



The Ghost Writer

JANUARY 2015

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

EVENTS

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED!!!

for dates & costs, see
www.orchidswamp.org
and select Tours & Events

GHOST RIDER TRAM TOUR

Tuesday at 10am

MOONLIGHT TRAM TOUR

all tickets sold out

TRAM TOUR & WET WALK

Jan 1/8/29, Feb 19/26, March 19/26

BIOLOGIST'S SWAMP WALK

Jan 10, Feb 7/13, March 7

BOARDWALK AFTER DARK

Jan 3, Feb 2, March 4

COASTAL CRUISE

March 21

FOF BOARD MEETING

Sunday, January 11, 10:30 a.m.
Ranger Station, Copeland

Art in the Preserve, En Plein Air

Saturday, January 10

phone Karen at (239) 695-4593 for info

Everglades Ultras Marathons

Saturday, February 21

www.evergladesultras.com

NATURE FESTIVAL

January 16/17

www.rookerybay.org

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Festival

February 24-28

www.evergladesmuseum.org



Left: Tom Maish listens to Jane Parks, whose petitions and activism helped to save the Fak, as she talks to guest speaker Nick Penniman at the FOF Welcome-Back Dinner.



Right: Nick Penniman signs copies of the books he generously donated to the FOF Annual Fund while President Francine Stevens lends a hand.

PENNIMAN URGES VIGILANCE ON AMENDMENT 1 FUNDS

Naples author and environmentalist Nick Penniman presented a sobering picture of Florida's environmental policies at the Friends of Fakahatchee dinner at Port of the Islands on December 13.

Penniman, author of *Nature's Steward, a History of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida*, spoke to more than fifty attendees at the Friends' annual "welcome back" dinner.

His description of the state's failure to comply by 2004 with an EPA order to implement numeric limits on the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen in state waterways was illustrated with slides of polluted rivers. In many, the algae blooms in the rivers were as green as the surrounding banks. "These slides are not photoshopped," he assured the audience. Penniman said that by 2012 the EPA shifted its focus and ceased trying to enforce its consent decree, allowing the state to slightly modify its current standards.

The November election yielded good news, he said, with the overwhelming passage of Amendment 1. The measure garnered 78 percent of the vote in Collier County, despite opposition by local politicians and agricultural interests. Amendment 1 directs the state to use one-third of the documentary stamp tax, already being collected on real estate transactions, for natural resource preservation and land acquisition. The stamps had been the source of funding for the Florida Forever program until the legislature began diverting funds from this purpose. It is estimated the amendment will generate \$10 - \$20 billion for land and water conservation over the next 20 years.

"But, this is Florida," Penniman said, noting that one legislator had already floated the idea of paying for existing environmental programs with the funds, rather than using them to acquire and preserve new land and water resources. He left the audience with the clear impression that while Amendment 1 was a great victory, it would require continued vigilance to assure its effective implementation.

Before his presentation, Penniman did a lively business selling signed copies of his book. He donated all proceeds to the Friends of Fakahatchee for the Annual Fund. A few copies are still available at \$20 plus \$2.50 postage. To order one, phone (239) 695-2905.

Visit www.orchidswamp.org for events, newsletters, glorious photos, and more ...

M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 11/26/14, in the afternoon, Melissa Miano, Park Ranger, observed two **Snail Kites** flying over the marsh north of US-41 and about 2 miles west of SR-29. On 11/29/14, around 8AM, Melissa Miano observed 2 **Sandhill Cranes** flying north over Jones Grade. Also, on 11/29/14 around 10AM, she observed 4 **Roseate Spoonbills** and 4 **Wood Storks** standing in water north of US-41 and west of SR-29.

On 11/22/14, Kathy Hatch, volunteer, and Truman Trudeau while walking out in Dan House Prairie, observed a **Northern Harrier** gliding over the prairie and pretty purple wildflowers called **Glades lobelia** blooming.

On 12/8/14, starting around 4:45PM until dusk, while on Janes Scenic Drive (JSD), James and Becky Basford, volunteers, observed 1 **Common Snapping Turtle**, 1 **Belted Kingfisher**, 3 **Great Egrets**, 1 adult **Black-crowned Night Heron**, 1 juvenile **Wood Stork**, 1 **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, 2 **Crows** and 8 **White Ibis**.

On 12/13/14, in the morning, young Logan and his mother Jill observed a **Florida Panther** which peered out seemingly wanting to cross SR-29 but shortly turned back around.

On 12/15/14, while on JSD, Robert Fisher and Becky Basford observed a variety of **Butterflies** including Gulf Fritillaries, Zebra Longwings, White Peacocks, Viceroy's, Cloudless Sulphurs, Ruddy Daggerwings, and Julias like the one nectaring on a Spanish needle (*see photo below by Becky Basford*).

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



Photo by Becky Basford of a Julia butterfly seen on December 15.



Photo of Black-crowned Night Heron by Dick Brewer.



Monarch butterfly photo by T. Wilson off SR-29 in November.

COUNTING BIRDS

Birds were not the only signs of wildlife on the 2014 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) along Jones Grade although they were the primary focus.

The Area 8 F.S.I. (Fakahatchee Scene Investigation) Team got its feet wet from the dew on the grasses on the crisp 45°F morning. After warming up with Common Grackles, Gray Catbirds, and Carolina Wrens, the team got serious looks at Bobcat, Panther, and Bear Scat plus fresh Panther scrapes.

Then, it was back to birding, and, after pausing to enjoy American Alligators and blooming Toothed Rein orchids, the team finished with 30 species and 155 individuals. Most often observed were Palm Warblers (19), Anhingas (18), Catbirds (17), and Black-crowned Night Herons (15). A Kestrel gliding over finished the day

President's Message

by Francine Stevens

The older I get the more bewildered I am at how fast a year can slip away. Of course, the busier we are the faster time goes by but in early spring time slowed down abruptly for me when my mother was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer. I flew to Montreal and spent a month with both mom and dad in the home I grew up in; mother died on 19th June and my father lost his wife of 62 years. I think of her often and console myself in knowing that her health failed her only for the last five months of her 83 year-long life. She left me with very good memories – I was fortunate to have a mother that took her mothering responsibilities to heart and yet, at the same time, encouraged me to become an independent woman. I bring this up because I know that we all have our own stories, we all have a lot going on in our private lives, in the pursuit of happiness we all face difficult challenges, but the Friends of Fakahatchee find it their heart to devote so much of their precious time to all matters of the FOF mission.

I am extremely grateful to the FOF volunteers who take so much time out of their lives to “work boots on the ground” in the Park, the trails, the road, and on the Boardwalk; time out of their lives to conduct FOF interpretive tours, time out of their lives to perform all the administrative functions that are essential to keep this non-profit business running: bookkeeping, banking, membership, public relations, etc.

Our Donors' and Friends' generosity this year facilitated the funding of repairs and purchase of new equipment for Park maintenance and interpretation, the Park's Children's Fishing clinic, the Orchid restoration project, the future construction of an Orchid shade house, the launch of an Interpretive planning process for the Boardwalk Expansion, and the creation of a new Website.

As the year comes to a close, know that you are all individually essential to the success of the organization mission and I wish all the Friends of Fakahatchee a healthy and productive 2015.



Donald Forgione, Director of the Florida Park Service, with Howard Lubel, FOF Resource Management Committee, and “Mr. Gator” on Janes Scenic Drive during the Director's visit (see article in right column).

DIRECTOR VISITS THE FAK!

Thanks to FOF President Francine Stevens for her *foresight* in bidding for “A Day at Any State Park with Florida Parks Director Donald Forgione” at the silent auction during the Friends of Florida State Parks conference in January 2014.

She quickly figured out it was a great opportunity to get Donald Forgione in the Fakahatchee and that it would pay a big dividend for the Friends of Fakahatchee.

With 172 State Parks plus Trails and Greenways there was little likelihood that Mr Forgione would just make a special trip to the Fakahatchee.

The auction changed that! Donald arrived Friday afternoon in time for a fun-filled evening of fellowship with our Volunteers followed by a tasty BBQ dinner and music by the campfire – what better introduction to the Fakahatchee.

On Saturday it was all business as Donald met with several FOF leaders at the old US-41 site soon to be the new parking area for the Boardwalk. Viewing the expansive prairie, along with the renderings of our designs, gave Donald a real sense of place in what the Friends envision to accomplish.

Donald immediately told us that he was 100% behind our the FOF Vision and would do whatever he could to help facilitate the Friends' efforts.

Next was a trip up Janes Scenic Drive with leaders of the Resource Management Committee who showed Donald JSD's deteriorated condition and demonstrated that the Friends have been relentless in the clearing of trail and controlling exotics and that Janes Scenic, being the gateway to all trails, is in need of additional funds to give a boost to the Friends so they can continue what they love to do – “work in the Fakakahtchee”.

At lunch Donald was shown a Power Point presentation “FOF, a Competent Partner” describing the many ways that the Friends support the Park. In viewing the new FOF website, Donald was very complimentary saying “how professional it looked” and that it could match the website of a national organization!

Wrapping up the meeting, Donald told how our number of members and the huge amount of support provided to the Park ranked the FOF in the top tier of CSOs serving the Parks. He was very taken by the many Volunteers; the thousand of volunteer hours and financial support contributed.

President Francine, Thank You so much for bringing Donald to the Fakahatchee!



FOF President Francine Stevens and Park Manager Renee Rau with Donald Forgione, Director of the Florida Park Service, during his visit on December 5.

BOARDWALK REPORT

by Linda Koreny

In early December at the Boardwalk, visitors reported seeing and hearing **Owls, Ospreys**, and the **Florida Bald Eagles** busy in and around the nest.

On December 13, Rita Bauer, a Park Volunteer, and a couple from Connecticut observed a **Great Horned Owl** sticking its head, including its ear tuft of feathers, up from its nest (*see photo*). They also saw the Osprey hanging out near their nest and heard the Bald Eagles. In addition, photographer Kim Nagy was taking photos and observed an **Anhinga**, a **Moorhen**, a **Green Heron**, **Pileated Woodpeckers** (adult male and his two kids; brother and sister), a **Great Blue Heron**, a **Black Crowned Night Heron**, a **Palm Warbler**, a **Yellow Bellied Sapsucker**, as well as heard other Warblers and an Osprey.

In the morning of December 16, visitors observed a **Black Racer Snake**, a **Yellow Rat Snake**, a **Red-shouldered Hawk**, an **Anhinga**, a **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **White Ibis**, an **Owl**, **Pileated Woodpeckers** (*see photo*), a **Gray Squirrel**, **American Alligators** and a **turtle**. Two days later visitors reported seeing both **American Bald Eagles** (1 on nest, 1 on lookout branch), an **Osprey**, a **Great Horned Owl** on nest and

December was an active month on the Boardwalk and January promises to be even more so. Cameras are a popular way to capture activity of the wildlife as well as the unfolding of ferns and other flora. I have also watched painters with oils and acrylics and nature journalists with water colors, colored pencils and inks capture the experience of the area. So grab your binoculars, come join the fun – take a walk on the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk and make your day more beautiful!



Photo left of
**Great Horned
Owl on the nest**
by Rita Bauer.

Photo right of
Pileated Woodpecker
by Kim Nagy.



BOARDWALK VISION UPDATE

by Tom Maish, Chair of the Vision Committee

It is with great pleasure to report that our BoardWalk Vision is starting to move forward. The Park Service has almost completed their plans of the parking area, restrooms, and picnic pavilion at the new entrance off the abandoned US-41 site. Also included will be a deceleration lane to move traffic safely on and off the highway. These improvements will be funded by the Park Service!

The BoardWalk Vision committee sent out Requests for Proposals to begin the first phase of the Interpretative Master Plan for the route of the new pathways; design of exhibits and graphics that will connect the new entrance with the existing boardwalk. The Vision committee evaluated four proposals, interviewed the principals of the two final contenders, then checked references.

The committee unanimously selected The Acorn Group to begin the design. Meetings are scheduled to start in January with the completed report due at the end of June 2015. These plans will include a bridge across the canal and the final design of a “cracker style” Visitors pavilion with pathways and boardwalk around Green Heron Lake to connect with the old boardwalk. Exhibits and graphics will be designed along the trails for Visitors to enjoy the beauty of the Fakahatchee rather than keeping folks inside a building. Special emphasis will be on exhibits to engage children of all ages to learn about the wonders of nature – to lure them away from their electronic devices.

Our next step was to fund the engineering study by the George F. Young Company that will inventory the plants, select the sites of the route, and begin the permitting process with Collier County. The George F. Young Company has performed all of the engineering and site evaluation for the Park Service parking lot and restrooms. They are very familiar with our site and our Vision. This study is expected to be completed concurrently with the Interpretative Master Plan. Both of these contracts were funded from the Partnership-in-Parks reserves that had been set aside by the FOF.

These contracts will allow the Friends to finalize the required planning and permitting to prepare to raise the funds necessary to complete the Vision



Aerial photo from the Collier Appraiser's website with old-41 and the existing Boardwalk on the north side of the Tamiami Trail.

BIKING & HIKING THE FAKAHATCHEE, PART 2

by Anthony (Tony) Marx

In my December *Ghost Writer* article I described off road 'mountain' biking in the Fakahatchee State Park and this will serve to acquaint visitors with what they can expect to find either hiking or biking the trails kept open for public use.

There were once 200 miles of rail tracks laid within what now comprises the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park which gradually fell into disuse by the late 1950's when logging ended and the property was sold to developers. The rails and ties were removed although some of the latter can still be seen laying where they were discarded alongside Janes Scenic Drive (JSD). Even the Drive itself was a railroad to which were connected the main arteries and served the interior shorter branch tracks feeding into it from north and south.

The Developers scammed people into buying small building lots, as happened in the adjoining Picayune State Forest although not on such a large scale, and some remain hidden in the forest today, referred to as 'in holdings'. Permanent occupation is not feasible simply because building is not permitted and an in-holder's camp may simply consist of a bare patch of land partially flooded in summer or an old crumbling shack left over from the 1970's when the land was acquired by the State of Florida and designated a Park and Preserve – the largest in Florida. Believe it or not, there are still almost 1000 such lots scattered throughout the Park with most hidden away in the depths of the swamp.

The 200 miles of trails have almost all disappeared, recovered by Mother Nature, with the Park Staff assisted by the 'FAKA-hackers' – volunteers with the "Friends of the Fakahatchee" CSO – just managing to keep open what remains. The annual 'Ultra Marathon' is run through much of the Park in February and is preceded by a burst of trail clearance each year, which leaves the remaining trails in their best condition before the tropical summer rains arrive and the vines, creepers, and undergrowth encroach once again to reclaim the remaining signs of civilization. Mentioned below are trails that can be ridden or hiked and, in the case of JSD, driven.

Janes Scenic Drive (JSD)

The main road bisecting the Park and accessed from State Road 29 at Copeland. The paving ends just past the Park Ranger Station and the JSD continues N.W. for 12 miles until it connects with the back entrance to Picayune State Forest. This is a narrow bumpy dirt road running through the heart of the Swamp forest affording access to the main off-road trails. There are several places where you can safely park and hike or bike. Of course, lock your vehicles and stow valuables out of sight.

The trails in the right column are all double track with grass between. They meander through tall pristine forest and luxurious understory festooned with ferns and bromeliads. Wildlife encounters of all kinds happen on a regular basis, so keep your camera handy.

West Main Hiking Trail

The gated entrance is three miles from the start of JSD, sign-posted on the left. A double track ends at a small open prairie 3 miles from the trail head. It is possible to continue north across the grassy prairie to connect with Mud Tram trail (see dotted line on the map) but this is more strenuous and side trails make a compass or GPS mandatory as the trail is not marked. Otherwise return to the trail head after a mildly strenuous ride at about 7 mph.

East Main Hiking Trail

This is the main hiking trail with ample parking, located on the right approx. 6-1/2 miles from the start. The first 2-1/2 miles are easy double track and bring you to an in-holding known as 'Ballard Camp.' This privately-owned corrugated iron cabin was once a logging supervisor's cabin and is kept in good shape by its owners. They kindly allow visitors to rest on the front porch but please respect their privacy if they are present – accompanied by a vehicle parked nearby. They maintain a jetty running from the back of the cabin to a lake which is always busy with alligators large and small.

Bear right past the cabin and the trail continues for another half mile before being blocked other than in February-March when it is cleared for the Marathon. The trees here are heavily festooned with bromeliads.

Mud Tram

The gate with limited parking is presently un-signposted and is located on the left a mile past the East Main entrance. As the name implies, it becomes very muddy in summer. The double track ends after three miles when you break out of the tree cover into the open at the Picayune State Forest line.



Ballard Camp, viewed from the north side, is on East Main.

Tony Marx is a Florida Master Naturalist and FOF Board Member. He is also a volunteer interpreter for the Fakahatchee guided tram tours and frequently contributes articles to The Ghost Writer.

HACKING IN THE FAK

by Dino Barone

On Saturday, December 6, the Intrepid Fearless FAKA-hackers were once again working out on East Main, trimming back vegetation on the tram (*see photo below*). This will allow our Park Guests to enjoy all the visual beauty the Fakahatchee has to offer. Joining our group on this day were 3 runners who will be participating in the February 21, 2015 Ultra Marathon. On race day, they are so focused on their next step ahead, most do not take a moment to enjoy their unique surroundings. These workday allow for some advance scouting and most importantly the opportunity to see and experience everything a strand swamp has to offer from wildlife to flora.

Come on out and join us. Looking forward to seeing our Faka-hackers out in the swamp soon ...



**Back row : Brendan Barry, Dino Barone Paul Joslyn
Front row : Ray Marti, Bob Becker (Fearless Faka-hacker), Linda & Tim O'Brien**

Photo: Courtesy of Rose Flynn, photographer extraordinaire



On December 20, led by Ranger Steven Bass, FAKA-hackers Paul Joslyn and Dino Barone morphed into FAKA-rakers on East Main, physically raking the first mile of the tram, north from the gate off of Janes Scenic Drive. Our goal was for an enjoyable experience for Park Guests who enjoy riding their bike on the scenic tram.

Once this was done, we proceeded up East Main, continued our trimming efforts in preparation of the Ultra Marathons to be held in February 2015. There are many miles of trams and trails that will require attention.

Visitor Center Help Needed

You can volunteer at the Fak even if you don't join the physically-fit FAKA-hackers. The Visitor Center at the park ranger station in Copeland needs friends to tell people where to go and what they might see in the Fakahatchee. To help out, contact Ranger Melissa Miano at (239) 695-4593 or email her at Melissa.Miano@dep.state.fl.us to let her know what days and times you are available.

PLAN AVAILABLE ONLINE

The Unit Management Plan, which outlines the future of a state park, was discussed in April and approved in August. To download a copy, go to <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/>, then click on Management Plans on the right, and scroll down until you find the Fakahatchee



It is also available at www.orchidswamp.org; click on About the Park.



SHERIFF'S WARNING

Parked vehicles can be a target for opportunist burglars, especially during the busy winter tourist season. It was reported recently that thieves smashed a window in a car to steal a purse that was carelessly left in plain sight.

Always hide valuables and lock your vehicle. If you see anything suspicious in Collier County, phone (239) 252-9300.

SPECIAL SWAMP WALK

by Robert Fisher

On 11/24/14, Mike Owen, Biologist, and two Fakahatchee Volunteers, one a veteran, Robert Fisher, assisted in the Wounded Warrior Swamp Walk. There were six participants, between the ages of 25 and 35, who served in all three wars from the Gulf War to the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns. One of the means of transport was the Friends truck. All the participants had a chance to get their feet wet in a slough and learn about the Swamp.

During the designated walk, they helped with data collection, including Brazilian Pepper density, blooming orchids, and other listed plants. Fakahatchee volunteer, Cougar McBride, Panther expert, gave a quick lesson on the Florida Panther and was able to find tracks and scrapes to show the participants. One of the participants asked about Fakahatchee Swamp Walks to be able to include his family in the future.

I feel proud that Fakahatchee can give back a little something to those who have given so much!

Restoring the Giant Air Plant

by Mike Owen and Karen Relish

The Friends of Fakahatchee are an important part of a team to rescue bromeliads, especially the *Tillandsia utriculata* or Giant Air Plants, seemingly a favorite of the non-native *Metamasius callizona* or Mexican Bromeliad Weevil. Typically, after about 10 to 15 years of growth, the Giant Air Plant sends up a seed stalk or spike up to 6 feet long, produces flowers in June, then produces thousands of seeds during spring, and then dies unlike many of the other Florida bromeliads which can also reproduce vegetatively by pupping.

The Friends of Fakahatchee contributions will assist other team members at Naples Botanical Gardens, Selby Botanical Gardens and possible affiliates to educate, quarantine/monitor, then regularly treat with an insecticide the recovered plants as well as provide materials to re-attach to hosts, and logistical support for the Giant Air Plants from Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and from its headwaters Okaloacoochee Slough State Wildlife Management Area and other Florida Natural Areas.

Work on the Giant Air Plant and other bromeliads at Fakahatchee and other parks around the state was initiated at University of Florida by Teresa Cooper for her graduate work. She is currently working for Indian River Research and Education Center in Fort Pierce with Ron Cave. From December 2008 through December 2013, Mike Owen and primarily two Fakahatchee volunteers continued and expanded the monitoring within the center of the Fakahatchee Strand along 7 miles of Janes Scenic Drive. With the dedicated efforts of the two volunteers, including one who entered the data and created the graphs, the monitoring efforts produced an annual snapshot of the Mexican bromeliad weevil invasion that reached the sampling area in 2010. The December 2013 data revealed an over-80% decline of the Giant Air Plants, especially north to south along Janes Scenic Drive. Upon seeing this in graph form, Mike Owen obtained the necessary permission and permits to collect some of the known remaining surveyed plants, approximately 160 of them, to

place under the conservation efforts of the Gardens' staff and volunteers to enable a healthy seed stalk and seed production. On November 13, 2014, 16 Giant Air Plants were ready to be returned to the Fakahatchee. Using the data gathered, they were returned to as close to the same tree, height, and distance from Janes Scenic Drive that they originated. Team members from both Gardens, including interns from Belize, and Fakahatchee staff and volunteers assisted in this process. By the time these seeds mature into plants, we are hoping with the tireless team efforts that we will see them produce healthy seed stalks and successfully release thousands of seeds back to the Fakahatchee Strand. Each year in November the plants, safely protected from the ravages of the weevil larvae at the two Botanical Gardens, that produced a spike during the previous June will be returned to the Fakahatchee Strand to continue the release of seeds into the swamp.



Chad Washurn of Naples Botanical Garden, Fakahatchee biologist Mike Owen, and Bruce Holst of Selby Botanical Garden with the Giant Air Plants.



Thanks to Rita Bauer for these photos of the Full-Moon Tram Tour on December 6 which was led by Glen Stacell and Patrick Higgins. This very popular event is sold out for the winter season.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 320 current memberships. Renewals are sent each quarter by email or post and may be paid online at our website www.orchidswamp.org.

Do not confuse membership with the Annual Fund!!! Membership entitles you to vote for FOF directors whereas the Annual Fund supports projects in the Park.

Welcome to new members since our last newsletter:

Bob Barcus, Yellow Springs, OH
Colonel Baxter, Naples
Linda Fernandes, Naples
Carolyn Ginther, Marco Island
Chris Hopkins, Naples
Chuck & Liz Orsay, Naples
Tom & Marcia Watts, Marco Island
Myra & Van Williams, Naples

THANKS TO ANNUAL FUND DONORS!!!

The Annual Fund total is currently \$10,365 from only 63 (less than 20%) of our members. We had generous contributions of \$500 and more from: **Warner Blow, Rita Bleasdale, Glen Stacell, Tom & Judy Maish, Jerry & Lori Williams, Paul Joslyn, and Nick Penniman.**

Every amount helps for Park Support, so donate whatever you can ...

RELISHING SANTA

Santa Karen and her sleigh, silently, stealthy without notice from the local wildlife, swoops into the Fakahatchee, led by her trusty gators, landing at the Fakahatchee Hilton, whereby she discovers the Park's Chevy, parked there by our own Hootie Whoo Biologist Mike Owen, while he is out slogging, gathering data in the strand.



Never missing the unique opportunity to bring a smile to others, Santa Karen and the Gators quickly deploy to decorate the Chevy. Afterwards, the exhausted gators take a needed rest, thermoregulating their fatigued bodies on a log in the warm Fakahatchee Sunshine.

Later in the evening Santa Karen bellows to her gators, On Wally, On Ali from the strand we must ascend, quickly to the marshes, the prairies, and the uplands.

Photo and report courtesy of a FAKA-hacker elf.

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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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 _____
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MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:

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