



## Executive Director's Report

by Francine Stevens

Executive Director, Friends of Fakahatchee

### **Not a minute to waste on the 23rd March – two Board meetings were held!**

**The first meeting at 1 PM was the last meeting with then current Board members.** Once all the business was taken care of President Glen Stacell congratulated Ken Shapiro for serving six years on the Board, as well as recognizing his stellar attendance record at Board meetings, including attendance via Skype from countries around the world. A heartfelt thank you was also expressed to outgoing Treasurer Scott Geltmeyer for serving two years on the Board, and his valuable contribution to the FOF financials; I also extend my personal gratitude for his support during my learning curve with QuickBooks. We wish Scott continued success in his new home in Tennessee.



**The second meeting at 2:30 PM was an “organizational” meeting** – the new Board Directors took their seats and the Board elected the Officers. Tom DesFosses, John Kaiser and Phil McGuire were invited to take their seats on the Board. The Board of Directors elected Glen Stacell as President, John Kaiser as Vice President, Phil McGuire as Treasurer and Ken Shapiro as Secretary, wrapping up the rest of the organizational meeting by 3:15 PM. This gave the Directors a bit of a break before moving on to the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic and Annual Members meeting at 4:00 PM by the shores of the Harmon Lake.

The Annual meeting officially opened at 5:00 PM with the formal presentation of the Presidential walking stick to Glen Stacell. This ceremony was followed by announcing the Board of Directors. I must mention that it is much to my regret that I neglected to call Andrew Tyler to join the line-up of Directors; an oversight revealed

to me when I received the picture for the newsletter. Andrew begins his second year on the Board, and is quick to get involved with research and follow-up. We are very fortunate for his committed service to the Board!

After introducing the Board of Directors, the rest of the event was turned over to Park Manager Steve Houseknecht who formally recognized the volunteers' contribution to the Fakahatchee.

Steve introduced his immediate supervisor B. J. Givens who reported that the volunteers recorded over 9,000 hours, declaring it a remarkable achievement for a group of 35 active volunteers.

All agree that Park staff and volunteers did a wonderful job preparing the event site near Harmon Lake, and 74 people enjoyed the spectacular weather and BBQ menu. Thank you to BBQ chef Don Leonard, assisted by B.J. Givens, for keeping the food hot and plentiful for all our guests. And thank you to everyone who brought dishes to share.



Board of Directors and ex-officios: Tom DesFosses, Don Leonard, Patrick Higgins, Phil McGuire, Francine Stevens, Glen Stacell, Dr. John Kaiser, Dr. Paul Joslyn, and Bruce Bunch.





Resident volunteers Don Leonard and Dee Leonard with Glen Stacell.



Park Staff: Assistant Bureau Chief B. J. Givens, Guy DiGiovanni, Steve Houseknecht, Nichole Ellison, Mike Duey, and Steven Bass



Ernie Peterson, Eric and Beata Jadaszewski, Jerry Winters & Signe Backus.



Alyce and Fred Townsend, Eric Bauer and Sam Peters.



Tom DesFosses, Dave Boesche, and Bruce Bunch.



Carla and David Corban with Dino Barone.



**Annual meeting continued...**

A long day came to a close when the sun was setting across the lake, a day rewarded with a sense of pride and accomplishment, it is clear that we are an outstanding CSO because of collective selfless efforts by all, bravo!

*Group photo: Rita Bauer, Jill and Steve Houseknecht, Debbie Kaprelian, Stevens Bass, Guy DiGiovanni, Mike Duey, Dee & Don Leonard, Dino Barone. Steve and Jill's sons.*



## News from the Strand

### 8th Annual Everglades Ultras a great experience

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's race a great experience for all who attended. Just short of 250 runners got an experience of a lifetime running old railroad trams through the swamp and prairie.



*Preparing for the Everglades Ultras: from Steven Bass mowing trams and prairies, to the Fakahackers clearing trails, it takes a team effort.*



*Howard Lubel and Clare Holden crossing through Hole in the Wall shows how the trail can vary from the dry, open prairie.*



*Howard Lubel and Clare Holden set up at Hercules Fist to help runners during the race.*



*The official race sign. Park Manager Steve Houseknecht and Fakahacker Dino Barone on race day. Images from the Everglades Ultra website.*



## Seen in the Strand

### Swamp Walkers wade right in

Dear Francine,

Just wanted to let you know that we had an awesome swamp walk with Patrick Higgins yesterday. He is so charming, funny and of course, a master of all things swamp related! Of course Jim Winger was just as informative and really added to the enjoyment of the walk.

When we got there, we introduced ourselves as FOFs (*as in Friends of Francine*). They said we could come anyway. Thank you for making an extra spot for us. A wonderful experience!

John & Loretta.

P.S. Sorry, I know you see a lot of snakes, but I couldn't resist!



Jonathan and Loretta Hayes, far left and other Swamp Walkers with Master Naturalist guide Patrick Higgins.



### Boardwalk Report: You never know what you'll find!

by Dave Boesche, Master Naturalist guide at the Boardwalk

Well everyone, we had another couple of fun filled boardwalk tours the week of March 4. When I first started with Fakahatchee I was told "you never know what you will find at the boardwalk." So, just let me say, "*you never know what you will find at the boardwalk!*"

On March 6, I had a great group from the Ft Myers area who had all read *The Orchid Thief*. They enjoyed a morning Tram ride, picnic lunch at the main park, then it was off to the boardwalk. When we arrived at around 1:00 PM it was so crowded that folks were parking across the Tamiami Trail in the turn around. We started our tour with the Gumbo Limbo tree which was a real 'what the heck?' moment when the guests found the trunk cooler by 10 to 15 degrees than the ambient air. Gotta love those tropical plants! **Continued >>**





**Boardwalk report continued...**

Earlier in the day our guests had learned that the limestone under our area that runs 2,000 feet deep in places. As we stopped to look at Wild Coffee plants, I pointed out the walkway. It was 'what the heck?' again as they saw that the concrete walkway was actually the top of the limestone layer, right there under their feet. Later that helped explain why some trees were pushed over in the last hurricane.

The Eaglets were not flying about but in the nest doing their wing strength exercises. Mom and Pop were out some place, likely enjoying a little time off from the kids. Speaking of the Eagle area, the guests enjoyed discovering Male Panther scraping/markings right there on the boardwalk railing. When you visit, stop by and take a look – very easy to see.

And then what a treat at the twin sister cypresses. We talked about male/female Cypress trees, age, uses, breeding cycles. Then the question, "...they are so big, they must be very old?" Of course the answer is kinda - sorta - maybe. It's more about location-location-location. They must have the right amount of water at the right time, as well as nutrients, then good weather – combined with at least 500 years! There it is again, 'what the heck?!'



*Ft. Myers group visit organized by Laura Riddle, seen here with Park Biologist Mike Owen after a tram tour and ready to go on their Boardwalk tour.*

As we walked along we met other guests with questions and thoughts. We observed the smart female wasp that let the tree raise her young so she could be out and about. We witnessed several water snakes catching a quick snack of little fish in a puddle or two. At the Gator Pond we did see several gators, great blue heron, black-crowned night-heron, great egret, tricolored heron, black vulture, turkey vulture, several hawks passing by in a hurry and not to mention a frog and a turtle.

I again worked (actually enjoyed and played is more correct) the boardwalk on Saturday, March 9, 2019 – the same day as the Ultra Marathon. Before I even exited my car, a Grandmother and Granddaughter arrived to visit. The missing generations were a Son/Dad participating in the 30K Race. What a pleasant day! We saw and discussed the aforementioned key attractions, but I encountered a little difficulty.

Let me ask you – can you remember the TV show, "are you smarter than a 5th grader?" In this case, her name was 'Meeko' (code named actually), and yes, a 5th grader; Air Force reared, mostly in Hawaii (some kids get a tough life). Well Meeko started me off easy, quiet,

shy, taking it all in and putting it in her memory bank. She enjoyed the Cabbage Palm, the state of Florida tree which of course isn't a tree at all. A little later the Wild coffee was discussed and we all agreed that the Velvetleaf Wild Coffee could be better named De-Café. When we got to the Gator Pond, Meeko was comfortable and enjoyed identifying plants and animals before I did. She really enjoyed my laser pointer so I loaned her my spare. So yes, the 5th grader was pointing out snakes, Anhinga in and out of the water, other plants – well I couldn't keep up! They needed to get back to the races so we parted after I gave her a orange toy snake to match her sox. She couldn't wait to surprise her dad with it! Stay tuned because I feel this young lady will one day be a Super Star.

I enjoyed several more hours meeting our guests. One special guest was a older father, pushing a wheel/medical chair with his adult daughter on board. They sat and enjoyed the peace and tranquility of the gator pond. The birds coming and going, the fish splashing, the slight breeze, the sounds of nature and all the while holding her hand. What a picture of love.

*Yes, "you never know what you might find" right here at our boardwalk!*

## Membership News

### Another Photogenic Swamp Walk!



New member Evelyn Garcia enjoyed a swamp walk with Park Biologist Mike Owen on March 2nd and shared these images of the beauty of the strand above left, and a dingle star orchid in bloom above right.

### Celebrate in Historic Everglades City

Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 27 when Everglades City will receive official recognition for being named a Trail Town by the Office of Greenways & Trails. Eric Draper, Director of the Florida Parks Service, will make the presentation to Mayor Howie Grimm on the steps of Everglades City Hall at 11:00 a.m. Trail Towns promote healthy lifestyles by providing goods and services to trail users and Everglades City is the first one south of Lake Okeechobee.

That day is also the 21st Birthday of the [Museum of the Everglades](http://www.evergladesmuseum.org) and there will be antique cars, Laundry Cart Races, a Walking Tour of historic buildings, Dixie Land Band music, arts & crafts, and lunch before the Birthday Cake is served. It also is the 91st Anniversary of the Opening of the Tamiami Trail which made southwest Florida accessible.



Everyone in Collier County and further afield should come out to celebrate in Barron Collier's first county seat, so save the date! For information, see [www.evergladeshistorical.org](http://www.evergladeshistorical.org) or call (239) 252-5026.

## 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. Please visit <http://orchidswamp.org/support/memberships/>

## Annual Fund appeal to build the Pole Barn continues

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 2018 ANNUAL FUND APPEAL FOR POLE BARN form at <http://orchidswamp.org/support/>. Either way, many thanks for your ongoing support of the Park!



If you haven’t yet opened your free AmazonSmile account, please take a few minutes to do so. Visit [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), then choose the Friends of

Fakahatchee as your charity to receive the donations from your purchases. To get there quicker, go to <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-3511352> which is our direct link. This works for your shopping all year round, and when more FOF members join in the donation parade, we’ll see more money for our Park. Thank you!

## Great Boardwalk!



“We were unable to do the tram tour, but our walk down the boardwalk was great. We saw gators, snakes, eagles, herons and lots of other birds in a postcard pretty swamp setting. The boardwalk is longer than most, shaded, and in good shape.”

– darwinmoore, Houston

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

## Members make a difference.

Welcome to new members Susan Anberg, Naples FL; Alan Coulter, Vermont; Elizabeth Davis, Key West FL; Rebecca Falkenberry, St Petersburg FL; Doug & Gisela Drysdale, Wisconsin; Evelyn Garcia, Miami Gardens FL; Robert Luckay, Ohio; Anna Madrona, Nokomis FL; Robert McBride, Miramar FL; Holly Puterbaugh, Vermont; James Schnell, New Jersey; Carol Schuller, Oregon; Theresa Fabiano-Schuhmacher, Mt. Pleasant MI; Ken Gaul, Naples FL; Armando Sanchez-Aballi, Tampa FL; JB & Loren Wright, Goodland FL; and Key Wyman, Glen NM. We now have 355 members.

*Thanks to John Elting for transitioning to a Lifetime member!*

## Thank you to our Lifetime Members.

### Lifetime Preservers

Bruce & Janet Bunch

### Lifetime Protectors

Kit & La Raw Maran

### Lifetime Family Members

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

### Lifetime Individual Members

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





Stay up to date with what's seen in the Strand on our FOF Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/orchidswamp>

#### Friends of Fakahatchee Board

President – Glen Stacell  
Vice President – John Kaiser  
Treasurer – Phil Mc Guire  
Tom DesFosses  
Paul Joslyn  
Donald Leonard  
Tom Maish  
Andrew Tyler

Ex-Officio  
Bruce Bunch  
Dennis Giardina  
Patrick Higgins  
Ken Shapiro (Secretary)  
Francine Stevens (Executive Director)

Contact the Friends of Fakahatchee at  
[FOF\\_90@hotmail.com](mailto:FOF_90@hotmail.com) or call 239-695-1023.



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](mailto:news@orchidswamp.org), subject line: Ghostwriter.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR THE FRIENDS OF FAKAHATCHEE, A FLORIDA-BASED NONPROFIT CORPORATION (REGISTRATION NO. CH9223), MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE OR VISITING THEIR WEBSITE HERE (<https://csapp.800helpfla.com/>)

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

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