

The Ghost Writer

Winter 2003

Newsletter of Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve
Home of the Ghost Orchid

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Celebrate our 5th Anniversary on
December 5th!*

FoF was founded in 1998

Join us for Dinner and Members'

Meeting

Seafood Depot Restaurant
Everglades City

5:00 to 5:30 for drinks and dinner

6:00 p.m. for meeting

RSVP to (239) 695-2397

Swamp Walks

December 2, 20, and 30

For reservations, call Preserve Office
(239) 695-4593

Limited to groups of 15

Fee: \$15/person or \$10 for FoF members

Guided Canoe Trips

December 6 and 27 starting at 9:00 a.m.

Equipment provided; limited to groups of 10

Fee: \$25/person or \$20 for FoF members

Annual General Meeting and Barbeque

Date to be announced for January

Star-Gazing

Friday, January 23

Florida State Parks

Festivals & Events

Telephone: (850) 245-2157

Website: www.FloridaStateParks.org

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Mike Owen, our biologist at Fakahatchee, reports that Jean Stefanik, here on assignment from New Hampshire to work on an archeology grant, saw an **Eastern Spotted Skunk** on Jones Grade in the evenings of November 13 and 15. She also sighted a **bobcat** crossing from east to west SR 29 at Janes Scenic Drive at 7:39 early one morning.

Mike and Ranger Dave witnessed a **Sharp-Shinned Hawk** at the Preserve Office and also saw their first Monarch headed south. An **Everglades mink** was seen at Gate 7, and Buddy, one of the Park Rangers at Fakahatchee, spotted one **bald eagle nest** near the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk on November 11. This was the first documentation of the return of the bald eagles to the nest at Big Cypress Bend. Mike Owen saw one **adult bald eagle** near the Boardwalk (flying south over US 41) at Big Cypress Bend on the 17th of November.

Panther Tracks were spotted at K2 Tram headed east, and over 200 **tree swallows** were seen over the Harmon's borrow pit lake, west of Janes Scenic Drive near the Park Headquarters.

With the cool weather and mild conditions for mosquitoes, it is a great time to be out in the swamp. Take an hour off this month and treat yourself to a walk along the boardwalk or join the Friends on many of the outings planned for the new year.

A Happy Holiday Season to all!

What Are We?

The Friends of Fakahatchee State Preserve is a Citizen Support Organization of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, an entity of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The Preserve comprises over 80,000 acres of land of the Big Cypress Swamp and is about 15 miles long by 5 miles wide, bordering US-41, I-75 and SR-29. The Fakahatchee Strand is the largest cypress strand in the world and its slough is the deepest in the greater Everglades.

OFFICERS

President: Patty Huff, Everglades City
Secretary: Kerrie Chobot, Everglades City
Treasurer: Jack Horner, Fort Myers

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Franklin Adams, Everglades City
Betty Foster, Bonita Springs
Bill Mesce, Copeland
Jan Brock, Ochopee
Russ Reay, Everglades City
Greg Toppin, Copeland

Visit our website www.friendsoffakahatchee.org for the latest news about events and for copies of newsletters

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Over 40 people were at our Dinner Meeting on Nov. 7th at the Seafood Depot Restaurant in Everglades City. The next gathering is on Friday Dec. 5th at the same venue. Arrive between 5:00 and 5:30 for drinks and to order food. Meeting starts at 6:00 pm.

Membership Secretary Marya Repko reported that paid-up membership is over 200 individuals and families. Unfortunately, there are also about 50 names on the mailing list who have not renewed. **If there is an XX after your name on the mailing label, you will be dropped at the end of December unless we hear from you.**

The meeting approved a suggestion that renewals be due on a quarterly basis. For example, if a member joins in January, February or March, his or her next renewal date will be 31 March. This should make it easier to follow up lapsed members.

Welcome to new members

P.A. Franklin, Heather Hill,
Patrick & Sylvia Sanders,
Jim & Sara Chatham and
Paul Rebman.

Wicken Fen

by Marya Repko

I remember visiting Wicken Fen in the 1960's. I have images in my mind of lots of reeds and marsh set in a very flat area. Look at a map of England for "East Anglia", northeast of Cambridge. There are names like "Parts of Holland" and the "Isle of Ely" and the "River Ouse" (as in ooze). The topography is criss-crossed with canals bordered by dykes. One could be in The Netherlands – and a lot of Dutch families did travel the North Sea to help drain the land in the early 1800's. Their names can still be seen on the map.

True old-time Fenlanders take pride in the remoteness and uniqueness of their area (as do Florida crackers). Their speech is like nothing else in Britain. Living off the land, they dug peat out of the bogs and, when it had dried, burnt it in their fireplaces for fuel. A major industry was cutting thatch for roofing cottages.

The landscape is dotted with pumping stations and sluices that helped the drainage. The very rich farmland (lots of sugar beet

and turnip is grown) can be seen under water during winter floods. Most of the area is sparsely populated, miles of flat fields as far as the horizon, with the occasional church spire rising up in the vista, and narrow straight roads following the canals.

Wicken Fen was established as Britain's oldest nature reserve in 1899 but it was a place of interest for natural historians, including Charles Darwin, long before that. Over the years, the National Trust and private donors have added to its facilities so that it now occupies over 1300 acres. It is known for its butterflies & moths, beetles, spiders, and birds. Unfortunately, it was drained during WWII but is being re-flooded (much like our Everglades Restoration). The administration is also trying to raise funds to buy adjacent fenland. They welcome volunteers to help with fund raising, visitor interaction, and land management.

More information about Wicken Fen can be found on their excellent website: www.wicken.org.uk. Have a look at the History, Visiting and Getting Involved selections.

If you are interested in a trip during the last week in March 2004, get in touch with me at 695-2905 or email FOF_90@hotmail.com. The plan would be to fly to England, spend two days around Wicken Fen, then visit the cathedral towns of Peterborough and Ely, the university city of Cambridge, possibly take the boat to Holland and stay in the Pilgrims' city of Leyden before flying from Amsterdam.

EVENTS and VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

New events coordinator Elliot Mascoop asked what special activities members would like to see for the coming year. First on the calendar in January are the Annual General Meeting and Barbeque with Star Gazing. The election of board members and officers is due before the AGM. To nominate someone for the board, phone Greg at 695-4593.

Volunteers are needed for the Friends' booth at the Seafood Festival, February 7-8, in Everglades City. Over 50,000 attend the Festival so we have plenty of potential new members and visitors to talk to. If you can do a 4-hour shift, please phone Patty at 695-2397. Volunteers are also needed for planting Royal Palms. For more information, call Greg 695-4593.



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