



Annual Organizational Meeting lines up FOF Leadership for 2022



The Annual Organizational Meeting took place as scheduled on March 19, 2022. The Officers elected by the Board were: Tom Maish President, John Kaiser Vice President, Phil McGuire Treasurer, and Glen Stacell Secretary. Directors serving on the Board are Tom DesFosses, Eric Foht, Zach Lombardo, Virginia Palmer Skok, and Mark Perro.

Left to right: Tom Maish, Francine Stevens, Phil McGuire, Ginny Palmer Skok, Glen Stacell, and John Kaiser. Directors Tom DesFosses, Eric Foht, Zach Lombardo and Mark Perro were not available for the picture. Photo by Rita Bauer.

President's message at the Members Annual Meeting

Photo by Rita Bauer

Annually your Board must submit its Citizen Support Organization (CSO) Goals, and some Goals take longer to accomplish than others.

In 2006, the Friends launched a major goal to assist DEP with a project to build a Visitor Pavilion, restrooms, and a safe parking area. Over 80,000 Visitors, many of whom travel from around the world, visit the Boardwalk to experience the unique habitat of the Fakahatchee Preserve.

The Interpretive Pavilion, architecturally designed like the old cracker style homes of the early Florida settlers, will include interactive displays to engage and educate visitor. They will learn about the history, flora and fauna, and the importance of the Fakahatchee Preserve within the Western Everglades fragile ecosystem.

The long awaited grand opening of these needed facilities is anticipated for the last quarter of 2022. Sixteen years in the making - and despite many unforeseen challenges - it is with the Board's steadfast determination, your continued support, and your generosity that we have been able to pursue this historic CSO Goal. Goals are posted on the FOF website at <https://orchidswamp.org/about-fof/>.

Please enjoy all the pictures taken at the successful March 19 event in the Park to celebrate our Members, our Volunteers - and this time around - Park Biologist Mike Owen's up-coming retirement.

Cordially,
Tom Maish



Volunteer your time and talents!
<https://orchidswamp.org/support/how-to-volunteer/>

News from the Strand

Members Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

The Annual Picnic had a good turnout on a beautiful day. Photo by Rita Bauer.



Sky Experience tickets still on sale.



The April Night Sky Experience is the ideal session for folks who never pointed their camera at the sky and may be unsure how to locate the Milky Way. Also welcome are those who want to sharpen their night photography skills.

Tickets for April Night Sky Experience are available here at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/april-night-sky-experience-tickets-289841081477?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>.



A huge thanks to Grill Master Jerry Winters and Signe Backus, grilling 100 burgers and dogs! Photo by Rita Bauer.



Andy Skok, Ginny Palmer Skok, and Jay Staton. Photo by Rita Bauer.



Ginny Palmer Skok presents Appreciation Plaque to Park Biologist Mike Owen, who will retire in August. Photo by Phil McGuire.



Park Biologist Mike Owen and Francine Stevens. Photo by Ginny Palmer Skok.



Marya Repko with Kathy and Franklin Adams. Photo by Phil McGuire.



Mike Owen kept Tony Schuhmacher and Theresa Fabiano Schuhmacher in the shade. Photo by Rita Bauer.



Ted and Pat DeGroot with Mike Owen. Photo by Rita Bauer.



Tom and Deb Trotta with Mike Owen. Photo by Rita Bauer.



*A Swallowtail Kite delighted the FOF Annual Meeting crowd by flying over the picnic area.
Photo by Charlie Egli.*

Views from the Boardwalk

by Dave Boesche

Presidents Day School Assignment



What is wrong with the kids today? Well, if they are the 3 who had a Presidents Day assignment from school who joined me at the Boardwalk, they were better than fun and good!

To keep them safe and private let me introduce 8 year old EA, 10 year old EL.A, and 13 year old CH. The three young ladies were to learn about our wonderful Florida Panther. They brought 2 dads along, for lunch and driving. They had contacted Francine, who called on me to guide them because she said I knew how to have fun with children. One family from greater Miami and the other from greater Tampa. Which makes the old saying that if you travel more than 25 miles the leader is an expert. So now I have to be smarter than 3 bright young ladies. Trouble!

We did the meet and greet, and right on cue the female gator was right at the pond edge under the "Warning Alligator" sign – perfect picture! We discussed who she was and what

she was doing, learned about our shadows, spooking the wildlife, and other safety tips. No, zig-zag running only makes the gator smile. No, gators don't eat people, people are too big to swallow. No, gators don't ever eat clowns, they taste funny! (Note - ever heard 3 kids groan at the same time, while 2 dads laugh?)

Off we went to see a 'cool' tree. They each felt the temp of the trunk on a Sable Palm, then we went over to the Gumbo Limbo! "Wow, it's cold!!!" "Yup, it feels 10 to 20 degrees colder. We discussed why kids in Central America lay in the branches, how to make a fence with thumb-diameter branches. (visit Naples Botanical Garden for a perfect example).



The smoother a surface, the cooler it feels, so a Gumbo Limbo feels cooler to the touch.

Now that they are starting to believe me, I tasked them with an assignment – to see and find things we adults missed. It always amazes me how young folks can find so many things. *Reason:* they haven't programmed their brains yet on what 'should' be here! For example, twice that day I had checked for baby gators, no show. Within 5 minutes, the 3 girls found the babies. Of course they also found poison ivy and sap from both a strangler fig and Brazilian Pepper. They all can give you a rash, or worse.

We walked along the rock path toward the boardwalk. We learned about Spanish Moss - the old legend and how it was used during the civil war (the dads liked that one), Live Oaks, Cypress Trees that can be both male and female (they are monoecious plants – each tree produces both male and female flowers), and Wild Coffee. We all took a break at the Chickee Hut to look at some books and pictures of Panthers.

It is impressive to see pictures in *National Geographic* (04/2021), *Naples Illustrated* (09/2021), as well as several library books that all have info and pictures from Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park showing and telling our story on panthers. Yes, we are sometimes called Panther Central. Somewhere I read that on any given day we likely have 3 panthers within our beautiful park. (In my 6+ years at the park I have seen 1 1/2 panthers - long story for another time).

Photos from the Fak often illustrate articles about Florida panthers. Photo to right by Jay Staton.



This 75-year-old leader could have paused longer but....off we went, headed for the Bald Eagle nest. No eagles were out that morning, but other birds were doing a lot of talking. Likely the eagles were 'grocery shopping' in the neighborhood. I pointed out 2 scrape/claw marks, right at the cut out railing. Again why/who/what and we all voted on which was the panther and which was the bear marking. The kids got a B+, adults F. (Note: the top rail is a bear, the side 4X4 post is a panther).

We headed down to the pull-off area of the 'twin sisters' large cypress trees. We talked about how old they likely are, their life cycle, and we even picked up several other guests. I don't remember which girl, but one of them said, "Oh my garsh! These trees were here when Columbus discovered America!" Yup, now that puts a time marker on old!



We also found the hawk's nest, leather ferns, and spores. They all felt the spores even though they couldn't see them (the dads groaned), then we found the Royal Fern, the only one locally that actually blooms to produce seeds.

So we walked along, the young ladies pointed out things like very small birds, plants we had already learned, and even that white stuff. Yes, it is a living being – Freddy Fungus and Alice Algae got together and took a LICHEN to each other (groans & giggles all around). We made it to the gator pond where we found Mr & Mrs Gator, 5 types of birds, even a black racer snake soaking up the sun.

Like so many good things, it had to come to an end. Especially when one person needed the restroom, rushed to the porta-can, and cried, "Nope!

Too stinky!" They said 'good-bye all' as they headed to Everglades City for a rest stop and lunch. My take away, there is hope for the future! These young ladies care about nature and the world. They can be the leaders for tomorrow, if we don't screw it up too much first.

Thanks Francine, I had a great time!
Master Naturalist Dave

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 Jay Staton (Correction).*



Bridge over canal leads to Interpretive Pavilion

A bridge that will provide access to the Interpretive Pavilion over the canal has been added. Photo by Phil McGuire.



Scene in the Strand

Wonders large and small captured by camera

Park Specialist Steven Bass was fortunate to see and photograph a group of Everglades minks, listed as a Threatened Species for the state of Florida. Small mammals, snakes, and insects make up most of their diet.



Fuzzy Osprey nestling poses for the camera. Photo by Charlie Egli.



Charlie Egli photographed this beautiful moonrise while on a FOF Moon Tour.

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/>

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

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.



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



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

"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!



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!

<https://orchidswamp.org/support/memberships/>

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

Members make a difference.

Welcome to new members!

Robert Bowman, Edina MN; Charlie Egli, Bonita Springs FL; Karen Eisenhauer, Estero FL; Joanne Johnston, Punta Gorda FL; Jody Hamade, Naples FL; Maria Alejandra Llorens, Miami FL; Barbara Richey, Ft Myers FL; Karen Sendik, Naples FL; Janet Watson, Ontario CA. Membership total is 389.

Special thanks to new Lifetime Protector Dr. Michael Rohovsky.

Continued thanks to our Lifetime Members:

Lifetime Preservers

Bruce & Janet Bunch

Lifetime Protectors

Kit & La Raw Maran
Dr. Michael Rohovsky

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 Saylor
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

BOD meeting schedule

April 24, 2022
Meetings are scheduled for 10:30 AM

Contact the Friends of Fakahatchee at
FOF_90@hotmail.com or call 239-695-1023.

Francine Stevens
(Executive Director)