



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

Year 2020 was full of challenges we will never forget. As we begin this new year with a new Park Manager, we thought it would be encouraging to share a five year summary of the Friends' accomplishments. A letter demonstrating the Friends of Fakahatchee's very good track record of support for the Park 'through thick and thin' was addressed to Brian Fugate Bureau Chief District 4 and given to the new Park Manager.



FRIENDS OF FAKAHATCHEE A SERIOUS PARTNER IN ITS MISSION TO SUPPORT THE PARK.

Since 2015 the Board was able to generate \$1,755,360.00 worth of financial support for the Fakahatchee. We start breaking down this impressive figure by listing the specific needs that were requested by the Park Manager, at a total of \$181,647.00

\$64,293 went to numerous repairs and maintenance of Park equipment and vehicles, of which the big ticket items were:

| | |
|------------------------|----------|
| Massey Tractor repairs | \$19,148 |
| John Deer repair | \$8,857 |
| Dump truck repair | \$2,142 |
| Park ATV repairs | \$3,620 |
| Ford Explorer repairs | \$1,600 |

The following is in addition to the \$64,293 above:

| | |
|---|----------|
| Orchid restoration project lead by Mike Owen | \$10,030 |
| Wildlife signs at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk | \$8,857 |
| Big Cypress Bend Board supplies for repairs (Labor by volunteers) | \$20,992 |
| Port O Let rental at Boardwalk | \$4,413 |
| Controlled Burns- helicopter rentals | \$1,000 |
| Fork lift rental | \$19,148 |
| Electricity installation at Harmon building | \$1,462 |
| Fabrication of three iron ranger lock boxes to finally collect park entrance fees at the Janes Scenic, East-River and North Lakes locations | \$1321 |
| Supplies to improve Visitor Center on Janes Scenic | \$3,587 |
| Commercial ice machine for park staff and volunteers | \$4,500 |
| Video surveillance system | \$1,700 |
| WIFI for park | \$4,000 |
| Pole Barn to shelter Park vehicles deposited on contract (balance due \$43,795) | \$23,612 |
| Plus miscellaneous requests too numerous to list | \$25,828 |

Expenses funded by grants:

\$62,219 were generated by successful grant applications (includes \$4,994 granted by FOF).

| | |
|---|----------|
| Janes Scenic Visitor Center educational supplies | \$2,500 |
| LCEC Electric Company | |
| Tiki hut at Big Cypress Bend Boardwalks | \$13,000 |
| The Naples Garden Club | |
| Wayfinding Kiosks | |
| Collier County Tourism. FOF added \$4,994, | \$46,719 |
| (More will be needed to complete the installations. | |

Bringing the total to \$181,647

Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk Expansion Project

\$1,331,500.00 plus \$175,000.00

The FOF Board of Directors championed a Specific Legislative Appropriation of \$1,331,500 and have invested over \$175,000 on the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk Expansion project. The FOF continues to collaborate with the State for this project within its financial fundraising capacity. It's expected that the new boardwalk site will double visitations to more than 160,000 annually. A simple mathematical exercise of park entry fees to be collected at the entrance gate quickly demonstrates the benefit of the project for the Park Service.

Protecting the Preserve by educating the public

The FOF's mission includes educating the public on the importance of protecting the fragile ecosystem of the Preserve. Our impact increased exponentially with implementation of seasonal interpretive tours program in 2013, thanks to a team of volunteers who conduct the tours. To date over 3,000 visitors were welcomed in the Preserve, visitors who might not have discovered the Preserve in the absence of a tours program.

Assisting the park with resource management.

Members of the Friends of Fakahatchee are a dedicated group of volunteers who, under the direction of Park staff, devote thousands of hours annually to clearing trails, controlling exotics, repairing the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk, maintaining passage on Janes Scenic drive and assisting the Park Biologist with his surveys.

In closing, our success is a result of the generosity of our members, donors and grantors who collectively put our mission statement into action!

c.c. Eric Draper Director of Florida Park Services, B J Givens Assistant Bureau Chief District 4.

Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens

News from the Strand

FOF welcomes new Park Manager Allen Murray

Allen Murray has been selected for the position of Park Manager at Fakahatchee Strand State Park. Allen has served in the Park service since 2013. He started at Fort Cooper as a Park Ranger and was later promoted to Maintenance Supervisor at Topsail. He served in that position for a year and was then promoted to Assistant Park Manager for his last two years there.

Allen graduated in 2009 with his Bachelor of Science in Professional Studies from Austin Peay State University, Tennessee. He retired from the US Army in 2007 after serving 20 years. He is married and has two grown children and two grandchildren.

Allen has great appreciation for the uniqueness that each park offers. He specifically has a fondness for Fakahatchee. Since his first visit here on a paddling trip, he has held a desire to contribute to the Strand and he's excited about the opportunity to lead the park into the future.

His hobbies are working on his 2017 Mustang GT California Special (Elma) and attending car shows. ***Please join us in welcoming him to The Fak!***

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Members generously support the Annual Fund Appeal

We so appreciate our members' warmhearted generosity in donating to the Annual Fund Appeal! Your support is vital to accomplishing our mission.

We couldn't do it without you! Many thanks.

Mel Finn & Franklin Adams – Day Trip to Long Lake, Fakahatchee Strand – May 16, 1970

by Franklin Adams

I recently came across these notes I had written in cursive which I have typed up. Mel is gone, but certainly not forgotten.



I picked up Mel Finn at his home in Miami at 6:00 am and we drove to Copeland Grade to spend the day in the Fakahatchee, a place we dearly loved. We left the Grade and walked down the tram approximately 20 minutes and then we turned east into the strand. On the way we saw a lot of otter and deer sign. On reaching the central flow-way of the strand we took a compass bearing and headed north. Our destination today was Guzmania Gulch and Long Lake, a lake that has never been dry or burned to our knowledge.

Our plan was to hit a large pond by following the water flow north, but evidently we didn't go far enough east before turning north. We had not visited this pond before which shows on an aerial photo from the 1940s. We had left the main tram at 8:50 am. At 10:10 am we crossed the first

interior tram where we saw a cottonmouth attempting to swallow a Banded water snake. We disturbed the moccasin so that it released the banded water but then it continued searching for its prey as we watched.

We continued north until we hit the second tram. This tram must be crossed at a particular spot in order to assure hitting Long Lake and the Guzmania area. I noticed that the water on the south side of the tram was flowing east. The reason for this is that there was previously an old bridge culvert on the tram during the logging day, and this seems to have been the very center of the main flow-way in Fakahatchee.

The bridge and culvert are long gone but the water naturally funnels into into this area of the tram and continues its slow natural drainage southwest. So in order to find the gap in the tram we walked (stumbled) up the direction of the flow west until we arrived at the cross-through where the water was deep and cold. The bottom was a sandy clear dotted with many small fish. I paused there for a moment to drink in some of that pure cool water and the beauty of the area.

There is a large oak just south of the gap, and a tall Royal palm just west of the gap. Leaving the crossing you must take a north-north easterly compass course to hit Long Lake and Guzmania. Mel and I went slightly too far northwesterly and missed Guzmania and came up on the southwest corner of Long Lake which has grown up into a dense area of cut-grass. Most of the lakes in the central strand are clear and open, surrounded by pond apple on the north ends, but heavy on the south ends with growth of *Zizaniopsis*.

Upon finding Long Lake it was a simple matter to correct ourselves and enter Guzmania Gulch where the water is cool and clear year round due to deeper water and shade. We spent a couple hours just wandering and enjoying this beautiful botanical treasure which is only a small part of Fakahatchee. We photographed the *Guzmania* in bloom although with the deep shade the lighting is very misleading.



A variety of ferns and air plants grace the shady waterways of the Fakahatchee Strand. Slough habitat image by Patrick Higgins.

Walking back out I led the way as Mel had walked up on the second snake of the day which was a banded water, not a cottonmouth this time. We walked out to the tram in 55 minutes which Mel recalled was the shortest time we had made the return trip. Buttonbush, Virginia willow, ceasar weed, *Epidendrum anceps*, and *Polyrrhiza lindenii* were all observed in bloom. We jumped four armadillos on the tram as we were walking out. These were the first armadillos I had ever seen in Fakahatchee or Collier County that I can recall.

There were a couple of dudes with a jeep buggy – and I use the term buggy loosely – tearing up the tram. They were hauling a flat trailer to their camp back by a small prairie on the left as you walk in. One fellow who owned the camp was Gary Keller or Kellum. Mel and I kidded them about trying to develop a camp instead of just enjoying the woods. We talked to them about conservation and they of course informed us that they wouldn't destroy anything unless they could eat it or sell it.

As a pair of wood ducks flew over, headed for the pond apple area, we mused about another wonderful, relaxing day in the swamp.

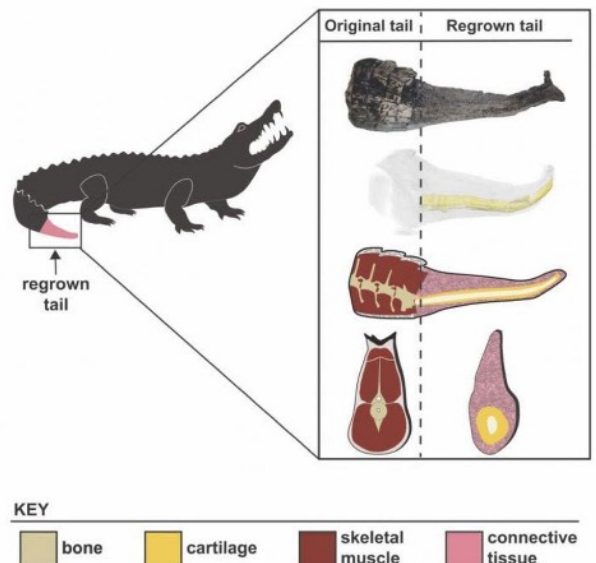
(image of Franklin Adams at the Fakahatchee Hilton from interview, Jay Staton Photo)

Not just lizards – alligators can regrow their tails too

John Elting, former FOF President, shares this discovery with our members

Researchers at Arizona State University have found that juvenile alligators who lose their tail in combat or for other reasons, can regrow it up to 9 inches or “18% of their total body length.” They do not regrow bone or skeletal muscles but cartilage and connective tissue — blood vessels, nerves, etc.

I have seen this occur some years ago at the Everglades Wonder Gardens, but never in the wild. I do not know what defines “juvenile” in terms of overall size, but perhaps that is yet to be determined. You can read more about their findings here – <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/11/201123100952.htm>. Infographic by Arizona State University.





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 Staff

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!



Seen in the Strand

Images Capture Life in the Fakahatchee

Richard Bachrach from Minnesota called the FOF phone line asking about visiting the Park. Below are some of his favorite shots, which he kindly shared after his visit.

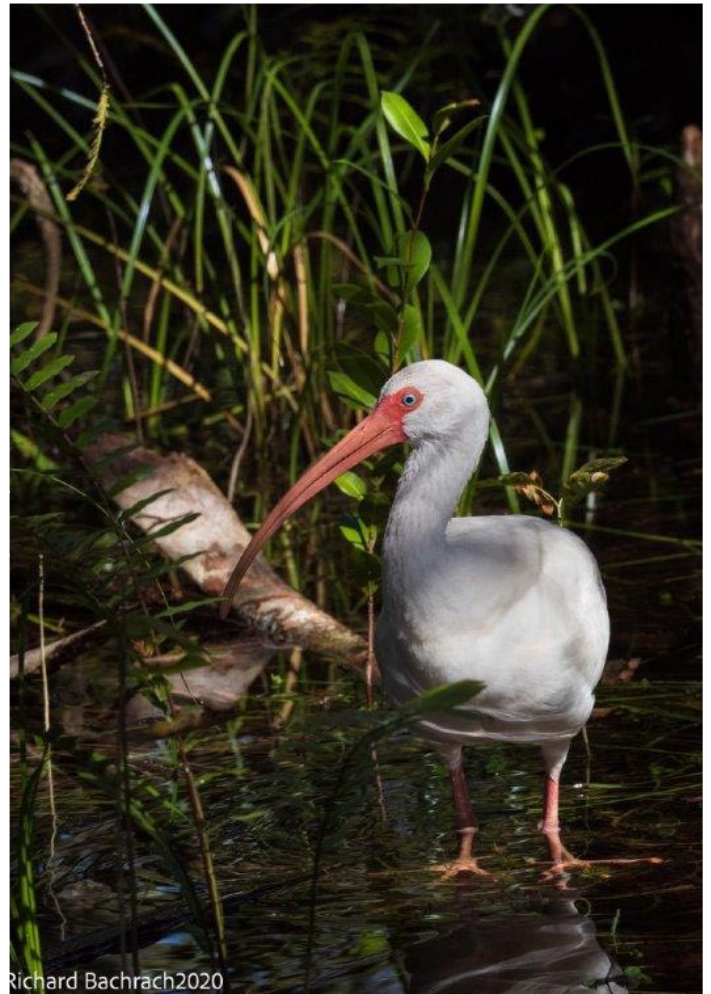




Red Shoulder Hawk



Zebra Longwing



America White Ibis

Phil McGuire, FOF Treasurer, also shared his images of the bird life of the Fakahatchee Strand.



Black and White Warbler



Roseate Spoonbill and Great White Egrets

Boardwalk Report

By Dave Boesche



Hi, All! I certainly hope this finds you safe, happy and healthy in the New Year. This report will be covering New Years Eve day, as well as 1/7, 1/14, and hopefully 1/21/21. The Boardwalk has been pretty quiet most days. We have had more bear activity than I remember in the past. There was a sighting of a bear mom with 2 cubs.

If you encounter a bear, please remember to be quiet and calm, don't turn your back, simply talk in a friendly voice, stay close to others in your group, and walk backwards while keeping an eye on the bear. Try not to stare into their eyes, that can be considered a threat of sorts. NOTE: Growing up my Mom gave me this look and it was threatening – always deserved, I must add!

The good news is they much prefer berries instead of fingers, but a surprised bear can react if frightened or pursued. I took a picture of the scat the bears have been leaving behind. It appears they eat a lot of Brazilian Pepper, along with some swamp lily blooms and an occasional twig.

The gators at the pond welcomed in the New Year with assorted bellows. If you haven't experienced this, let me say it is loud. It is almost like the roar of the adult lions in the Naples Zoo. Actually, this has been studied and it is a way to not only let others know they are about but also to get their reproductive juices flowing.

With no vocal chords as such, they do as bull frogs do – they puff up the pouch under their chin, then let 'er rip over their teeth and gums. It is so loud and of such a frequency that the water actually ripples and resembles a reversed rain storm! Quite a show to witness! There is also a female gator in the pond outside the 'Indian Village'. Last year this bellowing brought in another female and at least two smaller males. Mr. and Mrs. Gator were not good hosts and ran the others off.

Have you noticed the cooler weather and little to no rain? Good news - we seem to be in the early stages of the 'dry' season. A lot of the standing water is receding and drying up. Hopefully the aquatic critters will remember the water hole locations before the waterways dry up. But if they don't make it, the vultures are a great clean up crew.

As this life giving water goes away, the 'big back yard' becomes smaller by the day, leaving the critters to get more crowded in smaller areas. So we can all start to see several types of wading birds in a small area. Great for them, not so good for the fish and such. Since they are mostly wading birds, with different lengths of legs, this is fun to watch.

The Snowy Egrets, with their beautiful 'golden slippers' are close to the waters edge, just standing there, wiggling their toes. Along swims a bug or small fish, looking at that tasty, golden 'worm' when surprise, they become the food. The Snowy gets a snack, but this splash and activity, startles the other 'food fish' away from the shore into deeper water where you may find a Great White Egret.

The Great White's longer legs make for deeper water hunting. With a very sharp beak and a long recoiled neck, they often stand still, moving their head/neck from side to side. Since our eyes are on the front of our face, we have pretty good depth perception. But with this long beak and set back eyes, the Whites (and to a lesser extent the Great Blue Herons), have a large amount of their vision blocked. Therefore they compensate by moving their head/neck from side to side.

Also around the shrinking water holes there are several large Wood Storks fishing for a meal. They stick their beak into the water and move it from side to side, dragging the bottom. They are hoping that a tasty morsel swims right past their open jaws, then with one of the fastest reactions in the animal kingdom, snap – they close down on a snack.

How about all that mud and bottom they stir up? Well, the critters in this mud spring to get away, but close by is a Great Blue. Or if they make it to the near shore there is a Snowy. By using your imagination you see that they all can benefit from each others skills. So the next time someone calls you a 'bird brain', be certain to thank them for the compliment. Birds can be pretty smart!

Well, my two typing fingers are getting tired, so I will end and get set for a great Faka day tomorrow. A early six mile Tram Ride so see what pops up, then I'll head over to the Boardwalk for a sack lunch. This retirement stuff wears me out sometimes!

Oh, did you hear about the family of FOUR PANTHERS right on Janes Drive very close to the Harmon Building.? Yup, it happened and that is a teaser.....



– *Dave B.*

See <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/article248532345.html>

Membership News



Letter from Florida Park Service Director Eric Draper

Dear Park Volunteer,

As 2020 comes to a close I am reflecting on how staff and volunteers come together to safely protect resources and serve our park visitors. Whether you took a pandemic break or continued your volunteer service, please know how much we appreciate your generous gift of time and talent. You've made a difference and we hope that you will continue next year.

Over the past few months I have visited state parks in every part of Florida where I've met volunteers like you – flexible, friendly, and eager to help with whatever was needed. I met a camping visitor that offered his expertise and service as a volunteer to transform a cultural resource plaque to like-new condition. I met a campground host couple that finished a three month project clearing a heavy infestation of air potatoes from an acre of habitat. I met a volunteer team that replaced old wood on a boardwalk and ramp to the beach.

If you served in a state park this year, thank you for having confidence in our safety protocols. I am proud of the diligent efforts of staff and volunteers and concessions alike to stay safe and keep visitors safe. Sometimes that meant significant operational adjustments. We adapted and in adapting to new challenges showed again why Florida State Parks are the nation's best.

Friend Groups adapted as well to online board meetings or safe socially distanced in-person meetings and to online fundraising. Park projects continue to move forward such as bell tower restoration at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, a \$130k fire suppression system at The Barnacle Historic State Park, a new pole barn at Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, two new cub cars for park maintenance at Alafia River State Park, a new roof on the nature center at O'Leno State Park, and so much more. The Florida State Parks Foundation also made a big difference by raising funds for park equipment and improvements including the universally accessible glass bottom boat for Silver Springs now under construction.

2021 is a new year and each day will be brighter. You bring light to our parks when you volunteer. Stay safe and healthy. I look forward to seeing you and making it the happiest of new years!

Eric Draper, Director

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks/Florida Park Service



A special thank you to Mr. Cliff Kolber for his generous \$1,000 donation

We received this heartwarming note from Cliff following his kind donation.

Thanks Francine,

It is the least I can do to help support your efforts to keep the Everglades intact yet accessible to us, our descendants, and the future. As a side note, I've lived in South Florida my entire life, sharing my birth year with Everglades National Park, 1947. I have witnessed the evolution of the Everglades over many decades, photographing and sharing its beauty and uniqueness.

It is an extremely unique testament to our world's governments, environments and natural lands that the Everglades thrives, and lives on, specifically through the dedicated support of organizations like FOF.

Thank you for all you and the volunteers do.

– Cliff



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/>)

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

Members make a difference.

Welcome to new members! Christian Blackman, Jupiter FL; Sarah Cruz, Miami FL; Michelle Devine, Venice FL; Jeremy Finer, Miami; Richard Grannis, Naples FL; Amy Greenblatt, Plantation FL; Linda Kozlowski, Martinez CA; Henry Loeser, Placerville CA; Zachary Lombardo, Tampa FL; Patricia Lutkins, East Hampton NY; Kevin Norton, Parkland F; Thomas & Jane Pafford; Mark Pafford, Maitland FL; Mike Pafford, Fort Lauderdale, FL; David Rogers, Naples FL.

Membership now totals 400.

Special thank you to Jan Bachrach for elevating her membership to Family Lifetime.

Continued thanks to our Lifetime and Business Patron Members:

Lifetime Preservers
Bruce & Janet Bunch

Lifetime Protectors
Kit & La Raw Maran

Lifetime Family Members
Jan Bachrach
Richard & Sue Jagels
John and Pauly Kaiser
Tom & Judy Maish
Noel Nation
Jim & Peggy Phillips
Van & Jane Saylor
Glen & Laura Stacell

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

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)

Business Patron Member
Bay Design Store

BOD meeting schedule

January 17, 2021
February 21, 2021
March 20, 2021
Meetings are scheduled for 10:30 AM
Contact the Friends of Fakahatchee at FOF_90@hotmail.com or call 239-695-1023.