



Old Boardwalk is Closed!

Know before you go. Visit the State Park's website.

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fakahatchee-strand-preserve-state-park>

Have a question before you visit the park?

The Park Office has a new phone number: 239-961-1925

President and Executive Director letter

It seems it was just a short while ago that we held our Welcome Back Picnic under the park's pole barn in December 2022, and here we are at the end of April already.

Despite how hurricane IAN affected many of our volunteers, we had another successful fundraising season.

Chair of Public Relations Bruce Bunch promoted the Friends 10th Anniversary Tour Program and by mid-January all tours were sold out. The tours are aligned with the Friends Mission to educate the public about the unique ecology of the Fakahatchee within the Everglades ecosystem and to raise funds to support the park.

The tours program is completely dependent on the commitment of our Volunteers. From mid-November 2022 thru mid-April 2023 they managed to conduct 39 tours. We thank our fabulous Guides Virginia Palmer Skok, Rita Bauer and Gordon Saager for conducting swamp walks. Phil McGuire has our gratitude for his Night Sky evenings. We extend a very special thank you to John Kaiser who conducted 20 tram tours this season. Tour Guides were assisted by Charlie Eglie, Ted DeGroot, Ted Lock, Tom Maish, and Andy Skok.

To continue our success for another decade we will need more Guides, especially for the morning tram tours. Anyone interested can start by observing a couple of tours to decide if they would like a training session with one of our guides. For more information call Francine at 239-695-1023

Cordially,

Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens



It's always a good time to join the FOF Tours Team. Are you interested in guiding or assisting FOF Tours, but wonder what's involved?

To learn, you can join our tours as a guest and shadow a Guide or Assistant until you feel comfortable taking the lead.

For more information call Francine at 239-695-1023, or visit our Volunteer page at <https://orchidswamp.org/support/how-to-volunteer/>.



“Endangered Florida Panthers in Peril”

FOF Vice President Virginia Palmer Skok penned a wonderfully informative article – with some great photos – which was recently published by the Coastal Breeze News. An excerpt follows.

“The first time I saw a panther I didn’t even know I had seen one. My husband and I were driving early in the morning on State Road 92 to go fly fishing out of Chokoloskee. On the side of the road, I saw a large kitten with dark splotches of color sitting in the grass. As a grown woman who cries at the sight of roadkill or dumped pets, I felt both anger and sadness; “Who would abandon an innocent animal that some larger creatures could kill or that will get run over?” I yelled at my husband.

Later during the week, I was reading an issue of The Coastal Breeze News, and on the cover I saw an image of a mother panther and her kitten. On our drive to go fly fishing for tarpon, I had the first of my sightings of a majestic panther kitten, Puma concolor coryi, the state mammal of Florida.

I am not the first to be in awe of these big cats which were featured on a US postage stamp in 1996. Many Collier County folks come to...”

To read this article in its entirety, please visit the Coastal Breeze News website at <https://tinyurl.com/panthers-in-peril>.

2022 Park Impact Sheet

Every year a Park Impact Sheet is published by the Florida State Parks Foundation. Below is the Fact Sheet for Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. A complete collection of Impact Sheets for the Florida State Parks is available at <https://floridastateparksfoundation.org/impact/park-impact-sheets/>.



FAKAHATCHEE STRAND PRESERVE STATE PARK



2022 PARK FACTS

VISITATION	ECONOMIC IMPACT	LOCAL JOBS SUPPORTED
163,572	\$19,944,087	27

**OUR LARGEST STATE PARK IN FLORIDA OFFERS LANDSCAPE
TEEMING WITH WILDLIFE AND LUSH VEGETATION**

Plan your visit at FloridaStateParks.org


This information fact sheet was produced by the Florida State Parks Foundation (FloridaStateParksFoundation.org)



FLORIDA STATE PARKS

A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO FLORIDA'S
WELL-BEING!

The Florida State Parks and Trails system is one of the state's greatest success stories having won the prestigious National Gold Medal of Excellence a record four times. Florida residents and visitors from around the world are drawn to Florida's state parks and trails as *the places* to hike, bike, kayak, swim, fish, camp, lay on the beach, hunt for shells, learn about nature and Florida history, have family reunions, and even get married!

Plan your visit at FloridaStateParks.org.

FY 2021-22 Statewide Economic Data

- 175 Florida State Parks and Trails
(164 Parks / 11 Trails) comprising nearly 800,000 acres
- \$3.9 billion direct economic impact

- \$267 million in sales tax revenue
- 55,632 jobs supported
- Over 32 million visitors served



The Friends of Fakahatchee (FOF) work hand in hand with park staff to provide resource-based recreation while interpreting, preserving and restoring natural resources. One of FOF's important missions is to educate the public about the fragility of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park's biodiversity and we do so by creating wonderful adventures and programs.

FOF is a nonprofit organization of dedicated members and volunteers who help preserve the natural beauty and resources of *the Real Florida* for generations to come.

Find Out More - Get Involved
orchidswamp.org


This information fact sheet was produced by the Florida State Parks Foundation (FloridaStateParksFoundation.org)

News from the Strand

Fakahatchee Wildlife Blitz completes 8 years

Starting in 2015, volunteers spent two hours each month stationed along Janes Scenic Drive every half mile. Each volunteer would bring a chair, set it up, wait for wildlife to pass, and record their sightings on observation sheets and take photographs.

After 8 years of collecting important data at monthly Wildlife Blitz events led by biologist Mike Owen, the last one occurred. True citizen science! Many thanks to these dedicated volunteers!



Left to Right: Andy Skok, Deb and Tom Trotta, Jay Staton, Mike Owen, Steve Busacca, Ginny Palmer-Skok, Theresa & Tony Schumacher, Olivia Ettrich, Dick Brewer, Deb Jansen, Liz Lyne. Photo by Andy Skok.

Meet New Volunteer Coordinator Alex Gobel



We are pleased to announce the Volunteer Coordinator position has been filled by Alex Gobel.

You can direct your volunteer related inquiries to Alex by e-mail at Alex.gobel@floridadep.gov or you can phone him at 239-359-4927.

Welcome, Alex!

Lawrence Morris group visits the Fak

FOF Executive Director Francine Stevens was delighted to meet FOF member Lawrence Morris, President Emeritus of the Quebec-Labrador Foundation. Lawrence and his wife Tina, along with friends Jo-Ann and Doug Watson thoroughly enjoyed their morning tram tour led by John Kaiser.

Left to Right: Jo-Ann Watson, Doug Watson, and Tina Morris. Photo by Lawrence Morris.



Left: John Kaiser shares information. Right: Lawrence Morris and thrilled Francine Stevens. Photos by Tina Morris.

Seen in the Strand

Life is wild in the Fakahatchee

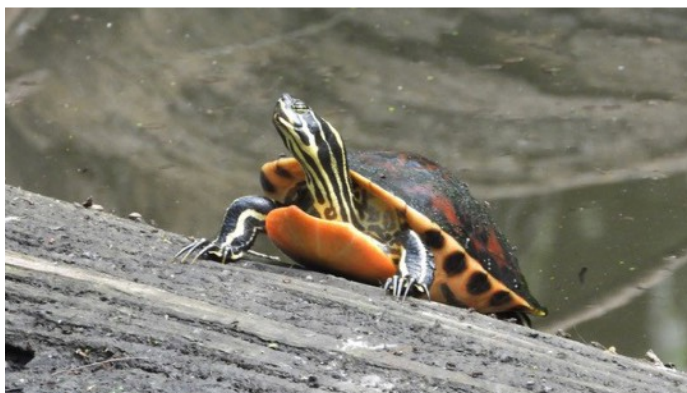
Olga Ettrich recently photographed a variety of Florida wildlife while she was on a walk through the Fakahatchee. Thanks Olga for sharing with us! (Send us your photos and see them in the Ghost Writer.)



Red shouldered hawk possibly watching for small mammals, lizards, snakes, or amphibians for a meal.



Gray Catbird, most likely migrating, makes a mewing-like sound.



Florida Redbelly turtle is a basking turtle with a highly-domed shell and usually has strong reddish to orangish tint on its plastron that is very distinctive in young.



Belted Kingfisher, with a wingspan nearing two feet, will nest in burrows dug into a soft earth bank.



Non-venomous Florida banded water snake, which inhabits nearly all freshwater habitats throughout Florida, eat crayfish, fish, tadpoles, frogs, toads, salamanders, newts.



Close-up of Florida banded water snake.

Donation Strategies by Chris Gair

Rising Rates and Charitable Giving

Headline financial news now focuses on rising interest rates and just how high they'll go and for how long. Good news for savers, but the intended result is to slow borrower's use of credit that translates into the Fed's goal Remainder Annuity Trusts (CRAT's), it can mean quite a bit. We'll avoid all the technical jargon and simply say that the higher rates go (especially on U. S. Treasury securities), the bigger deduction you receive when creating a CRAT.

And, as stated in previous issues, this form of trust can pay you – or a family member – now or be a part of your estate planning. The best result may be available from creating a CRAT as a beneficiary of your IRA. Here, you can provide up to a twenty-year payout to the next generation (even grandchildren) with no tax due when the trust is funded.

If you have an interest here, your CPA can run scenarios to show just how meaningful this plan can be.

And more good news from a bipartisan group of Senators who are calling for temporary breaks in charitable giving. As of now, and based on the latest numbers, less than 8% of 2020 tax payers who itemized claimed a charitable deduction. Now match that against almost 330 billion in individual gifts and the proposed legislation makes taxpayer sense. The legislation will allow "off-the-top" deductions for charitable gifts and that will benefit us all. We'll keep you posted and I'm sure the media will be all over this as more comes to light.

Mr. Chris Gair of Fort Myers is providing the FOF with thoughts and ideas in the ever-changing world of charitable giving. Mr. Gair is retired after 48 years as a Trust Officer in Southwest Florida and is a member of the FOF Fundraising Committee.

As with all matters financial, always consult with your attorney or tax advisor.

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/>)

"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!



You can now donate to FOF via your Fidelity Investment account with a Charitable program called the Fidelity Giving Marketplace. Follow this link for more information: <https://www.fidelitycharitable.org/>

**To Donate via the Friend's website,
visit www.Orchidswamp.org**

Membership News

Members make a difference!

Welcome new members: James Mann, Juliet Gross, Jo-Ellen Vernali Knoeri, and John Stuart.

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



Visit the Fakahatchee via
FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Follow us!

<https://www.facebook.com/orchidswamp>
<https://www.instagram.com/friendsoffakahatchee/>

*Share your pictures and stories about your
visit to the Fakahatchee.*

E-mail your shots to

connect@orchidswamp.org

*Add hashtags to show up in existing
collections: #fakahatcheestrands,*



Board Members

President – Glen Stacell

Vice Pres. – Virginia Palmer Skok

Secretary – Tom Trotta

Treasurer – Phil McGuire

Wally Baldwin

Rudi Ettrich

Eric Foht

John Kaiser

Debra Tayler

Ex-Officio

Bruce Bunch

Dennis Giardina

Tom Maish

Executive Director

Francine Stevens

Board of Directors meeting schedule

May 21, 2023

June 18, 2023

July 16, 2023

Sept 17, 2023

Oct 15, 2023

Nov 19, 2023

Dec 16, 2023

Meetings are scheduled
for 10:30 AM

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

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