



## President and Executive Director's Letter



Henry Ford said "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

Henry Ford has nothing to do with our Friends organization, but his quote rings true to the success of the *Five Faces of Fakahatchee* fundraiser at Paul Arsenault's Gallery on January 16. Even under the capable leadership of Tom Maish, Chair of the Boardwalk Expansion Project, it took several months of collective effort to plan the event.

We first want to thank Paul and Eileen Arsenault for their generous offer to facilitate the fundraiser at their Banyan Gallery. Of course we thank Paul for painting five original oil

paintings, all created while he was knee deep in the Fakahatchee. Paul titled one painting "Boardwalk Reflection" and it was auctioned off at the event with 100% of the auction price donated to the Friends (shown at right). The four other paintings are on sale for a couple more weeks and 40% will be donated to the Friends.

Director of Florida State Parks Eric Draper came down from Tallahassee to personally help the Friends honor Lavern Gaynor Norris, who was the focus of our attention for the evening. It was Board Director Andrew Tyler's excellent PowerPoint presentation, a result of hours of research, who drove the point home that it was Lavern's father, Lester Norris who saved a tract of land from logging, a tract of land we know to be the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. Without his quick action there would not be a Boardwalk - visited by over 80,000 people annually - a Boardwalk now destined for bigger things with the upcoming Boardwalk Expansion project.

We owe a very special thank you to Ray Carroll, who auctioned off a weekend at his Fakahatchee camp. His generosity, combined with Paul's painting, the donation from the Dellora Norris Foundation, and donations from everyone who attended the Gala, allowed us to raise nearly \$20,000.00!



We close this letter by thanking Nicole Gordon, Vice President Business Development Officer at First Florida Integrity Bank for sponsoring the event, FOF Vice President John Kaiser and his wife Polly for funding the beverages and serving seventy guests visiting the bar, and lastly a thank you to Photographers Jay Staton and Rita Bauer for all the beautiful pictures we know you will enjoy.

– Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens



## Photos from Five Faces of Fakahatchee Gala



Left: Cindy Carroll with brother Ray Carroll and his wife Pat, who will host the weekend camping in the Fakahatchee. Right: Long time friends reunite - Franklin Adams, Eric Draper, Paul Arsenault.



Left: Hosts Eileen and Paul Arsenault. Right: Park Manager Steve Houseknecht, FOF President Glen Stacell and Florida State Parks Director Eric Draper.



Left: Thank you to Pauline and John Kaiser for funding the liquid refreshments! Right: Lavern Norris Gaynor, whose father Lester Norris saved a tract of land from logging which we now call the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk







Left: Tom Maish, Chair of Boardwalk Expansion Project, opening the event. Right: Judy Maish and Dee Leonard at the registration table.



Left: Franklin Adams and Park Manager Steve Houseknecht. Right: Honoree Lavern Gaynor Norris chatting with Board Director Andrew Tyler.



Left: Highest bidder for Fakahatchee camping, John Passidomo with daughter Francesca. Right: Cindy Carroll, highest bidder for painting, "Boardwalk Reflection." Congratulations and thank you!

Photos by Jay Staton and Rita Bauer



## Naples Daily News reviews Gala

This lovely write-up includes a slide show of even more photos from the evening. You can [view the article online](#) or you can [download a PDF](#) of the article.



## Date set for Annual Meeting and Picnic

The FOF Volunteer Appreciation Picnic and Annual Members meeting will both be held on Saturday, March 21, starting at 4 PM. Watch your email for a special bulletin with more details.



## Tickets for several 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 many opportunities for Swamp Walks and Tram Tours. Visit our online [Adventure Store](#) to purchase yours while there are still many dates to choose from.



## News from the Strand



### Some Enchanted Swamp Walk

Sierra Club recently published a wonderful article about the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. It documents the author's Swamp Walk and also provides information about the history of the Park. Written by Artis Henderson, in collaboration with Patrick Higgins, it includes photos by Patrick Higgins. You can read it [here](https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/some-enchanted-swamp-walk-fakahatchee-strand-preserve-trailhead). URL is <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/some-enchanted-swamp-walk-fakahatchee-strand-preserve-trailhead>

## Volunteers Spruce up Visitor Center Garden



Garden workers pose in front of the Visitor Center with shovels and rakes. Left to right: Ernie, Eric Bauer, Dee Leonard, Signe Backus and Jerry Winters. Photo by Rita Bauer.

You can register as a volunteer! Please call Park Services Specialist Mike Duey at the Park Office at 239-695-4593 or email him at [michael.duey@FloridaDEP.gov](mailto:michael.duey@FloridaDEP.gov).

**You too can volunteer your time and talents!**  
**See how.**  
<http://orchidswamp.org/support/how-to-volunteer/>

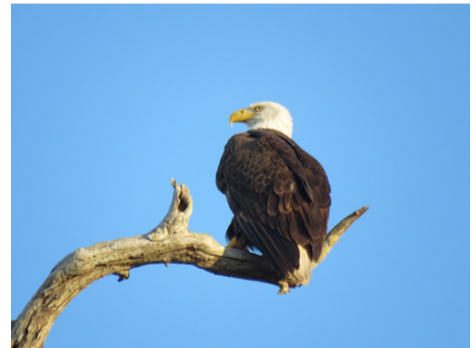
## Views from the Boardwalk

By Dave Boesche

Off we go to the Bald Eagle nest! Sure enough, one adult was out on a tree branch and the other was silhouetted through the tree leaves. Very nice indeed.

There were lots of bird sounds, but it was hard to see them – too fast and too far away. But, thank heavens for little kids! They are not programmed to see only what they have seen before like we adults. So the kids showed me two different woodpeckers, one pileated and two red-headed. Beautiful birds!

A guest walkingby stopped to ask me to identify a bird picture. Well, it was a very nice shot of a barred owl. We talked about their keen night vision, silent flight and why ambient light at night can be a problem. The kids thought their bedroom night light would be ok.



By now we arrived close to the Gator Pond, and another group of guests pointed out an alligator to the right of the boardwalk, close to the fallen tree's root ball. I've never seen one there before. This would prove to be the day's entertainment later. At about the same time the kids and I saw something right behind the alligator. There was an adult great blue heron! Likely 15 ft. from us, just standing there in the mottled shade, blending into the setting. That beautiful creature spent most of the day with me in awe.



Within a very few minutes the gator was gone, but we watched the water get stirred up. We could follow her and just knew she was right there (note: I recognized this alligator from last year and knew it was her). Yup, up popped her head, crunching a smallish fish, then down the hatch. What a show, not four feet away! Let's see Disney beat that! This event went on the entire day. We even had a black water snake visit for several hours.

By the way, it appears the panther scrapes are growing!  
*Dave B.*

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## It's a great time to schedule your 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](mailto:FOF_90@hotmail.com).





## Seen in the Strand

### Legislator Spencer Roach visits the Strand

House Representative Spencer Roach (District 79), recently brought his staff with him for a Swamp Walk in the Fakahatchee. The group was accompanied by Park Manager Steve Houseknecht, Park Biologist Mike Owen, and Volunteers Dee and Don Leonard. A good time was had by all!



*House Representative Spencer Roach with his staff (Rep. Roach is fourth from left).*



*Left: Volunteers Don and Dee Leonard. Right: Park Biologist Mike Owen, with Representative Roach and Staff, Park Manager Steve Houseknecht, and Volunteer Dee Leonard.*



## Hootyhoo! Pictures from a memorable swamp tromp!



*A group from the Rookery Bay Nature Festival led by Mike Owen and assisted by volunteers Eric and Rita Bauer. All photos by Rita Bauer.*



*Encouragement & tips turned the group from apprehensive beginners to appreciative swamp hikers.*

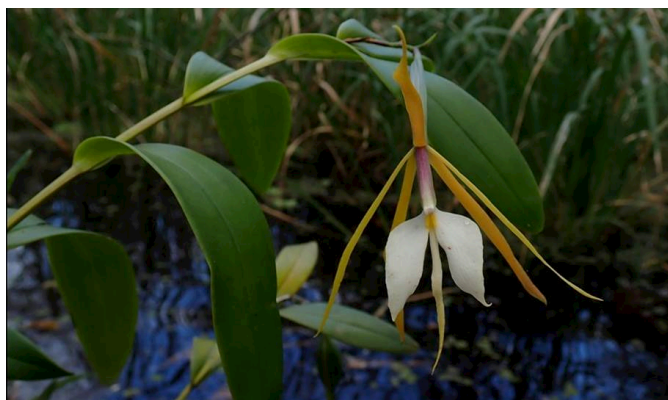


*"Thanks so much for taking & sharing these memorable pictures with us!! It was one of the coolest hikes I have ever taken & these photos will help me always remember it. Your encouragement & tips turned me from an apprehensive beginner into an appreciative swamp hiker. Thanks also to you & your husband for being such knowledgeable, dedicated volunteers. Hope that our paths cross again."*

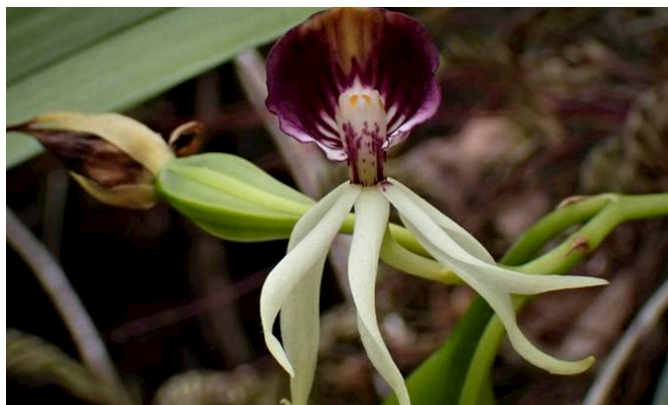
*– Cathy McClellan (the short one who got wet up to the waist, above, right)*



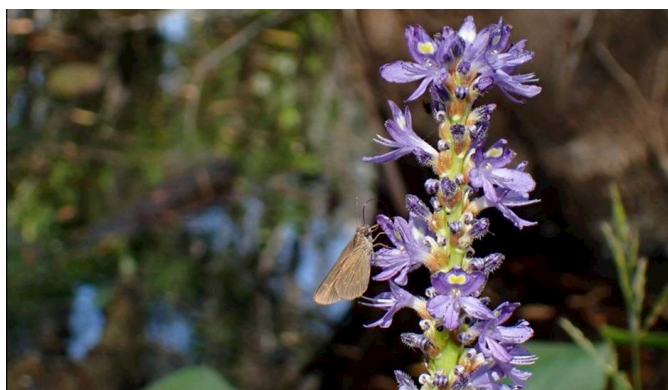
## Orchids – A day in the Fakahatchee



*Orchids are blooming in the Fakahatchee Strand. All photos by Rita Bauer.*



*Get out there, look for orchids, take your own photo memories.*



*Sometimes the lichens are as colorful as the orchids.*



## Park Biologist Swamp Walk



Thank goodness volunteer Debra Taylor joined us to help keep the group together and entertained. Park Biologist Mike Owen was in great form and it was a great day. Photo by Rita Bauer.

## Swamp buddies – it was a deep walk this day!



Eric Bauer with Gunnar and Cathren, visitors from Vienna, Austria; FOF Volunteers Theresa and Tony, with Shelly and Christina Ariano (sister and niece).

## Lucky couple sees red rat/corn snake



Gunnar and Cathren visiting from Vienna Austria, and the lady in lime green T-shirt (Rita Bauer) were lucky to see this red rat/corn snake. These snakes are seen only once or twice a year. Photos by Rita Bauer

## December - January Sightings Reported at Visitors Office

20-Dec	2 Cooters 1.8 miles, 2 gray squirrels mile 2, small alligator
21-Dec	Gate 12 White Pelicans flying over; vis center 2 Red Shouldered Hawks, 3 Yellow bellied woodpeckers;
	Gate 2 baby alligator, Gate 7 adult alligator, yellow rat snake; at Boardwalk Water snake, Cottonmouth, alligators, herons, eagles
24-Dec	small alligator 3.4 mi; dee, hawks zebra longwing butterfly mile 1
26-Dec	2 large alligators
27-Dec	2 Deer mile 1; alligator mile 3
28-Dec	Gate 7 large alligator; mile 1.5 Doe & fawn; mile 2 Barred owl
29-Dec	2.8 mi 3 Everglades mink; Gate 7 Bobcat, Barred owl, Red Shouldered hawk, Anhinga, Heron, Julia butterflies
30-Dec	Boardwalk: Eagle near nest, pair osprey on nest; sulphur butterfly at VC; Cottonmouth on road
31-Dec	Boardwalk: Eagle near nest, 2 eaglets - one on nest, 4 pileated woodpeckers across from eagles



4-Jan	Red rat snake on road, Bobcat sitting on road ~ 1.8 miles; King Rails 1 mile; Black bear Gate 3
7-Jan	Barred owl; Panther ~ 1.7 miles; 3 Deer Gate 15 trail
8-Jan	1.8 miles: water snake, Green Heron, Little blue heron; Red shouldered hawks in prairie, Great Blue heron in prairie
9-Jan	1.8 miles: 3 turtles, small alligator, Kingfisher, 2 snakes, 2 Barred owls, 2 Deer
10-Jan	1.8 miles: small alligator, blue gray gnat catcher, downy woodpecker, Flicker woodpecker; Vultures eating catfish
13-Jan	Everglades mink 3.8 miles;
14-Jan	Panther ran across road 1.5 miles; Everglades mink
15-Jan	Turtle
19-Jan	Boardwalk: Eagle on nest, female alligator with baby on its back in canal
20-Jan	Red shouldered hawk with fledgling, barred owl gate 15
21-Jan	Deer; 3 Zebra longwing butterflies; Bobcat & 5 deer at Fakahatchee Hilton
25-Jan	Barred owl
26-Jan	Diamond back rattlesnake 10miles; Painted bunting, turtle; Box turtle ~ 2 miles; Rat snake sunning East Main trail; Deer West Main
27-Jan	Many warblers Jones Grade
28-Jan	Boardwalk: Osprey on nest; Red Start in tree; Alligator, 2 Black crowned night herons, Green heron at pond

## 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. Click on the amazonsmile logo, 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!

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

## Members make a difference.

### Welcome to new members:

Margaux Biernart of Naples FL was the first new member in 2020! Diane Augustus, Naples FL; Janet Bowers, Plant City FL; Edward Caplin, Wynnewood PA; Golda Rae Gillaspie, Naples FL; Laura Hardin, Brooksville FL; Bill Schutz, Fort Myers FL; Walter Wallenstein, Davie FL. Membership now totals 327.

### Thanks to our Lifetime members:

#### Lifetime Preservers

Bruce & Janet Bunch

#### Lifetime Protectors

Kit & La Raw Maran

#### Lifetime Family

##### Members

John and Pauly Kaiser

Tom & Judy Maish

Noel Nation

Van & Jane Sayler

Glen & Laura Stacell

#### Lifetime Individual

##### Members

Karen J. Berkley

Rita Bleasdale

Warner Blow

Elsie Caldwell

John Elting

Peter Haffenreffer

Don Harmon

Susan Hauze

Terry Heap

Patty Huff

James Nici

Wendy Becker Payton

Ken Shapiro

John Spengler

Carol Vartanian





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](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>

#### 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](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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