



August-September 2018

It's been an eventful summer. Much of May and June were taken up negotiating FOF's Master Concession Agreement with the DEP, but Martha and I managed to get away for most of July to sample some of the delights of camping in other state parks as well as in Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks. Too often I'm so caught up in FOF's affairs I don't have time to smell the roses, or in this case the rhododendrons and balsam. Most of us Florida flatlanders get vertigo just crossing a canal bridge, so the change in elevation with one hazy vista after another was particularly rewarding.

It was also humbling to be in an area where I didn't recognize most of the plants. The Smoky Mountains have over 100 species of native trees alone. We even had one walk in Shenandoah with 11 bear encounters in a single day, concentrated no doubt by a bumper crop of high country blueberries. One was a bit too close for comfort. Fortunately, this bear hadn't read the section in the guide book about what happens when you get between a mother and her cubs. The clouds had rolled in, so visibility was poor, and I had wandered off the trail to investigate what looked like an American Chestnut sapling. Although these magnificent trees were nearly all killed off by Chestnut blight by the 1940s, some of their roots are still alive and occasionally gather enough energy to send up some leafy shoots which then succumb to the fungus again. There was a rumbling through the ferns at my feet and there was a cub scrambling towards a tree about 50 feet away. It's mother thankfully was already 20 feet up!



The end of each day was magical; sitting around a crackling wood fire with something yummy bubbling in a cast iron skillet and fireflies competing with errant embers. Often, we'd lure over a few solo campers with the promise of single malt whisky and Martha's cooking to share the day's experiences. Even the wildlife enjoyed it. We had a shoo away a raccoon in the darkness trying to steal the artichoke hearts Martha was about to plop into her paella. Martha quickly learned you can't lay out your ingredients on an unguarded prep table.

Back at the Fakahatchee, the park's contractors were busy throughout the summer on Janes Scenic Drive, hauling in almost 72 hundred tons of lime-rock fill and replacing a total of 57 culvert pipes, so that despite some water filled minor potholes from 14 ½ inches of rain over July and August, the road is in better condition than ever. Amber colored water is roaring through the culverts instead of flowing over the top. Driving up Janes there are now distinct humps at each of the newly replaced culverts and the road is nicely crowned to better shed water. You'll also notice that at Gate 2, where the tram tour turns around, the rocks that prevented vehicle access have been replaced with a smart new green gate and the trail extended to provide a new hiking opportunity. This is the site of a planned 6-mile loop trail that will eventually curl around on to the prairie and come back out lower down on Janes Scenic Drive.

It's a year on from hurricane Irma and if you look closely you'll see that many of the trees downed by the storm are now sporting colorful fungal brackets as evidence that the process of nutrient recycling is well underway. Irma also seems to have stimulated a bumper crop of yellow hog plums and red dahoon holly berries along our trams.

The upper 4 miles of Janes beyond Gate 12 have been deemed a critical wildlife area and are now permanently closed to vehicular traffic. The crater-like washouts are all filled in although there's still a little finishing work to be done on what was the good section to make it even better before the worked is signed-off. Wildlife is returning, and this now forms a wonderful traffic-free bicycling, hiking and birding resource. The gate there has already been ripped off once. It was found with a truck bumper chained to it but immediately replaced. This is shortly due to be replaced again by an even heavier design that if anyone tries to vandalize, won't result in just a bumper left behind, but a rear axle too!

The park's wayfinding project funded through a FOF grant from the Collier Tourist Development Council is well underway. The kits for the 5 new information kiosks are in the Harmon building waiting for the panel design to be finalized before installation later this autumn.

But the big news is of course the Concession. On July 18th the DEP sent out a letter to all the known current commercial operators utilizing the park's resources notifying them that FOF had been selected to manage the provision of all visitor services in the park, in effect to act as air traffic controller. A concession launch meeting was held in the Park Office on the 29th of August attended by 17 commercial representatives and facilitated by Valinda Subic, our District IV Bureau Chief, our Park Manager and 2 Bureau of Operational Services Partnerships Specialists from Tallahassee.



The purpose of concession operations is to provide visitor services that the park would otherwise be unable to offer, thereby enhancing the visitor experience and fulfilling fundamental needs. In so doing it's usually also to generate additional revenue for the Park Service with the money going to Tallahassee. There are two major differences in our contract; (1) the lion's share of the revenue will be retained by us so that after administrative expenses it can be reinvested by FOF directly in the park, its facilities and our conservation and education programs; and (2) it also involves providing the Park Manager a mechanism to regulate access and protect the resource via a permitting system. It isn't our intention to expand our own tour programs, but rather to work with and develop the existing base of excellent commercial operators to meet the growing needs of the public, which will only increase when the new Boardwalk facilities are opened.

At the launch meeting the commercial operators were invited to enter into Independent Subcontractor Agreements with FOF that include activity and location specific operating permits. This is through a four-class permit system with varying annual permit fee and commission levels; Class 'A' for the majority of operators including paddling adventures, bicycle tours, swamp walks, organized hikes etc., Class 'B' aimed mainly at the small van operators who include a Boardwalk stop as just one of several activities in an all-day tour, Class 'C' for special events like the Everglades Ultras, and a Class 'D' for food operations such as a potential future food truck at the expanded boardwalk site.

Nobody likes change, but this was not a shock to the park's commercial operators as they had all been invited through a public Call for Business Plans to submit their own proposals for concessions operations back in November 2017. Generally, the news was received graciously and there were more questions on detail than kick-back. The commercial operators also responded well to our cooperative marketing plans, after all, their success will be our success. After the launch meeting Valinda Subic and the representatives from Tallahassee complimented FOF on how well we were prepared for the launch – saying that we were in better order at this stage than many commercial concessionaires, so special thanks to my other members of the concession team, Francine Stevens, Andrew Tyler and Glen Stacell and to our pro bono legal consul, Mark Slack of Woods, Weidenmiller, Michetti & Rudnick.

In effect from the 1st of November 2018, all commercial operators must have a FOF-issued permit to conduct any activities in the park and will have to display a permit badge on their vehicles evidencing this. However, to ease the transition FOF will not be charging commissions on any tours until January 2019, although the \$2 park entry fee per visitor must still be paid in the interim, and the initial permits will be valid through December 31, 2019. FOF has begun to receive and process permit applications. Full details of our permitting program can be found in the new Concession section of our website, including the PowerPoint handout from the launch meeting.

Finally, on December 7th we will be celebrating groundbreaking for our Boardwalk Expansion Project and the 20th Anniversary of the Friends of Fakahatchee. I hope to see as many of you at there as possible. In the meantime, stay dry and keep your eye on the tropics!

Patrick Higgins

Executive Director's Report

*by Francine Stevens
Executive Director, Friends of Fakahatchee*

One of our most heart breaking life experiences is grieving the loss of someone we care for. Franklin Adams really cared for Nathalian Reed who passed away on the July 11th. Franklin answered my request to indulge the FOF with the story of a friendship between two men born out of mutual environmentalist goals. I am grateful for those who paved the way for us; without their perseverance we might not have the Fakahatchee to protect and enjoy as we do today and will in the future. My sincere thank you to Franklin Adams for sharing his journey with Nat with the FOF; I am sure you will enjoy reading it.

Farewell to Jinny Ball

With sadness in my heart I informed the Board of the Directors that Jinny Ball passed away on August 12th. Jinny became a FOF member in 2004, attended most FOF events, and took on the FOF scrapbook in 2010. She was elected to the Board in 2013 and served as Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Chair from 2014 on. She was also the lady greeting our members at the entrance of our events. Never bringing attention to herself or tooting her own horn, she executed an enormous volume of administrative work in the background. >>>>continued





Jinny was quick-witted, as was often demonstrated at Board meetings when some of us were stuck trying to figure things out...her 30 years as a Cincinnati High school math teacher prepared her for “herding the Board of Directors cats” when necessary, and we all benefitted.

I spent a lot of time with Jinny outside of the Board meetings, hours and hours counting the Iron Ranger donations at the Bank, re-structuring the financial reporting with a CPA and seeking her advice during my presidency. I counted on her to set me straight when my emotions were getting the best of me – she became a friend and confidante.

Jinny was about to complete her sixth year on the Board. Understandably the entire Board misses her for her friendship and sincere devotion to the Friends. Her dedication to us is even more impressive when you know that she also volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and the Immokalee Catholic Charities for migrant workers. Suffice it to say we were extremely lucky that she chose to provide such great service to the FOF.

Remembering Nathaniel “Nat” Reed

by Franklin Adams, Gladesman and Historian

On July 11, 2018 Nathaniel Reed crossed over the river while salmon fishing in Quebec. Nat was just 11 days short of his 85th birthday when he passed. Nat dearly loved to fish and quoted his Mother as saying, “he came into this world casting a fishing rod.” He departed the same way. According to his son Adrian, Nat had just landed a 16 pound salmon and released it. Excited by his fine catch he waded to the river bank, slipped, hit his head and never regained consciousness. Not a bad way to go, I suppose.

Nathaniel is survived by his wife Alita, daughter Lia, sons Adrian and Nathaniel Jr. and five grandchildren. Those of us who knew Nat and worked on various issues with him deeply miss him. We will never forget his friendship and tremendous lifetime environmental accomplishments all over our country but especially in Florida and the Fakahatchee.

Nathaniel Pryor Reed was from Jupiter Island, born into a wealthy family. His conservation contributions are too numerous to mention here; if you would like to know more about his many years of volunteering, his passionate leadership and many environmental issues that have his fingerprints on them, find his 2017 book: *Travels on the Green Highway, An Environmentalist Journey*. His book tells the often entertaining “inside” story of what happened in various environmental battles both in Florida and in Washington.



Nat Reed tours the swamp he helped save with Franklin Adams in 2011. Photo by Jay Staton.

There is a chapter on the saving of the Fakahatchee, and Nat finally meeting Mel Finn and the pivotal day of May 1, 1970 when Nat’s swamp walk led to the assurance that the Fakahatchee would be acquired and protected at last. (there are some photos by our friend Jay Staton).

Nathaniel worked for six Florida governors and two presidents, Nixon and Ford. Nat Reed became the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Interior under Richard Nixon. President Nixon told Reed when he was appointed: “I don’t give a damn about the environment, I have other priorities. I want a brilliant record, better than Kennedy’s and I don’t want to be bothered by you or anyone else.” In 1972 Nixon had been persuaded by “powerful polluters” to veto the Clean Water Act. When Nat learned this he announced his resignation but John Ehrlichman, Nixon’s chief Domestic Advisor, told Reed that Congress would probably override the veto, and Congress did.

Nat stayed on and had a major role in banning DDT and Compound 1080, a poison used for predator control that killed non-target wildlife including wolverines. He convinced Florida Governor Claude Kirk to abandon his support for the Cross Florida Barge Canal and Nixon pulled the plug on it finally. Nat Reed had a major role in stopping the Dade County Jetport in the Big Cypress – this action eventually led to acquisition of what we know today as the Big Cypress National Preserve. His efforts saved Lignumvitae Key from development, helped to protect Biscayne National Park, and of course pushed for the acquisition of the Fakahatchee Strand Swamp.

I was asked in 2011 by the Friends of Fakahatchee if I could get Nat Reed to come over for a visit and be the speaker at our welcome back dinner in Everglades City. It took me awhile to get this very busy man to commit, but as the date came closer Nat became really excited to visit with us. On December 3, 2011 Frank Lund drove Nat over from Hobe Sound and a group of us took him around the swamp that he had helped save. I brought lunch fixins and we crashed at the B/B Camp (aka Fakahatchee Hilton now) and had an opportunity to visit with Nat.

That evening Nat Reed was our guest speaker. He had warned me to keep his introduction short. I did my best but Nat interrupted me very quickly and began to speak in that wonderful commanding voice that was his only. The Friends presented Nat with an appreciation award that evening. Nat always mentioned our work to save the swamp and he was genuinely proud of his role in making it happen.

There is so much more to his life's story. Nat was a wise man, an eloquent spokesman for the wild places, a deep thinker, strategist and a tough fighter for what was right, no matter the issue. To quote Miami Herald columnist and author Carl Hiaasen: "Nat Reed was literally a force of nature." I close with this: I received a card from Nat last August when he was fishing in Maine. The Fakahatchee was on his mind. He wrote about the fight for the swamp and how proud he was to have been a part of the effort with Mel Finn and Ney Landrum and others. His closure touched me deeply. "With Boundless Thanks, Your friend for Life – Nathaniel".

The man was one of a kind. Let us all try our best to follow his example in whatever way we can.
Franklin Adams August 21, 2018



In this film Mike Owen, biologist at Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, interviews historian and long time conservationist Franklin Adams about the Fakahatchee's long and complicated road to protection as the largest state park in Florida. Filmed on the front porch of "The Hilton," Adams gives first-hand accounts of six decades of influential people and protected places. Thanks to Jay Staton for filming this wonderful 52 minute discussion of the history of conservation in South Florida.

You can watch the film at
<https://youtu.be/apuxO5ecBVg>

About Franklin Adams

A native of Miami, Franklin Adams first came to Big Cypress with his father when he was six years old. He's been coming back as often as he can ever since. First as a land surveyor in Big Cypress and Everglades National Park, later in efforts to preserve the Fakahatchee Strand and Big Cypress. He has also served as Collier County Chairman of Friends of the Everglades, conservation representative on the Big Cypress Swamp Oil Advisory Committee, Chair of the Florida Wildlife Federation, and founder of the Florida Wildlife Federation Southwest Florida Office.

News from the Strand

FOF Guided Tour Season on the Horizon

The race is on to get your tickets for the 2018-2019 FOF guided tour program! We've received several calls for the anticipated full moon tram tours. The first Moonlit Tram Tour is scheduled for October 24th, and tickets are now for sale. Please share this news with all your friends.

Tour Tickets Now On Sale at <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/friends-of-fakahatchee-4741210771?ref=eorgbtn>



A Face Lift for Janes Scenic Drive



Park Specialist Mike Dewey wades into the work to upgrade the culverts below Janes Scenic Drive. All photos courtesy of Dino Barone, FAKA-hacker.

We are pleased to report that the contracted project to replace culverts on Janes Scenic Drive was a success; the Park Manager reported that 57 culverts were installed and a three-inch cap layer was laid out on Janes.

Along with this news, the Park Manager informed the Board that Janes Scenic will remain closed from Gate 12 onward to the Picayune Forest border, providing an undisturbed area for hikers and cyclists as well as wildlife. Gate codes are given to land owners for access to their properties. A gate has also been installed at the Picayune Forest border, as vehicle access to the Fakahatchee is no longer lawful from that end.

For the Fearless FAKA-hackers, summer time brings special challenges on a daily basis. Primarily, humidity and our afternoon thunder boomers. Staying on top of hydration and taking necessary breaks especially during the high heat index of mid day is critical. One major blessing this summer, essentially NO mosquitoes. Quite the refreshing break from last seasons swarms.



This summer, keeping West Main and East Main trails open have been one of the primary jobs. On Sunday Sept 9 2018, Ranger Mike Duey, Howard Lubel and Dino Barone drove up east main removing barbed wire we found at two locations on the west side of the tram.



Park Specialist Steven Bass cools off during culvert replacement.

You too can Volunteer at the Fakahatchee!
<http://orchidswamp.org/support/how-to-volunteer/>

Membership News

Save the Date: 20th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon

We are celebrating the Friends of Fakahatchee's 20th Anniversary on Friday, December 7 with a luncheon celebration in Everglades City. (This is in lieu of the traditional FOF Welcome Back dinner.)

Our guests of honor are Director of State Parks Eric Draper and Environmentalist Franklin Adams; we will also honor the FOF founders and all FOF Presidents. A special bulletin will be published in October with more details.



Marya Repko Assumes Membership Role

With the passing of Jinny Ball, Marya Repko resumes the membership responsibilities, a task she performed for numerous years with ease and confidence. Let's not take Marya for granted – she is busy enough volunteering for the Everglades Historical Society and writing her books. On behalf of the Board of Directors and our members, thank you Marya.

Reprint of Fakahatchee History Now Available

Newly reprinted, Marya Repko's fascinating history of the Fakahatchee strand is again available in *A Brief History of the Fakahatchee*.

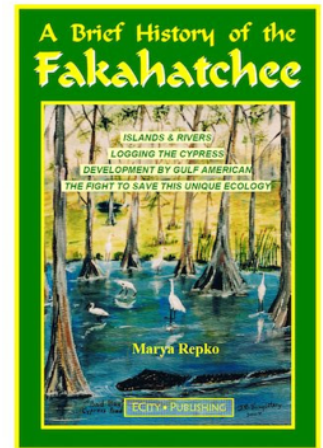
Repko writes about early settlers, logging, attempts at development, and the fight to save this unique ecological area as a preserve. The past come alive through the experiences of people who lived in the area and were involved in its conservation.

One reviewer said, "The author so artfully explained over 100 years of history that I found myself effortlessly reading it straight through."



The 64-page book is illustrated with historical photos and has a long list of references for those who want to dig deeper. It is available for \$10 online from www.ecity-publishing.com. For more information, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905.

Historical photographs depict the stories of the Fakahatchee, including removal of the strand's cypress, revealing the royal palms that had coexisted in the canopy. Photo credit: C009419 - Florida State Archives.



Does your employer have a "Matching Gift" program?

Several of our members have taken advantage of their employer's matching program (General Electric, Exxon Mobil) for donations to not-for-profit organizations by sending us the "matching" form. We do the rest – it's that easy! We have revised our Membership Form with a reminder.

Members make a difference.

Welcome to our new members: Terrence Heaps, Sherri Rebmman, and Richard Reeves. And a special "thank you" to long time members Kit and LaRaw Maran who have upgraded their membership to the Protector level. We now have 18 Lifetime Memberships for a total of 333 members. You are all individually contributing to the mission of the Friends of Fakahatchee. Bravo!

Become a Friend of the Fakahatchee
Visit <http://orchidswamp.org/support/memberships/>

Lifetime Preservers

Bruce & Janet Bunch

Lifetime Protectors

Kit & LaRaw Maran

Lifetime Individual Members

Karen Berkley
Rita Bleasdale
Warner Blow
Elsie Caldwell
Peter Haffenreffer
Don Harmon
Susan Hauze
Patty Huff
James Nici
Wendy Becker Payton
Ken Shapiro
Carol Vartanian

The Ghost Writer – August-September 2018

Lifetime Family Members

Tom & Judy Maish
Noel Nation
Van & Jane Sayler
Glen & Laura Stacell

Business Patrons

North American Canoe Tours
(Ivey House B&B)
Shurr Adventures

Business Benefactor

Everglades Day Safari

Friends of Fakahatchee Board

President – Patrick Higgins
Vice President – Glen Stacell
Secretary – Ken Shapiro
Treasurer – Scott Geltemeyer
Paul Joselyn
Donald Leonard
Tom Maish
Gayle Norton
Andrew Tyler
Stacy Wolfe
Executive Director – Francine Stevens

Annual Fund appeal to build the Pole Barn still open

You can still donate to the Pole Barn Project which will protect the FOF and Park equipment and vehicles. Give via PayPal through our website at <http://orchidswamp.org/>. If you prefer to mail a check, download the 2017 ANNUAL FUND APPEAL FOR POLE BARN form at <http://orchidswamp.org/support/>. Either way, many thanks for your ongoing support of the Park!



Ruggedly beautiful place to bike or hike

The website says that, "the emphasis at Fakahatchee is on the preservation of its natural character" and they've done a fantastic job of that. This is wild Florida at its finest and it's amazing.

– Cabopc, Ft. Myers, Florida



Follow us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/orchidswamp>

Our mailing address is:

Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.
PO Box 35, Everglades City, FL 34139z
Contact the Friends of Fakahatchee at FOF90@hotmail.com or call 239-695-1023.

Miss an issue of the Ghostwriter? Visit the archives at <http://orchidswamp.org/about-fof/the-ghost-writer-archives/>



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.

The Ghost Writer, named after the endangered Ghost Orchid which blooms in the Preserve, is currently edited by Next Steps Collective, LLC, which also manages the [Orchidswamp.org](http://orchidswamp.org) website. Contributions to Ghost Writer that relate directly to the business and purpose of the Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc. are welcome. Please write news@orchidswamp.org, subject line: Ghostwriter.

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