

# The Ghost Writer

**NOVEMBER 2013**

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

## EVENTS

### **GUIDED SWAMP WALKS**

**1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday**

\$50/member, \$70/non-member

Reservations Required.

***Resume on November 9.***

### **GHOST RIDER TRAM TOURS**

**Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday at 10am**

\$25/person, Reservations Required.

***Resume on December 10.***

### **COASTAL CRUISES**

**Thurs, Dec 19, 2:30pm**

**Tues, Feb 18, 2:30pm**

**Wed, March 19, 2:30pm**

\$75/person, Reservations Required.

### **BOARD MEETING**

**Sunday, November 10, 10 a.m.**

Ranger Station, Copeland

### **VOLUNTEER TRAINING**

**Sunday, November 17, 2 p.m.**

Ranger Station, Copeland

### **WELCOME-BACK DINNER**

**Saturday, December 7, 5:00pm**

Everglades Seafood Depot

***Reservations are Required!***

### **ORCHID RESTORATION**

**Saturday, March 1, 5:00pm**

Rookery Bay, Naples

***You can download the FOF events calendar and make reservations at our website [www.orchidswamp.org](http://www.orchidswamp.org).***

## **SWAMP HERITAGE FESTIVAL**

Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center in Ochopee is hosting its annual jamboree on **Saturday, December 7**, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Several FOF members will give Campfire Corner Chats and we will have a booth among the exhibitors. For info, call (239) 695-4758.

Finish up the day with our Welcome-Back Dinner ...

### ***Welcome-Back Dinner***

Join us for our first informal evening event of the season on **Saturday, December 7**, at 5:00 p.m. in the Everglades Seafood Depot when we can greet friends that we haven't seen all summer.

After a delicious roast beef buffet dinner, we will hear Gary Schmelz talk about his ecological experiences in Southwest Florida and have a chance to buy copies of his new book *Journey to the Edge of Eden* which we reviewed in the last issue of the newsletter.

Reservations are required in advance so we can tell the restaurant how many to expect. You can book at our website, [www.orchidswamp.org](http://www.orchidswamp.org).

## **TRAM TOURS**

Our first Ghost Rider Tram Tour is on **Tuesday, December 10**, and every Tuesday thereafter, plus the first Saturday in the month, during the winter. This is a great way to see the Fakahatchee without getting your feet wet so bring your guests and neighbors for an educational day out. The tours last 2½ hours and the tram can accommodate wheelchairs. You can make reservations at our website.

## **CHRISTMAS CRUISE**

Start celebrating the holiday season on **Thursday, December 19**, with a Coastal Cruise to historic Fakahatchee Island where we will be guided up the shell mound path to an old cemetery, noticing rare plants on the way. Festive refreshments will be served on the tour boat during our return journey. Places are limited so visit our website for reservations.

## **ANNUAL FUND APPEAL!**

It's that time of year when you can help yourself and the park by making a tax-deductible donation to the Friends of Fakahatchee.

This year park manager Renee Rau says she has ONE critical need, "*We desperately need rock to fill Janes Scenic Drive and other areas of the park. We could easily use \$50,000 worth and would have none left over.*"

Letters have been mailed to all members and your donation will be acknowledged by post so that you have written proof for your tax advisor of your generosity.



Visit [www.orchidswamp.org](http://www.orchidswamp.org) for events, newsletters, glorious photos, and more.

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

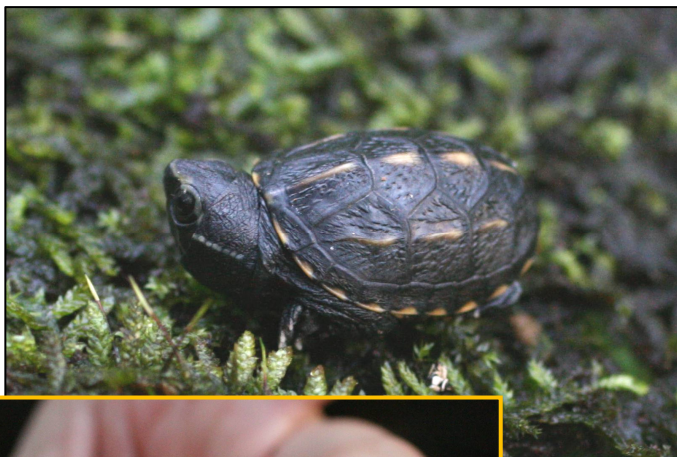
On 8/15/13, Steven Bass, Park Ranger, observed an adult **Florida Black Bear** looking back at him just inside Gate 16. On 9/3/13, at 9AM, and again on 9/13/13, Bente Torvund, Administrative Assistant, observed an **Eastern Kingbird** perched on top of the Bald Cypress near the Butterfly Garden then near Coastline Drive. On 9/20/13, at 9:24AM, Mike Owen, Biologist, observed a **Belted Kingfisher** over Firetower pond.

On 9/21/13, in the evening, Steven Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, observed an adult **Coyote** cross North to South on US-41 about 5 miles west of the US-41 and SR-29 intersection. On 9/27/13, at 9AM, Bente Torvund observed a **Palm Warbler** in the Cypress tree near the Butterfly Garden. On 10/1/13, in the afternoon, Renee Rau, Park Manager, and Steven Houseknecht observed 30 **American Alligators** from 2-8 feet long along the Drive.

On 10/2/13, at 8:25AM, Bente Torvund observed an **Ovenbird** calling from bushes in the west ditch about 0.5 mile south of the Firetower. She also saw a juvenile **Purple Martin** about a mile south of the Firetower perched alone on the Janes Scenic Drive (JSD) power line and on 9/13/13 observed 20 **Purple Martins** flying over the Firetower.

On 10/2/13, at 9:04AM, Steven Bass and Carol Arrasmith, volunteer, observed a **Florida Black Bear** run off of Janes Scenic Drive into a Hammock. On 10/12/13, at 11:30AM, Alan and Lori Paulson, volunteers, observed a **Chicken Turtle** laying her eggs along the east side of JSD. On 10/15/13, at 9:20AM, Mike Owen observed and an **Eastern Phoebe** around Park Headquarters.

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 FOF member Jim Woodard who emailed this note and photos:

On Saturday (10/12/13), Niki found an egg in the middle of the tram. As we cleaned it off, a baby turtle hatched, with the egg yolk still attached. It was about the size of a quarter. Saul identified it as a striped mud turtle. After taking pictures, it was released into the water.

### Rare Birds

We received an email from FOF member Howard Lubel: I saw something in the Fakahatchee that I had not previously seen. At approximately 4:15 PM on Monday, October 21, I saw 4 **roseate spoonbills** in Lee Cypress prairie approximately .4 of a mile north of the office. They were about 75 yards west of JSD.

### Gator Beware!



FOF member Frank Denninger emailed:

Might be beneficial to those that hike in Fakahatchee to report on the gator incident where someone got bit out on West Main ... Folks need reminders that Gators Do Not Smile.



If you're interested in panthers, go along to North Collier Regional Park in Naples on **Saturday, November 16**, for the annual Florida Panther Festival where there are activities for all the family.

The event is sponsored by a number of local environmental groups including Audubon, CREW, National Park Service, FWC, FWS and Defenders of Wildlife.

For information, see [www.floridapantherfestival.com](http://www.floridapantherfestival.com) or phone (727) 823-3888.

## *President's Message*

This passed month was filled with exciting developments for our organization. We are moving forward on a number of fronts.

**Our beautiful new website** – [www.orchidswamp.org](http://www.orchidswamp.org) – reflecting hundreds of hours of effort by board member **Rose Flynn**, is going “live” this month. The site really captures the beauty and mystery of the Fakahatchee. Please bookmark this site and send the address to your friends. And if you haven’t already, click on one of the tours we offer to see more details and make a reservation to experience the Fakahatchee led by our dedicated volunteer tour guides. Thanks to **Marya Repko** for handling our website all these years. I predict Rose will have just as long and successful run.



**Annual Fund:** By the time you read this you may have received our annual fund solicitation letter. While stuffing the envelopes (*see photo*) **Bruce Bunch** board director and FOF Public Relations Chair as well as **Jinny Ball** board Secretary & Membership secretary chatted with optimism at the prospect of seeing tons of rocks delivered on Janes Scenic to make the road a smoother ride for the all the passengers on the Ghost Rider tram tours. As it turns out this year park manager **Renee Rau** needs just one thing – rock to fill in the rutted roads. Anyone can attest that this summer’s relentless rain created havoc on the Parks road and with your generous tax-deductible donation for a ton of rock at \$20 or a truckload for \$500 you will be proud to say you were instrumental in getting the job done.

**New Brochure:** With the fund letter, you will also receive our new brochure advertising our adventures and describing our other activities. If you’d like more copies to distribute to friends or other organizations, email Bruce Bunch at [brucebunch@yahoo.com](mailto:brucebunch@yahoo.com). You can also download a copy from our website.

**Training for Volunteers:** On the 17<sup>th</sup> November, **Glen Stacell**, **Janet Bunch**, and **Renee Rau** will hold a training session for the Ghost Rider, Fakahatchee Island Cruise and Swamp Walk volunteers. This will insure participants in our events receive a consistent, professional experience. Interested in volunteering as a guide or helper? Please email Glen at [gstacell@comcast.net](mailto:gstacell@comcast.net).

**Our Welcome-Back Dinner** is set for Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at the Everglades Seafood Depot. We look forward to hearing guest speaker FOF member **Gary Schmelz** talk about his life in the southwest Florida environment. Gary is also co-author with Glen Stacell of the book *A Guide to Native Wildflowers of Southwest Florida*.

Bruce Bunch will inform the membership of its details in the very near future.

**Boardwalk project:** The Board of Directors were honored to receive a very quick response from our request to **B J Givens**, assistant Bureau chief for District IV of Florida Parks and Recreation, to meet with us to discuss the FL State’s construction blue prints for the proposed parking and facilities at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk (BCBB). B J Givens attended our October Board meeting and a very productive Q & A session lasted for hours, all parties involved walked away with a better understanding of their respective roles concerning the BCBB.

At that same meeting, the Board being mindful to protect the Everglades fragile Ecosystem from the impact of the new BCBB project, voted to hire a LEED consultant to review the State BCBB blue prints, in plain English the LEED consultant will recommend to the State the best construction methods to assure that the project is as “green” as it gets! This move gives FOF a real “seat at the table” as this project progresses.

**Orchid Restoration program:** Last but not least, please mark your calendars now to save March 1 for an exciting evening report by **Mike Owen** and **Dennis Giardina** on their work restoring lost orchids to the Fakahatchee. The fundraising event will take place at the Rookery Bay auditorium on Tower Road, Naples. These two are funny and exciting speakers, so you will want to bring your friends and houseguests. It is FOF’s pride and joy to support the lost orchid restoration in the Fakahatchee and to quote Dennis G. “from exploitation to restoration” your support will get the orchids back where they once were so abundant. An update from Dennis *Lost & Found in Cuba, Part III*, is included with this newsletter.

Last April I spent a day with Dennis, Mike, and **Matt Richards** of the Atlanta Botanical Garden to survey the progress of the orchids restoration program and I can assure you their efforts are already coming to fruition. Stay tuned for more about this next month!

I will conclude my letter by saying thank you to **Jimene Rinehart** for all she’s done while on the Board of Director since Feb 2012, although she vacates her Board position she won’t be too far since she will continue to serve as a committee member.

Sincerely,  
*Francine Stevens*  
FOF President



## Status of our Boardwalk Vision

by Tom Maish, Committee Chair

The Park Service through consultants George F Young have prepared 60% detailed plans for the new Boardwalk facilities to be located on the abandoned stretch of US 41 just east of the current entrance at the Miccosukee Village.

During the study of the site work it was discovered that the Collier County Comprehensive Master Plan prohibited any building in "wetlands". Although the site was part owned by the Park Service, old US-41 was still under FDOT title.

FOF President Francine Stevens and Tom Maish requested appointments with the Collier County Commissioners to inform them of the plans for the Boardwalk. Commissioners Coyle, Fiala, and Nance met to learn of the proposed project that will expand and improve our visitor's experience in the Fakahatchee and its importance to tourism.

At this time John Bastow, Engineer with the George Young Co., worked with Collier Planning staff to effect a change in the Master Plan since the wetlands building ban affected all the Parks in Collier County. On September 6<sup>th</sup> the change was approved at the Commissioner's meeting.

What we do not have is funding from the State to construct the facilities. The Park Service requested funds for the FY 2013-14 from the Legislature, but was denied. The request will be made again in FY 2014-15.

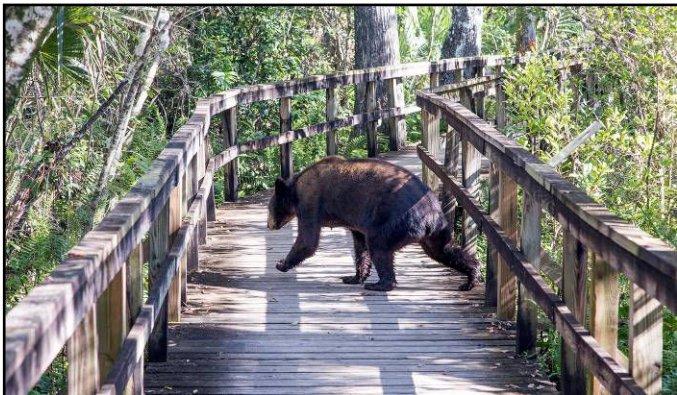
The 60% plans by the Park Service do not reflect all of the vision of the Friends as proposed in our Boardwalk Vision.

Yes, the Friends are very appreciative of the site work, parking area and restrooms.

However, plans do not include all the "green" and "sustainable" features the FOF proposed to promote conservation of our resources.

Our vision of a small "Florida cracker cabin" as the visitor's center was replaced by a standard roadside rest type of structure. No interpretation there!

The Boardwalk Vision committee and the FOF Board met on September 6<sup>th</sup> and decided to ask the Park Service to reconsider our design ideas. A response will be sent to officials at District 4 requesting a meeting to determine exactly what can or cannot be designed.



Thanks to English visitor Steve Paddon for this photo of a bear on the boardwalk which he saw on October 27.

## BOARDWALK REPORT

by Linda Koreny

I recently heard from Ginny, a new Boardwalk volunteer, about her experiences this summer. She emailed: *"I had a great time on the boardwalk. Believe it or not, the bugs weren't bad. Those **Gambusia** and the **dragonflies** are on the ball. We had a surprising number of European tourists who all seemed to enjoy the walk. Had lots of nice sightings of **skinks**, the **lubber grasshoppers** and various **butterflies**."*

Gambusia are also known as "mosquitofish" because the diet of this fish sometimes consists of large amounts of mosquito larvae relative to body size. You can find the "Gambusia" interpretive sign on the east side of the Boardwalk just before the observation platform near the end. Look for the Gambusia this winter while there is water in the strand. Dragonflies, a favorite of mine, are important predators that also eat mosquitoes.

Later this report was included in the park records: 'On October 12, 2013, around noon Virginia Roseberry observed a 4-5 foot **American Alligator** near the entry to the Boardwalk and around 1:30pm observed a larger one in the Alligator pond as well as four approximately 4" **Five-lined Skinks** on the platform. While at the Boardwalk, she also heard the two **Bald Eagles** calling seemingly to each other as they flew over.'

While I was getting this report ready, Ginny emailed: *"Saturday a nice **Whitetail buck** visited the boardwalk. He had "snuffed and snorted" a couple times before showing himself near the strangler fig. Nice experience. **Warblers** and other **Songbirds** are starting to arrive. Fall is here I guess."*

My husband Steve and I, "fair weather Floridians", are looking forward to getting back to Fakahatchee this month and spending time on the Boardwalk again. What observations will we have to report this winter? Baby alligators, eagles and ospreys? I look forward to seeing you there either as a volunteer or a visitor or both!

## Between the Leaves

by Marya Repko



I've just received a beautiful new book – *Enchantments; Julian Dimock's Photographs of Southwest Florida* by Jerald T. Milanich and Nina J. Root.

Photographer Dimock and his father A.W. Dimock explored Florida from 1904 to 1913, producing several books and numerous magazine articles about their adventures in this sparsely-populated area. They went by canoe, ox cart, sail boat, and on foot meeting early settlers and Seminoles.

One of their stops was at Deep Lake Plantation (a citrus farm) where they wandered in the prairies and saw the huge cypress. And, they went into the nearby "Figahatchee" where Julian took a photo of a pet bobcat.

The book is available from University Press of Florida and should be in every local public library for students of our early history.

## **50th Anniversary Remembrances of President Kennedy's Death.**

by Franklin Adams

It was November 1963. The surveyors were staking the construction right of way for the controversial road that was to be built across the Everglades and Big Cypress Swamp. The road which would eventually be dubbed "Alligator Alley" by the AAA would cross just north of the old Jones Logging Road in the Fakahatchee Strand and end near east Naples.

My family had been coming to the Fakahatchee beginning in the late 50's to hunt and explore this beautiful logged over swamp. Having been involved in the fight to prevent the construction of this highway across the Glades and Cypress I was well aware that the road would forever change this special area of Florida. Many had fought the "road to nowhere" but we had lost our fight to route it north through Hendry County which would have been a less damaging alternative than what we viewed as another dam across the great swamp.

Wanting to see and enjoy this remaining wild and largely undisturbed area one last time before the road came, my brother John and I planned a weeks swamp buggy trip on the old logging roads and trails. We towed my buggy the "Stump Jumper" from Miami to the Copeland Grade as it was called back then. Today that lime-rock road is known as Janes Scenic Drive. Loading our gear we took a logging tram down to Dan House prairie area and just rambled the old tram roads until they ended or connected with another. John and I were in no particular hurry and had no destination in mind. Eventually we came back to the Copeland Grade and meandered west bordering the edge of a large pond apple swamp which no longer exists today. Gradually we ended up circling back and connecting with the East Main tram.

Late in the days' end we would look for a hammock or pine island to camp for the night or not finding one we just camped on the tram. We had the Fakahatchee and its solitude all to ourselves. What was to have been a week flew by. We crossed the Jones Logging road, Table Camp and eventually came out north at SR-846 and crossed over to the southwest boundary of Corkscrew Swamp on the tenth day of our roam. We spent the night on the edge of a pine island. Next morning we drove the buggy to the truck stop on the north side of the big curve that was operated by a Mr. Frank Head.

We had nothing cold to drink in five days so John and I sat down on a counter stool and both asked for a cold Pepsi. Mr. Head asked what we had "been up to". We told him. His response was, "Did you hear about President Kennedy?" We hesitated, expecting another good-natured Kennedy joke as there were many making the rounds. Without speaking, Frank Head reached down under the counter and held up a newspaper. In shocking and sobering big black headlines it said, "President Kennedy Assassinated".

We were silent and shocked. We had gone to the woods to enjoy and escape the day to day reality of life in the city and returned totally unaware that the President was dead.

It was truly an unforgettable day in our lives.

*FOF Member Franklin Adams was instrumental in saving the Fakahatchee from development in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He is the FOF official historian, having helped to make history himself.*



**President John F. Kennedy was in Florida on November 18, 1963, just four days before he was assassinated in Dallas. While here, he visited Tampa and Miami. *Photos courtesy of Florida State Archives.***

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 373 memberships including 21 who are in arrears from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters of 2013. Watch for your renewal notice in early December if you joined in the last quarter of the year.

*Do not confuse the Annual Fund Appeal with membership. We are asking for extra donations to help the park directly with their needs.*

**Welcome to new member since our last newsletter:**  
Patricia Ison, Naples

## Congratulations!

Swamp Walk leader and former FOF President John Elting has recently been appointed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to a five-man Big Cypress Swamp Advisory Committee. The Big Cypress Watershed includes Collier County and the adjoining Hendry, Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe Counties. The responsibility of the committee is to protect the integrity of the Big Cypress area as pertains to the exploration for hydrocarbons, oil and gas.

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

### Board Development (Governance):

Francine Stevens, Kathleen DaSilva

**Boardwalk Vision:** Tom Maish, Francine Stevens

**Fundraising Development:** Tom Maish, Francine Stevens

**Communications:** Bruce Bunch

Website & FaceBook: Rose Flynn

Newsletter: Marya Repko

**Budget & Finance:**

**Education & Outreach:** Glen Stacell

**Resource Management:** Howard Lubel

**Membership:** Jinny Ball

**Merchandise:**

**Events:** Francine Stevens, Jinny Ball

**Historian:** Franklin Adams

**Scrap Book:** Jinny Ball

*If you would like to help on any of the committees, contact (239) 495-6744.*

## 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 –

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

Ken Shapiro

Glen Stacell

Francine Stevens

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

**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)    ☐ 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