



## Election of Officers 2022

The Board of Directors will meet on March 19 at 10:30AM to elect the officers. FOF Members wishing to observe the election of the Officers can contact Francine Stevens at 239-695-1023 or e-mail [FOF\\_90@hotmail.com](mailto:FOF_90@hotmail.com).

## President and Executive Director's Letter

### *FOF Spring Event at the Park, March 19, 12:30 PM*

We look forward to seeing you in the park on March 19 for the 2022 Annual Members Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Picnic. **Members can expect a special bulletin in early March with event details and registration instructions.**

***This special day features three important events.***

**The Annual Members Meeting** - We will present the 2022 Board of Directors the Elected Officers.

**The Volunteer Appreciation Picnic** - We will celebrate the invaluable contribution the Park's volunteers make to its operation and welfare.

**Mike Owens, Park Biologist, will retire** in August when many FOF Members are up north. Therefore, we will celebrate Mike's career on this day when the Friends of the Fakahatchee are still in town.

## We Need Tour Guides

Have you ever been interested in guiding tours? This time of the season is a good time to join a tour to observe the Guides and determine if this is something you would like to start. If you are interested, or if you have questions, call Francine at 239-695-1023.

**Volunteer your time and talents!**

<https://orchidswamp.org/support/how-to-volunteer/>

## Tour tickets on sale

Sign up now for the *Introduction to the Swamp Walk with Morning Tram Tour* (<https://tinyurl.com/introtoSwamp>). This morning tour combines elements of our tram tours with a swamp walk to give participants a wonderful introduction to the Fakahatchee.

The tour begins with an interpretive ride on the Friend's Ghost Rider tram to the site of the swamp walk. After about 90 minutes of wading through the swamp, participants board the tram for the return trip. Experienced guides leading the group share their insights about the Fakahatchee's flora and fauna on both wet and dry portions of the adventure.

*Right. Master Naturalist Gordon Saager led this great Introduction to Swamp Walk.*



## News from the Strand

### Views from the Boardwalk

by Dave Boesche (Wonder why Dave is not wearing his volunteer shirt?

Go to <https://tinyurl.com/DaveatDaytona> )

Hi, All! I have had some wonderful experiences with Fakahatchee Alligators recently that are too fun not to share. "Alligator – Any of several crocodilians in which the snout is shorter and broader than in the crocodiles, and the teeth of the lower jaw shut into pits instead of into marginal notches. They are mainly American." (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary - 1957 edition)

WOW, *big help there Webster*. Guess it is up to me to get this all straightened out.

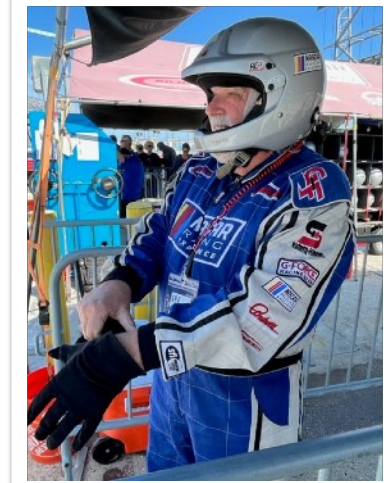
1st - Alligators **don't** eat people! 2nd – Alligators **do** eat silly people! Ok, so the deal is, do something silly and you are messing with a very top predator. Mainly they don't eat us because we taste funny.

Also, gators **can not** swallow an adult human. They can't chew their food, only crush the food with very powerful jaws. Example: Turtle Dinner – the gator picks its choice from the menu, pops it into its mouth, clamps down with jaws of steel, repeats several times, crushing the carapace, then raises its head out of the water, opening a flap in the back of its mouth, and in goes the meal of the day.

Please note, gators **can not** swallow underwater. Safety tip: if swimming with gators (Not recommended!), please swim under water. Alligators can and do eat humans and other large prey. But, they stash this large prey under a log or rock for several weeks. This will 'tenderize' the meat for planned future meals (to be eaten in chunks).

Webster didn't mention **speed**. Usually a gator is slow, almost lethargic, but it can run short distances, jump up, forward, back and even roll. Running in a zig-zag path will only make the gator laugh. Ok, I know this by simply looking at its mouth. See the grin at the back? 'Nuff said.

About 2 weeks ago, I came upon a group of kids and teens that were **very** close to the East Pond, at the entrance to the boardwalk parking area. Being a retired teacher I have Mother Nature-granted super powers – like eyes in the back of my head, super hearing even when not facing a class, and a clear sense when something is about to happen! Oops, up went my Teacher Antennae! I walked over to the group. I saw nothing in the water, but my Antennae were vibrating!



"Hi Kids, how about let's back up for a moment." **TOO LATE!** Splash, slam, water all over everyone - even Yours Truly! Screams abound, kids running away. Good news – we found Mama Gator AND 8 to 12 new babies. Probably when the kids moved, their shadows spooked the babies, and Mom sprang into action. She never left the water, but likely was doing that smiling thing again! YES, Mama gators protect their babies for at least a year and sometimes longer.

She never feeds the baby gators but does her best to keep predators away. Babies hatch out at about 12 inches long. They usually grow about a foot each year, so if you see a 3 footer it is possibly 3 years old. Also, the distance from their nose to their eyes (let's say it's 3 inches), is a rough measure of total length (3 feet for this example). >> *Continued*

Mama changes her babies' location for protection. Take a look see at this East Side borrow pit, even look at the branches in the water, and you may find the babies. Also, if you walk down the path to the observation platform, keep your eyes open. I have seen Mama with a baby or more resting on her head. Great photo op, but remember – no fast moves, be aware of your shadow, and use gentle voices, please. She is a proud mama and wants to stay that way.

If you walk near water, keep your eyes open. You may see baby gators, and maybe Mama!

This week, while watching nature from the patio at the 'Gator Pond' I was treated to gator play! Having known Mr. and Mrs. Gator for over 5 years I have some observations. She hasn't grown much, still 6 ft or so. But Mr Gator, like me, has put on his 'Covid-19 pounds' and more. He is a big, old bull now, 10 or more feet long, and he spends a lot of time laying around. The bigger they are, the less they seem to do. That is on purpose, as they only require roughly 100 calories per week to survive! I guess a Big Mac is good for a month?

Mrs. Gator seems almost affectionate to Mr Gator. I have seen her approach him while he's resting and place her chin on his back. She also often comes along side and places her leg on his tail or back. All very nice and gentle. But this week there was water play!

She did a little cuddling along his back, then climbed up onto his back, sideways to him! They stayed like this for a little while then they played 'Motor Boat'. You know, take the kids or grand kids, over to the pool or beach. Pull them around in a big circle while making 'Motor Boat' sounds. (Note: this is better at the beach as none of your friends and neighbors will likely see you and hear you making motor boat sound effects!) Mr. Gator didn't make the sounds but he DID give her rides around the pond for almost a half hour. (Safety tip #2: When you return home after the beach/motor boat exercise get the Icy/Hot out for your shoulders and back.)

I'm running a little long but one more learning experience. Recently while leading a Tram Tour to Gate #2, we met with an obstacle that you may encounter while hiking. Seems a large, bull gator had blocked the path that the guests were wanting to explore. This is a big boy, one that I hadn't seen this year until now. What to do? This is their park, but they usually don't mind sharing. Well, today was his day in the sun, so we needed to talk him into giving us some room. Never move quickly nor in a hostile fashion. Use a calm voice to explain that you would like to take these guests down this path and they would ALL like to take his picture.

Take a look at his eyes; he has two sets of eyelids. One set that, like humans, opens and closes top to bottom and is used to avoid the sun and pesky human guests! There is a second set of eyelids that opens and closes front to back used to swim underwater. (Actually, when an alligator submerges, a clear, third eyelid covers each eye. This eyelid acts as swim goggles and helps them to see objects clearly under water.) OK, so he is awake now because we can see his eyes are open. Still not moving? Bring in the dancers. You know, the ones that pick up a dead palm frond – laying at the side – to strike the ground, bushes, trees anything to make noise. You can softly chant and laugh for effect if you wish – it won't help but it's fun.

Still no luck? Well, if the dried palm frond is about shot, use the stem to make a cracking sound against a tree or the ground. Usually, by this time the gator has had enough of us humans and should walk off. When it gets up on all fours, step back please. Step, NOT scream and run.

This particular bull, gave a big grunt, took a step, a larger grunt, then back into the water. Please note! Calm, cool, and collected gets the job done. Once you arrive back at home, you may want a cool libation, call the grandkids, tell them about the dinosaurs you single handedly moved, enlarge the pictures, and send them along for proof. Then sit back in your Lay-Z-Boy and enjoy your replay.

See, the Fakahatchee gives back in so many ways. I hope to see you soon in the Strand.

*Please stay safe, happy and healthy.*  
*Dave*

**Bravo to Dave Boesche and Ted Lock  
for another successful group tour**

Hi Francine,

We just arrived home after our tram tour. It was all great and the weather was perfect. Everyone loved Dave. He was fantastic. Ted added much to the tour as well. We all had a grand time.

Thanks,  
Linda Columbo, President, Friends of Tiger Tail Beach

## Interpretative Pavilion taking shape

The Interpretative Pavilion and Restrooms building continue to make exciting progress. These aerial views are shown in a counter-clockwise flight pattern. – *Photos by Ralph Atwood.*

### Looking for an Event planner

We need your help to organize one of our most important events, the opening of the new Interpretative Pavilion. If you are interested in planning this event please get in touch with Francine Stevens at 239-695-1023.



### Park Biologist Mike Owen to retire in August

Park Biologist Mike Owen conducted his last official Swamp Walk as Park Biologist for the FOF tours program on February 19. He will be retiring in August. He was assisted by Ginny Palmer Skok, Andy Skok and Gordon Saager.

*Mike (in pre-retirement pose) with his wife Donna and the group. Photo by Rita Bauer.*

## Scene in the Strand

### Ranger Rebecca photographs Orchids



On her day off Ranger Rebecca Thornhill explores the Fakahatchee. Photo by Rita Bauer.

### Orchids by Rita Bauer



*Epidendrum amphotomum*, Dingy Star Orchid



*Epidendrum rigidum*, Rigid Epidendrum



Great Crested Flycatcher catching lunch. Photo by Diego Fernandez.



Tiny epiphyte starts life on a small branch. Photo by Diego Fernandez.

### Park Visitors share photos, praise, and gratitude

We met Eric and Rita Bauer with another gentleman counting Giant Bromeliads two Saturdays ago, and I promised to share any interesting photos I took during our visit to Fakahatchee.

First I have to thank you for making our visit very special. We truly appreciated you pointing out bromeliads and orchids to us along the way and for sharing information about the preserve. It was a very enjoyable and educational visit for us. I'm happy to inform you that while we did not see a lot of birds during our visit we did come across a Great Crested Flycatcher which was a first for us. I've attached a picture of the flycatcher, as well as a couple others which may be of interest to you and Eric.

Thank You Again,

Diego and Andrea

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: [Check the State Park Website](#) for hours, closures, and other announcements.

## Sunset in the Fakahatchee



*Elizabeth Williams captured another stunning sunset in the Park.*

## Remember, 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.



## Membership News

### More Meaningful Memberships

From education to preservation, networking to artworks, donations of time or funding, there are a myriad of ways to support the mission of the Friends of Fakahatchee. To discover all the different ways to support our mission [visit the Support page of our website. https://orchidswamp.org/support/](https://orchidswamp.org/support/)

### Gift while the gifting is good

*by Chris Gair*

While volatility is a concern for every investor, many people currently find themselves in the enviable situation of owning highly appreciated securities. If your 2022 New Year's Resolutions include gifting to FOF, let us first say thank you and offer our assurance that it will be put to the best of use.

And from there, consider making your gift in the form of appreciated common stock. This form of gifting during market peaks has proven to be an excellent way to "capture" the value of your shares while receiving a tax advantage as well. It's truly a win-win. If you have appreciated securities that you'd like to donate to the Friends please call the Executive Director at 239-695-1023 and we will make it easy for you to help one Florida's true treasures.

As with all matters financial, please consult your CPA or tax advisor to see if gifting appreciated securities makes sense for you. A word of caution here: If units of a mutual fund (or ETF) are being considered, please provide us with all the details as some funds are not transferable.

*Mr. Chris Gair of Fort Myers, now retired after 48 years as a Trust Officer in Southwest Florida, is providing the FOF with thoughts and ideas in the ever-changing world of charitable gif*



If you haven't yet opened your free AmazonSmile account, please take a few minutes to do so. Visit <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/>

### "Matching Gift" programs

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!

Become a Friend of the Fakahatchee!  
<https://orchidswamp.org/support/memberships/>

## Charitable Remainder Trust

On January 1, 2020, the SECURE ACT (Setting Communities Up for Retirement Enhancement) became law. The law had an immediate and direct impact on estate planning for IRA's. The ability for the owner of a traditional IRA to stretch the taxable payments of their IRA over the lives of family members is no longer available. The SECURE ACT mandates that an IRA must be fully distributed by December 31 of the tenth year following the owners death. Attorneys and estate planners have been offering techniques to help their clients deal with this, resulting in the idea of naming a charitable remainder trust (CRT) as the beneficiary of some or all their IRA.

The tax savings of this technique are compelling. As CRTs are considered a qualified charity (just like Friends the Fakahatchee) for tax purposes, any amounts received by a CRT from an IRA are free of tax. This means you can take a tax deferred IRA dollar and have it become a forever tax free dollar and still provide an income to your family. To learn more, it is important to consult your Attorney or CPA to see if this technique makes sense for you.



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/>)

## Members make a difference.

### Welcome to new members!

Virginia Olson, Greensboro NC, and Lucille Capo Miller, Sarasota FL. Membership total is 389.

**Special thanks to new Lifetime Family Members: Eric & Laura Foht and Nick & Linda Penniman.**

**Continued thanks to our Lifetime Members:**

### Lifetime Preservers

Bruce & Janet Bunch

### Lifetime Protectors

Kit & La Raw Maran

### Lifetime Family Members

Jan Bachrach  
 Eric & Laura Foht  
 Richard & Sue Jagels  
 John & Pauly Kaiser  
 Tom & Judy Maish  
 Noel Nation  
 Nick & Linda Penniman  
 Jim & Peggy Phillips  
 Van & Jane Sayler  
 Glen & Laura Stacell

### Lifetime Individual Members

Karen J. Berkley  
 Rita Bleasdale  
 Warner Blow  
 Elsie Caldwell  
 John Elting  
 Carolyn Ginther  
 Peter Haffenreffer  
 Don Harmon  
 Greg Hauze  
 Susan Hauze  
 Terry Heaps  
 Patty Huff  
 James Nici  
 Randy Parks  
 Mark Perro  
 Wendy Becker Payton  
 Ken Shapiro  
 John Spengler  
 Carol Vartanian

### Board Members

President – Tom Maish  
 Vice President – John Kaiser  
 Treasurer – Phil McGuire  
 Secretary – Glen Stacell

Tom DesFosses  
 Eric Foht  
 Zach Lombardo  
 Virginia Palmer Skok  
 Mark Perro

### Ex-Officio

Bruce Bunch  
 John Elting  
 Dennis Giardina  
 Glen Stacell  
 Andrew Tyler

Francine Stevens  
 (Executive Director)

### BOD meeting schedule

March 19, 2022  
 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.

**Our mailing address is:**  
**Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.**  
**PO Box 35, Everglades City, FL 34139**

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