



# The Ghost Writer

## DECEMBER 2015

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

### EVENTS

#### RESERVATIONS REQUIRED!!!

for dates & costs, see  
[www.orchidswamp.org](http://www.orchidswamp.org)  
and select Tours & Events

#### GHOST RIDER TRAM TOUR

Thursday at 10am

#### MOONLIGHT TRAM TOUR

Dec 24, Jan 23, Feb 22, Mar 22

#### TRAM TOUR & SWAMP WALK

Tuesday at 9:30am

#### BIOLOGIST'S SWAMP WALK

Saturday at 9:30am

#### GUIDED BOARDWALK TOUR

starting Dec 3, Thursday at 9am

#### FOF BOARD MEETING

Sunday, December 13, 2:00 p.m.  
Ranger Station, Copeland

#### WELCOME-BACK DINNER

Sunday, December 13, 5:00 p.m.  
See right column and President's Message.



### Wildlife Blitz!

It's that time of year again. Do you like wildlife? Birds? Exotic and native animals? Or just plain love the Fakahatchee? We will be conducting our annual **Wildlife Blitz!** on the third **Wednesday** of each month through April of 2016. We need a total of 24 volunteers and a few hours of your time for each month. Whether you would like to volunteer for all the months or just once, your help and time will greatly be appreciated.

What is the **Wildlife Blitz**? It's a time to come out and enjoy the Fakahatchee, look for wildlife, and just plain soak up nature at its best. Bring a chair and wait for the wildlife to pass you by. It will be a two hour sitting along Janes Scenic Drive every half mile. We will meet at the park's Visitor Center at 7:30 a.m. to pick up observation sheets and then caravan to assigned locations. We return to the Visitor Center about 11 a.m. to share our sightings and photo's.

Animals you *may* see: Black Bear, Florida Panther, Everglades Mink, Bobcat, Gators, Birds and much, much more.

Suggested items to bring: chair, hat, sunblock, bug spray, binoculars, camera, pen/pencil, and something to write on.

Dates are **December 16, January 20, February 17, March 16, and April 20.**

Please email with date(s) available. If you have a preference on your location, please note it in your email. Contact: Thomas.Mosley@dep.state.fl.us, Mike.Owen@dep.state.fl.us, or WynLyn.McBride@dep.state.fl.us.

Thank you for volunteering!

Tom Mosley, Park Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator

### WELCOME-BACK DINNER

Join us on **Sunday, December 13**, to greet old friends and make new ones at our first formal event of the winter season. The evening starts at 5:00 p.m. with a cash bar followed by a buffet dinner. After some introductory remarks by our president and a tribute to Allen Caldwell, guest speaker Cesar Becerra will talk about logging in the Fak area.



The event takes place in Everglades City at the Everglades Adventure Center (old Depot Restaurant). Cost is \$45 and reservations are required. See [www.orchidswamp.org](http://www.orchidswamp.org) to book your places. For info, call (239) 695-1023.

### START THE NEW YEAR WITH A SWAMP WALK!

Join other state parks for a "First Day Hike" on **Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup>**, when Fakahatchee biologist Mike Owen will lead a swamp walk. Meet at the park office (137 Coastline Drive, Copeland, FL, 34137) at 9:30 a.m. and bring the usual long pants & shirt, water, bug spray, camera. There is no charge but donations are welcome. Deadline for reservations is Monday, December 28. Phone (239) 695-2886 to book your place. For info, see [www.FloridaStateParks.org](http://www.FloridaStateParks.org).



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

On Saturday 11/15/2015, Dino Barone, Faka-Hacker Volunteer, and Thomas Mosley, Park Ranger, observed a **Flamingo** on the northern border of the Park hanging out within a flock of other wading birds. Also that week, Austrian visitors reported seeing an adult **Florida Panther** along with a young Florida Panther on Janes Scenic Drive.

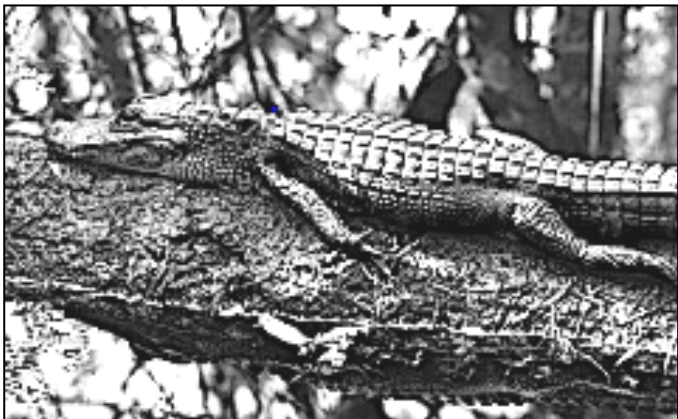
On 11/16/2015 between 9:30AM-3:30PM while on Janes Scenic Drive, Volunteers Skip and Becky observed and recorded **American Bitterns, Great Egrets, Little Blue Herons, White Ibis, Black & Turkey Vultures, Red-Shouldered Hawks, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatchers, American Crows, Gray Catbirds, Northern Mockingbird, several Black Racers, and an American Alligator.** They also observed various **butterflies** including Eastern Tiger Swallowtails, Palamedes Swallowtails, Zebra Longwings, Cloudless Sulphurs, White Peacocks, and Ruddy Daggerwings. Furthermore, they observed a **Florida Black Bear** strolling down Janes.

On 11/24/15, Mike Owen, Park Biologist, and Tom Mosley saw a dark morph **Short-tailed Hawk** circling over the shop area about 100 feet high. The Short-tailed Hawks in Florida compose a disjunct population of tropical hawks at the northern end of their geographic range.

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



Thanks to Becky Basford for this photo of an immature Little Blue Heron seen at Lake Harmon. Note the darker bill and gray wing tip.



Fine art photos by FOF member Jay Staton will be on display until December 22 at the Arsenaault Studio & Banyon Art Gallery, 1199 Third Street South, Old Naples. For more info, see website [www.arsenaaultgallery.com](http://www.arsenaaultgallery.com) and click on Events.



FOF member Mike Cullinan wrote on November 30:

I saw these two panthers on JSD at 9.10AM today about a mile north of the Mud Tram entrance. I think they were a mother and a juvenile. I watched them, about 150 yards from my position, for about 15 minutes through the zoom lens on my camera but for most of that time they were partly hidden by a bush and I could only see them because of the lens. I think they stayed hidden after they saw me.



Photo of water lily at Ballard Camp by Becky Basford.



## ***President's Message***

by Francine Stevens

Christmas Holiday membership challenge!

This year I will be buying an FOF membership as a Christmas gift for my good friend Dennis. Every time he sees me he asks me about the Friends of Fakahatchee that he refers to as the "swamp people" so by making Dennis a member he will read all about the FOF in the newsletter and see for himself what the amazing group of FOF volunteers are doing to support the largest State Park in Florida.

I am challenging you do the same – I'm sure you have at least one friend you can give the gift of an FOF membership.

On the subject of swamp people, I was just on a couple of swamp walks and there is no better remedy for the weary than to be knee deep in the water breathing fresh air while soaking in the beauty of the Fakahatchee. The world comes to halt and the silence has a calming effect. It is just what I need to remind myself of the reason why preserving the Fakahatchee Strand and its wildlife is so important, why volunteering makes a difference, and so I extend once again my gratitude to all who volunteer in the Park. Some of you have done so for years and others are just beginning but all are of extreme value to the FOF mission.

December is upon us and so is the Welcome Back dinner on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Besides a talk by energetic speaker Cesar Beccera we will be making a very special tribute to Elsie Caldwell in memory of her husband Allen who was a founding member of the FOF before its incorporation in 1998.

I hope to see you at the Welcome Back dinner.



Francine wrote: **FOF lifetime member Rita Bleasdale (in hat) invited a group of friends on a hike to the Fakahatchee Hilton and swamp walk lead by Patrick Higgins. Rita provided picnic lunch for all; Dee Leonard volunteered to help me bring the lunch to the Hilton.**

One of Rita's friends said that last year's swamp walk was the highlight of her winter and she wanted to come back for another one.



## **BOARDWALK REPORT**

by Linda Koreny

Now that the temperature has dropped to more "normal" levels for this time of year, we all seem to be enjoying the outside more and experience shows that the wildlife does the same.

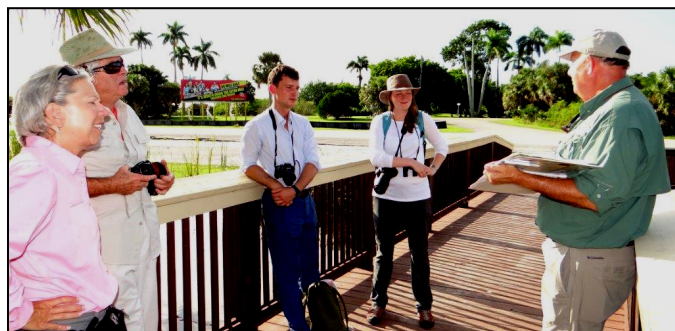
**Pileated Woodpeckers, turtles and juvenile American Alligators** have been recent reported sightings. The **Florida Bald Eagles** have been busy repairing and readying their nest. The **Osprey** have been sighted on their snag and, hopefully, will begin working on their nest. All of this means we should be seeing young ones this season.

The Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk and the area around it is part of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. According to a document (CIR 1186) published by the University of Florida, the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve '*... contains what is considered the most unusual cypress mixed-hardwood forest in the US, as well as the world's only royal palm-bald cypress forest.*' The area of the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk is at the southern end of the Preserve and '*contains one of the last remaining virgin cypress strands.*'

'Virgin' or "old-growth" by definition means, '*these forests are relatively old and relatively undisturbed by humans*'. These areas '*provide habitat to many wildlife species, including some rare and endangered.*' Though many of the trees along the boardwalk are hundreds of years old, old-growth does not mean that all the trees are old – it means that there are old, middle-aged, and young trees as opposed to a recovering clear-cut area with trees all of the same age.

The area of the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk was saved from the logging of the 1940s and 1950s literally "in the nick of time". And because of that, 5 (five) raptors make their nests here, the Florida Bald Eagle, the Osprey, the Barred Owl, the Great-Horned Owl and the Red Shouldered Hawk.

It is indeed a *very* special place and one to visit often.



Patrick Higgins (right) gave a guided tour of the Boardwalk to Dale Allen, Executive Director of Florida Greenways & Trails Foundation, and his wife plus Scottish visitors Dr. Emma Goodyer, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) who is their UK Petlands Manager and formerly worked for the Scottish EPA, and Will Hinchliffe, Senior Arboriculturalist at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. They all finished the day with a swamp walk.

**MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

We have 286 current memberships excluding those in arrears from previous quarters. You can join or renew on our website. For info, call Jinny at (239) 695-1023.

**Welcome to new member since our last newsletter:**

Adam Rickert, Bradenton

**ANNUAL FUND**

Donate now and take advantage of a tax deduction for 2015 but do not confuse your contribution with membership. The purpose of the Annual Fund this year is to buy an ATV for the park biologist. As of December 3, we have received just over \$6,000 from 41 donors.

**Like Us on FaceBook!**

Join the 300+ people who have "liked" us at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/orchidswamp>



FOF volunteers Patrick Higgins and Steve Koreny erected two new signs launching our Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk expansion project appeal. One is located where tram tours start on Janes Scenic Drive and the other is by the iron ranger at the boardwalk on US-41. The signs have a map of our vision for the expanded site and will be used as talking points to raise awareness of the project, as well as to solicit donations. The signs have an embedded QR code that, when scanned on a smart phone, takes the viewer directly to the projects page on our website.

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

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**MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:**

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