his time to organizing our Board elections.

Allen G. Caldwell was born in 1929 in Covington, KY, but moved to Florida as a youngster. After graduating from Vanderbilt University, he qualified in bioanalysis and was licensed as a Clinical Laboratory Director. He loved the outdoors and after retirement could enjoy spending more time in the greater Everglades, including the Fakahatchee.

FOF member and former director Jim Woodard sent this tribute:

Allen was one of the founding members of the FOF. In addition, Allen continued his dedication to the Fakahatchee from day-one until the day he died. He was always there to give historical perspective to the issues of the day and actively participate in work days, board meetings, and committees. I shared more than one stint on the elections committee with Allen and his advice and counsel were always on-target and one of the reasons that we were always able to get a well qualified group to agree to devote their time to the board. Others of you had similar experiences.

Allen will be missed by all of us who knew him.



Allen and Elsa (front row) at an early meeting of the Friends of Fakahatchee with manager Greg Toppin (right).



VOLUNTEER CORNER

The Sweat and Joy of a Fakahatchee Summer

by Jeff Kneisley

Heat indexes above 100 degrees, venomous snakes, biting and stinging insects, ripe poison ivy and afternoon thunderstorms would seem to make a place unbearable. These are abundant elements encountered while doing field work in the Fakahatchee during summer. Despite all of this, the Fakahatchee summer provides its own magic if you give it a chance. Subtle clues like blooming orchids, ripe fruits, lush vegetation and complete isolation are the antidote to what mattered before you stepped into the swamp.

In opening Pennington Post, Jones Grade and Upper East Main trams this summer it fulfilled my romantic notion of what it is to be a Park Ranger. It is during the trials of summer that I have come to love my job the most. On many occasions staff was joined by board members Dino Barone and Howard Lubel. It was their willingness and enthusiasm that matched the staff's aspirations for progress on trams this summer. Without their participation there is no doubt in my mind that we would have not made it as far as we did. With Steven on an ATV and me on the tractor, we were making progress on Pennington Post when we encountered what I would call a "Fakahatchee Final Exam". As I was mowing, the tram literally dropped out from under me. The tractor was now stuck leaning towards a pond with one front wheel 3ft below the tram and the other hung on a log original to tram's construction. We returned the next day with a swamp buggy and employed the ingenuity and perseverance of Steven Bass until, in a dramatic moment, a thunderstorm rolled in and we knew we only had one more shot at getting unstuck before the tram turned to a river. Up to this point we felled trees to make logs that would be used for traction under the wheels. We dug out behind the wheels where possible while minding the cottonmouth that slithered into a close tree on the pond. Nearly heat exhausted from doing this all day, we knew the coming storm was a double edged sword. In pouring rain with me on the tractor and Steven on the buggy we try again. It is getting so close and finally I used the bucket to push the tractor out! As you can imagine there were phrases of joy which I can't repeat in this article! We then gathered our tools and drove down the tram before we could get stuck again. What could have felt like a miserable day turned out to be an affirmation of the privilege of working in the Fakahatchee.

Having experienced these things, I look forward to another summer here. It is the time when I am able to regain that sense of wonder about the Fakahatchee. I have realized summer is when we really need additional help to make progress. There is a short window for keeping up with many of these areas. So, I invite you all to join us on the ground next summer.

See page 6 for November Workdays ...

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 333 paid memberships plus 6 names in arrears from the 3rd quarter and 6 Introductory members.

New members since our last newsletter:

- Joey Hipolito, Miami
- Sarah Pauly, Miami
- Elisabeth Wengronowitz, Arlington Heights, IL

ANOTHER FIRST!

Our first "Preservers of the Fakahatchee" are members Bruce & Janet Bunch who renewed with such generosity this year. But, they've gone even further by recommending that Bruce's former place of work donate a matching gift.

NEW BUSINESS MEMBERS

Marcy and Gary Wagner have entered their Naples Bicycle Tours as a Business Patron.
 EarthTech Environmental of Naples has upgraded to Business Patron.



VOLUNTEER CORNER



NOVEMBER WORKDAYS

by Jeff Kneisley

Saturday November 10:

Trail maintenance of Pennington Post via Jones Grade. Join us in clearing the most remote tram in the park. We will meet at the gate on Jones Grade at 9am. This will be a long day with the hope of reaching the West side of the Strand so bring a lunch. Bring durable gloves as there will be Hog Plum! *Please call me at 239-253-6372 to confirm by the Nov 8.*

Wednesday November 21:

Boardwalk and path trimming & cleaning. In addition to removing debris, the bear kiosk will get refurbished. Also, we could use two people to treat Brazilian Pepper adjacent to the boardwalk parking area. As usual we will meet at 9am and end by or before 1pm.

What Are We? Who Are We?

The **Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.**, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, is the Citizen Support Organization of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, 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 Friends of Fakahatchee strive 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 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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 Secretary – Francine Stevens Treasurer – Dino Barone
- BOARD: Dino Barone Bruce Bunch Ray Carroll Frank Denninger Shaun Floyd Dennis Giardina
 John Kaiser Howard Lubel Cynthia Peters Jimene Rinehart Glen Stacell Francine Stevens Charles Wright

LIFETIME MEMBERS: James Nici, Warner Blow

PRESERVERS OF THE FAKAHATCHEE: Bruce & Janet Bunch

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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 _____
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MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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