



For updates on the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, please visit the [website](https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park) at <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park>

## President and Executive Director's Letter

It will not surprise our members that much to our regret we will not hold our Welcome Back Luncheon in December. We will miss seeing everyone and sharing our summer adventures and plans for the season.

Plans for the Friends Tour season are limited this year due to the pandemic. We will conduct tram tours at reduced capacity –10 guests instead of 20 – and only twice a month starting January 2021 up to the first week of April. Moon tours will be conducted for the first four months of 2021. We are not scheduling swamp walks, but requests will be considered on a case to case basis.



In mid-October it was announced that the Boardwalk would re-open and Park staff was in the process of power washing. The Boardwalk is beautiful, rejuvenated and in good shape, although visitation at the Boardwalk is sparse. Volunteer Master Naturalist Dave Boesche made a bee line to the Boardwalk and spent a couple of days at the Chickee Hut greeting and informing visitors while keeping everyone at a distance. One visitor was so delighted that Dave spent some time with him, he later made a donation to the Friends including a thank you note for him.

Collier County issued the permits for the installation of four Wayfinding kiosks at distinct locations in the Park. The kiosks will inform visitors with maps, location-relevant facts, and history and will be in place by end of February, 2021.

The Board of Directors continues to manage the Friends business despite the unrelenting pandemic. Strangely, instead of having less to do we are busier than expected. Dealing with difficult situations requires shifting gears at every turn - and there are many turns. Fortunately our Board of Directors are tenacious, and we appreciate their dedication and demonstration that patience is truly a virtue!

In closing we thank Bod Becker, Director of the Everglades Ultra Marathon who donated \$4,000. We greatly appreciate his generosity and everyone's support continues to encourage us to forge ahead during these uncertain times.

*With very best wishes for the Holiday Season,*

*Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens*

## News from the Strand

### Tickets for FOF Tours on sale now

Tickets for the popular FOF Tours are now on sale! Visit our [online Adventure Store](#) to purchase yours while there are still many dates available.

*Remember, Tour tickets make great gifts!*



### ***Don't Feed the Wildlife!***

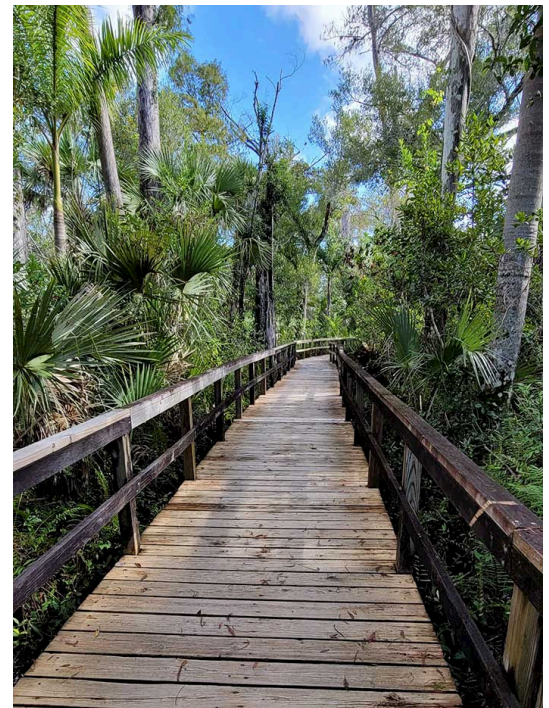
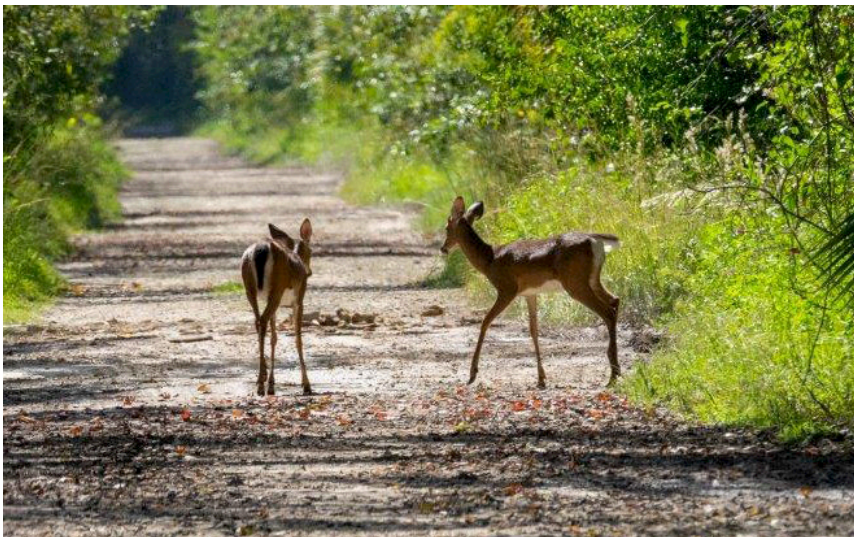
On East Main trail near the historic cabin, alligators demonstrating aggressive behavior had to be removed by a licensed contractor paid by Fish And Wildlife Conservation. Such behavior indicates that they have been fed by visitors. Park staff installed a sign to remind visitors it is illegal to feed wildlife.

*Photo by Park Services Specialist Mike Duey*

## Seen in the Strand

### Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk Reopens

*FOF Treasurer Phil McGuire had a fabulous day at the Boardwalk using his new camera lens to capture these beautiful images. All photos by Phil McGuire*



*On his first visit to the Boardwalk when it was re-opened in October, FOF Treasurer Phil McGuire said it was nice to get back to the Boardwalk and to find it all cleaned up for visitors. He also captured deer frolicking on Janes Scenic Drive.*

More Fakahatchee images from FOF Treasurer Phil McGuire.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - photos by Phil McGuire



Palm Warbler



Red-bellied Woodpecker

## Boardwalk Mystery Solved

In 2019, Dick and Edit Hughes found a tuft of fur in a damaged portion of the Boardwalk. Dave Boesche was instrumental in getting the sample analyzed, and that little tuft led to quite an investigation for Indiana University Southeast student, Kaycee Ranney. The interesting story was recently published on the IU SE website, and it's well worth a few minutes of your time to read (even if they did get the Boardwalk name wrong). Visit <https://now.ius.edu/2020/10/sustainability-student-kaycee-ranney-helps-solve-florida-mystery/>



## Boardwalk Report

By Dave Boesche

Great News!! The Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk is again open and ready for your visits with just a few changes and cautions. All visitors are urged to follow Covid-19 guidelines for everyone's safety. You will find me at the Chickee Hut, with pamphlets, information and even several show-and-tell items.

Here is a summary of my last two days at the Chickee Hut, November 12 and 19. After several days of rain, the water was up on the path leading to the boardwalk on the 12th. Just enough to leave a record of my fun day on the black floor mats in my car! There was water the entire length of the boardwalk, but fortunately never any on the boardwalk. I did startle some large tilapia that were swimming and foraging in and among the plants. It reminded me of some of the Amazon adventures I've seen on documentaries. No critters at the gator hole that day for me to document.



I got a nice surprise visit from Matthew Kruse, Park Manager at Collier-Seminole State Park. We were sharing experiences back and forth when he brought up a question about the female gator, who was parked on the path sunning and taking a lovely nap. (She has done this activity over the past several years which thrills many of our guests.) We both noticed she had several nasty wounds on her legs and neck from an encounter with another gator. Mr Kruse called his State Biologist for an opinion, and it was decided to let her be for now, with me keeping them posted on her healing. I am pleased to let everyone know, that within just a week's time her wounds were closed, healing in progress, and looking good again.

I had only 15 guests on the 12th, but it often looked like rain (oops - liquid sunshine!). Coming back Nov 19th I saw many more creatures and had 39 guests! Must have been the perfect weather.

The water was no longer on the path, my female gator friend was cruising slowly up and down the waterway, and a resident anhinga was perched close to the boardwalk preening. I heard several birds requesting information from their feathered friends. There was a hawk, several osprey, and an occasional eagle calling. Several of our guests also reported spotting these creatures, as well as a pileated woodpecker, two gators in the gator pond, and one "long, fast, black snake." I have seen a Florida black racer around there several times in the last year or so. On the plant side there is a wild coffee just at the South end of the Chickee - its maturing berries would make a great photo. Several of the maple trees are a very attractive red now, while others are already leafless. The contrast would also make a good picture.

The female gator was swimming and floating, doing her water aerobics, from around 9AM when I got there until shortly after noon. Then she had a nice mid-day nap on the path in the sun. Just for fun I used my laser temperature gun to do a little elementary science. (Most of us have seen these recently used to check person's temps, coming and going places. Mine is an industrial one for checking machine surfaces and engine temps.) But as you likely guessed, Mother Nature was correct to make the gators BLACK. The white, limestone rocks measured 73F while the lovely lady gator was clocking a snug 85F. Yes, she was happy - why, she even had a 'grin'!

I had several wonderful conversations with visitors who took advantage of the Chickee Hut's benches and the pleasant breeze to relax and just be social at safe distances. Stop on in as I plan to be there most, if not all, Thursdays. Bring your own snacks, stories, and questions. The price is right, the setting is perfect, and the bird calls are relaxing. Why, I even had a crawdad show up last week!

On my way home heading West toward Naples about a 1/2 mile down the road from the Boardwalk, there is a pickup truck pulled to the North side. I slow down, check my mirrors, no immediate traffic. I look to the South side and there there is the most beautiful, young adult, black bear I have ever seen. He or she was just sniffing around on the South side shoulder.

Big, beautiful creature - in danger at the side of the road! I was standing safely about 50 yards away, not too close, not too far. Then the traffic returned, both directions, so I waved my arms and motion to slow down. The drivers responded, with brake lights everywhere. But the bear seems OK with this activity. Cars are stopping just a few feet away from the animal, a few more cars arrive, and I am thinking, "Oh please go back into the woods."

Perhaps Mother Nature told the bear something similar, because he turns and walks into the woods and is safe again. His coat looked to be made of black velvet with just a bit of a shine. His eyes were like black pools of shiny glass. His muzzle was a beautiful tan/brown color. He looked like a toy store stuffed animal, perfect in every dimension, simply beautiful. Pictures? Well in the rush, I left my phone and camera in the car. When I got back to my car, I took a deep breath, enjoyed the A/C, and headed home with the cruise control on. Thank you Mother Nature for saving this beautiful creature!

– *Dave B.*

## Images from The Strand

*Intrepid Fakahacker Dino Barone ventured out to bring us a little closer to The Strand from the comfort of our homes.*

*All photos by Dino Barone.*



Seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) in the prairie.



*One handsome Fakahatchee dude.*



*That's pretty close, Dino!*

## 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](https://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](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](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/>.**

### 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 member Jim Newson, Fort Lauderdale.** Membership now totals 351.

### *Continued thanks to our Lifetime and Business Patron Members:*

#### **Lifetime Preservers**

Bruce & Janet Bunch

#### **Lifetime Protectors**

Kit & La Raw Maran

#### **Lifetime Family Members**

Richard & Sue Jagels

John and Pauly Kaiser

Tom & Judy Maish

Noel Nation

Jim & Peggy Phillips

Van & Jane Saylor

Glen & Laura Stacell

#### **Lifetime Family Members**

Richard & Sue Jagels

#### **Business Patron Member**

Bay Design Store

#### **Lifetime Individual Members**

Karen J. Berkley

Rita Bleasdale

Warner Blow

Elsie Caldwell

John Elting

Carolyn Ginther

Peter Haffenreffer

Don Harmon

Susan Hauze

Terry Heaps

Patty Huff

James Nici

Randy Parks

Mark Perro

Wendy Becker Payton

Ken Shapiro

John Spengler

Carol Vartanian

#### **Board Members**

President – Glen Stacell

Vice President – Andrew Tyler

Secretary – Ken Shapiro

Treasurer – Phil McGuire

Tom DesFosses

John Kaiser

#### **Ex-Officio**

Bruce Bunch

Dennis Giardina

Patrick Higgins

Tom Maish

Francine Stevens (Executive Director)

#### **BOD meeting schedule**

October 18, 2020

November 15, 2020

December 12, 2020

January 17, 2021

March 20, 2021

Meetings are scheduled for  
10:30 AM

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