



The Ghost Writer

Newsletter of the Friends of Fakahatchee

The Ghost Writer – February 2020

Save the Date!

*Annual Members Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Picnic -
Sat, March 21, 4:00PM*

Once again we are combining these two events. Join us on the shores of Lake Harmon; there is no charge to attend. A special bulletin will be sent first week of March with instructions on how to make your reservation.



President and Executive Director's Letter



We are pleased to announce [Shurr Adventures, Inc.](https://www.shurradventures.com/) (<https://www.shurradventures.com/>) as the latest commercial company to hold a permit to conduct paddling tours on the East River, as well as hikes on park trails and tours at the Boardwalk. In the near future we will add Shurr Adventures on our website page [Adventure Store](https://orchidswamp.org/adventure-store/) (<https://orchidswamp.org/adventure-store/>).

At this time of the year we are, as they say, "in the thick of it." The visitation at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk is at its peak and will continue to be so thru March. Driving by the Boardwalk and seeing numerous cars haphazardly parked reminds us how much we need the new parking site to accommodate visitors safely.

Volunteers at the Janes Scenic visitor center tell us they are very busy orienting visitors, although many visitors still drive by without stopping to pay the Park entrance fee. The FOF phone line is ringing, folks are asking what they can do in the Fakahatchee, and we have been busy organizing group tours at the Boardwalk and for the Ghost Rider Tram Tours. Park staff and volunteers are increasingly busy preparing for the Everglades Ultra Marathon on the weekend of March 14th. More details about this event are provided further on in the newsletter.

We close this letter by thanking Board of Director Andrew Tyler who is bringing to our attention a major discovery published in a scientific journal about pollination of the famous Ghost Orchid.

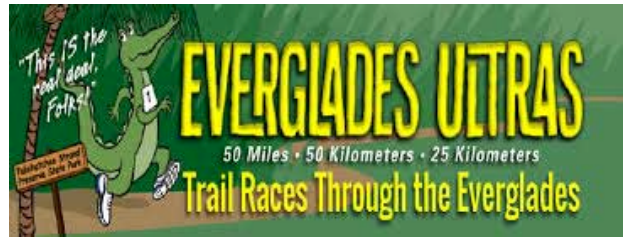
Andrew writes "Recently we saw the publication of an academic paper regarding the pollination of the Ghost Orchid. For many years the mechanism of Ghost Orchid pollination has been a mystery. The orchid has a very long nectar tube, and the assumption has long been that only an insect with a 'tongue' sufficiently long to reach the base of the nectar would be capable of pollinating the plant. In Florida that would imply the essential involvement of sphinx moths. A collaboration among a group of expert photographers and biologists, including our own Park Biologist, Mike Owen, working in The Fakahatchee, The Florida Panther Refuge and Corkscrew Swamp, have unraveled some of the mysteries of the process." They found that a variety of sphinx moth species, rather than a single giant member of the family, are potential pollinators.

If you're looking for a good detective story revealed by a group of all-star sleuths <https://corkscrew.audubon.org/news/scientific-reports-publishes-super-ghost-orchid-paper>. An excellent video from National Geographic allows you to [watch pollination of ghost orchids in action](https://bit.ly/2PsmmuD). (<https://bit.ly/2PsmmuD>) The [actual scientific report](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-49387-4) (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-49387-4>), is also quite interesting.

– Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens

9th Annual Everglades Ultras on Saturday, March 14

The 50 mile race start is at 6:30am; cut-off is 9:00pm. The 50 kilometer race begins at 7:45am, with cut-off at 7:45pm. The 25 kilometer race begins at 9:00am with a 7:00pm finish cut-off time. A required orientation will be presented before each race at the starting line, with optional packet pick-up, orientation and park history with the Fakahatchee Manager on Friday at 5:00pm. See <https://www.evergladesultras.com/>



Call Park Service Specialist Mike Duey at 239.682.6978 if you are interested in volunteer opportunities for this event.

Tickets for FOF Tours are still available

Tickets for the ever popular FOF Tours are selling fast – *Although ALL Moonlit Tours are sold out*, there are still opportunities for Swamp Walks and Tram Tours. Visit our online [Adventure Store](http://orchidswamp.org/adventure-store/) (<http://orchidswamp.org/adventure-store/>) to purchase yours while there are still dates to choose from.



News from the Strand

Gate 18 Cycle-and-Hike is Attainable and Unique

by Debra Taylor



Members of the SW Alligator Amblers Chapter of the Florida Trail Association at the Gate 18 Trail in the heart of the Fakahatchee.

For the especially active, there is an exciting option in the Fakahatchee for a bike and hike day outing. Best yet, this route explores the unique Gate 18 hiking trail. To start your outing, stop at the Copeland Drive Ranger Station Visitor Center to pay the park entrance fee, check out the information kiosk, pick up a map, and chat with knowledgeable Visitor Center volunteers. Then turn onto Janes Scenic Drive to continue west for 6 miles to Gate 12 where you will park next to native Royal Palms.

Get ready to do a bit of cycling while reflecting on the interesting things that you have already observed along the way. Visitors typically walk or cycle out East Main Tram to the cabin (aka Fakahatchee Hilton) and back which is a wonderful 4 mile out and back option. Today however, you are cycling to Gate 18.

The Gate 18 Trail is unique in that it is not a tram trail.

Created back in 2009, members of the SW Alligator Amblers Chapter of the Florida Trail Association worked with Park Manager Steve Houseknecht to establish a walking path in the heart of the Fakahatchee.

continued >>>

The Gate 18 Trail allows people to walk through diverse habitats and to have the option to loop back to Janes in various ways, or to return the way they came after it intersects with Gate 16 Mud Tram. It is a 1.5-mile link trail or a 3.0 mile out and back from Janes. This is what you are doing today on your first 'exploration' outing.

This is an excerpt from the beginning of a new [Trails and Trams](https://orchidswamp.org/explore-gate-18-hiking-biking/) article, which you can read in its entirety at <https://orchidswamp.org/explore-gate-18-hiking-biking/>

Debra Taylor is a Friends of Fakahatchee member and volunteer, and a member of the SW Alligator Amblers Chapter of the Florida Trail Association.

Members of the SW Alligator Amblers Chapter of the Florida Trail Association at the Visitors Center.



You can schedule your own private swamp walk



A Friends of Fakahatchee (FOF) private tour can be the highlight of the season for your community or organization. To arrange an exclusive private swamp walk, tram tour or board walk tour for your group, please email the FOF Executive Director, Francine Stevens at FOF_90@hotmail.com.

Plan to attend Annual Meeting and Picnic

The FOF Volunteer Appreciation Picnic and Annual Members meeting will be held together on Saturday, March 21, starting at 4 PM, on the shores of Lake Harmon near the entrance of the Park, west of Janes Scenic Drive. A special bulletin will be sent first week of March for everyone to make their reservation. This event is free of charge.



Seen in the Strand

Views from the Boardwalk

By Dave Boesche

Yup, I spent most of today at my Boardwalk with several of my animal friends. I didn't see my girlfriend gator at the pond but saw my walkway gator friend with 2 of her babies on her back.

Mr & Mrs Bald Eagle were out and about and there was some discussion back and forth between them. Seems she stayed home last night with the chicks during the rain. He came home this morning dry as a desert breeze.

Mr & Mrs Black Crowned Night Heron were showing off the new kid, kinda ugly but a good flyer. Mr & Mrs Red Shoulder Hawk #1, were loud and nasty talking to Mr & Mrs Red Shoulder Hawk #2. Who knows what that is all about? Hawks will be hawks!

Mr Big Blue Heron and Mr Great White Egret were having a fish lunch today and planning their plumage for breeding season, still up in the air on details. One Anhinga was at peace, drying and grooming his feathers, when another stopped in to visit. Very short visit with a noisy departure. On the walk out I came across a group of college age guests. Very nice and they found not 1, not 2, but yes 3 water snakes in a puddle from a tree root ball.

Lastly a barred owl was calling to a friend to come over and play cards at his hollow tree. The answer was short and sweet from far off to the west. She replied she had other plans and didn't give a hoot about his hollow tree!

So that is about all from me today, at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. Mr Panther now has 10 markings showing his ownership. Some people have a lot of nerve.

Dave B.



Brave swamp walker expresses her gratitude

Francine,

Great tour yesterday! I really enjoyed the SwampWalk, Sam Peters was very knowledgeable. Much gratitude to you and all the volunteers at Friends of the Fakahatchee for creating this experience. I have shared with many of my friends not as brave to walk the swamp about all your other trips. Hopefully, they will sign up!

*Cheers,
Margaux*



You too can volunteer! See how.
Visit <https://orchidswamp.org/support/how-to-volunteer/>

Membership News

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.



If you haven’t yet opened your free AmazonSmile account, please take a few minutes to do so. Go to smile.amazon.com, then choose the Friends of Fakahatchee as your charity to receive the donations from your purchases. 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!



You can now donate to FOF via your Fidelity Investment account with a Charitable program called the Fidelity Giving Marketplace, the following link will provide you with more information.

https://www.fidelitycharitable.org/?immid=EML_427_1

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



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 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.

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/>.

Our mailing address is:

Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc. PO Box 35
Everglades City, FL 34139

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

Members make a difference.

Welcome to new members:

Paul & Eileen Arsenault, Naples FL; David Bray Miami FL; Margaret Hepburn, Ocean View Delaware; Kathleen Kuhlman, NY, NY; Jean McCollom, Naples FL; John McConomy, Naples FL; Melagras Perez Distel, Marco Island FL; Richard Salter, Ft Lauderdale FL. Membership now totals 339.

Thanks to our Lifetime members:

Lifetime Preservers	Lifetime Individual Members
Bruce & Janet Bunch	Karen J. Berkley
Lifetime Protectors	Rita Bleasdale
Kit & La Raw Maran	Warner Blow
	Elsie Caldwell
Lifetime Family Members	John Elting
John and Pauly Kaiser	Peter Haffenreffer
Tom & Judy Maish	Don Harmon
Noel Nation	Susan Hauze
Van & Jane Sayler	Terry Heap
Glen & Laura Stacell	Patty Huff
	James Nici
	Wendy Becker Payton
	Ken Shapiro
	John Spengler
	Carol Vartanian

Friends of Fakahatchee Board

President – Glen Stacell
Vice President – John Kaiser
Treasurer – Phil McGuire
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 or call 239-695-1023.