

Swamp Buggy Rides Again



On April 8, 2002, Preserve Manager Greg Toppin received a proposal from Ralph Bellman of the Golden Eye Corporation, a surveying company, to sell their swamp buggy and trailer to the Preserve for \$26,000. On April 11 Greg, FOF President Russ Reay, Vice President Lee Russell and Board Members Marilyn Russell and Kerrie Chobot met to check over the buggy and give it a test drive. As you can see from the photo, this is a very nice machine. A mail-in

vote was taken to approve a FOF expenditure of \$6,000 to purchase the buggy, and carried by majority vote of 11-3-1. The balance of \$20,000 is to be paid by the State.

The opposing voters were concerned about the image of a preserve purchasing a swamp buggy, but Greg assures us that the buggy will be used to further the goals of the Unit Management Plan by facilitating work projects (exotic removal, primarily) and at special functions under strict guidelines. It will not be taken into sensitive areas that could harm rare plants.

A special thanks to Russ for approaching the State to set aside funds. Mike Bullock, Assistant Director of Recreation and Parks, secured \$20,000 from the State that was applied to the purchase. Thank you, Mr. Mike! And thanks to Ralph Bellman, too, who provided the buggy and worked hard to wrap up the deal.

We also need to thank the seven Friends who very generously gave gifts of \$500 that made it possible to fund the FOF share of the purchase: Karen Cabral, Spencer & Barbara Doty, Richard & Marian Klein, Victoria Nagle, Russ & Kerrie Reay, Lee & Marilyn Russell, and Frank & Martha Witherspoon. A permanent plaque will be mounted on the buggy to commemorate these donors, the Friends of Fakahatchee, and the State of Florida Department of Recreation and Parks. The balance of the funds paid by the FOF was raised through our famous raffle last December, thanks to Lee and Marilyn. Thanks also to all the participants in these events, and the individual and corporate donors of the raffle prizes.



Bylaws Proposed to Change

Congratulations to our new board members, Nancy Fessenden, Betty Foster, Jack Horner, and Vicky Nagle, as well as to our new officers, Pres. Lee Russell, Vice Pres. Patty Huff, Treasurer Marilyn Russell, and Secretary Kerrie Chobot. At the June 3rd Regular Board Meeting, the board will discuss changes to the bylaws, so if you would like to be a part of the process, please plan on attending at 5:00 at the Everglades Community Church in Everglades City.

The first proposed change involves changing the date of our annual meeting to sometime during the season so that more members can attend the annual picnic. This change also affects the terms of office of the board of directors.

The second proposed change is to increase the petty cash limit. As it stands now, petty cash needs to be replenished every \$300. Due to the few number of meetings during the year, it would be

more practical to raise this limit.

The third is a clarification of recorded voting. The bylaws provide a means to take votes by telephone, but it is vague on who can call for this vote and how it is recorded.

The final issue involves the number of board members. The current bylaws allow for up to 25 to be on the board, and some members feel that this is not practical.

In accordance with the current bylaws, changes may be made by a majority of directors in attendance at the meeting, provided there is a quorum, but only if the membership has been made aware that changes will be addressed. Please accept this as formal notice and an invitation to be present at the meeting to let your opinions be heard. The board welcomes participation and looks forward to having a productive meeting.

Exotic Removal Day Brings Bonus Photo Op



Photo by Lee Russell

On April 2, 2002, ten FOF members, Signe Backus, Kerrie Chobot, Barbara Lewinski, Dennis Marlin, Bill Mesce, Chuck Peters, Lee Russell, Bud Scott, Greg Toppin, and Jerry Winters, set out to rid a little corner of the Strand of the dreaded melaleuca. We lopped, sawed, pulled, and sprayed approximately 200 trees of all sizes, until the heat of the day got the best of us. Then we hauled 11 sticks out with the prospect of turning them into walking sticks that the FOF can sell. Thanks to Dennis for providing the transportation and rigging up the shade tarp for our picnic lunch. Also, as a bonus, an Eastern screech owl stuck her head out from a hole in a cabbage palm snag (see photo). We think we woke her up, because she was squinting, or maybe it was just the sunlight.

At any rate, she didn't leave the area, so she could have been nesting. We moved the buggy when we realized she was being stressed by our presence. If you haven't been out for a work day in the Strand, join us next time for the fun. It's a great time to get to know our Friends.

M You are about to enter *The*
O *MO Zone* .. news from our
biologist, Mike Owen.

April's bird sightings included three common nighthawks on Janes Drive, chimney swifts by the Preserve office, swallow-tailed kites, an American redstart, a black & white warbler, and a ruby-throated hummingbird that was seen on 4-stakes prairie. See below for a word about the eastern screech owl. A live 15-inch striped crayfish snake and a dead diamondback rattlesnake were found on JSD, as well as another roadkill rattlesnake on US41 west of the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. In May, several female deer were seen on JSD, a female wild turkey, and a dead striped crayfish snake. At the Boardwalk were several Cuban anoles, one green anole, and a gray squirrel, but the bald eagles have left the nest for the season.

This is also a good time to see butterfly orchids in the Strand, and there are at least three ghost orchid spikes being monitored. Call the Preserve Office if you are interested in a swamp walk to see the ghosts in bloom in late June or July. There is a \$15 charge to the FOF.

On May 12, the FFWCC found the den of Panther #83 (an F1 hybrid cougar) with one 3.8-lb. male kitten (#123). #83 is considered the wildest panther because she is hard to catch. The kitten is 1/4 cougar and does not have a kink in its tail (an inbreeding mutation if present) and blood samples will identify the DNA for future reference. Panthers typically have 1-4 kittens.



Print by Pat Tadema entitled
Everglades Queen from
Florida Wildlife magazine

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS:

Held at Everglades Community Church Annex, on the Circle in Everglades City at 5:00 p.m.

JUNE 3

OCTOBER 14

DECEMBER 2

Everyone Welcome

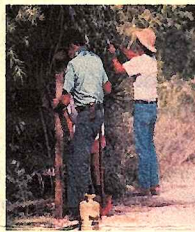
HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

Slow Down, Enjoy the Ride



If you hear sirens behind you on Janes Scenic Drive, it's because you're speeding! On April 10 Preserve Manager Greg Toppin, Ranger Dave Henley, and volun-

teers Chuck Peters, Lee Russell, and Jerry Winters installed three speed limit signs on Janes. They also erected reflective marker posts at the culverts and straightened signs and posts, and cut and sprayed around sign posts so they can be more easily seen. Then on April 23, Bill Mesce, Lee & Marilyn Russell, Greg and Dave continued the effort, but still couldn't quite finish, so on the 30th Russ Reay and Kerrie Chobot pitched in on another work day. Well, guess what, still not done, so the regular crew will go back out on May 22. It looks like our two-day job turned into five or six. The speed limit, by the way, is 30 mph. Forewarned is forearmed; you will be ticketed.



Road-Kill Korner

by Marilyn Russell

It's been pretty quiet since our May Annual Picnic - just deer, deer, and more deer. One lovely doe had twin fawns with her that still had their spots. They seem to enjoy the new growth along the first couple of miles of Janes Scenic. The last two weeks we've seen them chomping away.

The Jr. Ranger Program this past season was as fun for us as for the kids and their parents. Many of the kids were from Europe, and we had a number of Juniors from Canada. If they complete the course, I send certificates, and seven have been sent so far. We do ask that they complete and return a participation card to Park Manager Greg Toppin, but I'm sure we have many who, although they qualify and do receive pins, certificates, etc., do not return the cards, which is unfortunate because this is the only way the State can keep records of our participating youngsters. Ah, well, worse things can happen.

May 7th, Lee and I went to Golden Terrace Elementary School to put on a short program for seven classes of 5th graders. What a hoot! Talk about enthusiasm and questions! Again, we don't know who had more fun, them or us. The only real problem was all questions from the groups that were addressed to Lee had to be translated by me. No, no! They spoke English, but Lee just couldn't hear them. But does he need a hearing aid? What? Huh? Men are SO vain!

The media center of the school was so thrilled with our presentation that they begged to keep at least the picture boards for one week. Of course, we were happy to oblige. All our pictures are now 8 x 10s, and very much easier to see. We're ready for the Boardwalk next season, and could sure use some help. Call us at (239) 393-2469.

P.S. Hey, Paul Allen, we've got a picture of a five-foot diamondback rattler from the south side of the Fakahatchee. Sweetest little thing you have ever seen, wouldn't hurt a flea! (He was dead.)

Dutch Scientists Dig Up the Past

In March, four scientists from the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands, (Timme Donders, Claire Schreurs, Rike Wagner, and Wolfram Kürschner) visited Fakahatchee to do some research on the history of El Niño years. They inform us that they can reconstruct past conditions by studying the peat (murky black soil) along the Boardwalk, because the layers of leaf litter contain fossil leaves that date back 2000 years! During El Niño years, there is a much higher rainfall than usual, and unique qualities of the vegetation reveal what the weather conditions were like throughout history. Pollen grains are also well preserved and can tell how the forests were developed long before human intervention. Early results show that the area has been "species rich for a long time (about 1,000 years)." But pollen data showed effects of lumbering and agriculture in the 1940s. Another change was a rise in hardwood trees (popash, oak and red maple) during the last century, which was due to the lowering of the water table by eight feet from the canal system. Tree ring samples taken will also reveal their ages and the environmental conditions. The goal of the study is to determine the effects of human impact and the role of natural variation on Fakahatchee's ecosystem.

What We Are

The Friends of Fakahatchee is a Citizen Support Organization of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, an entity of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The Preserve comprises over 80,000 acres of land of the Big Cypress Swamp and is about 15 miles long and five miles wide, bordering US 41, I-75 and SR 29. The Fakahatchee Strand is the largest cypress strand in the world and its slough is the deepest in the greater Everglades.

Our address is: Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Inc., P.O. Box 548, Copeland, FL 34137

Phone: (239) 695-4593 Fax: (239) 695-4947 Visit our Website at: friendsoffakahatchee.org

Who We Are

Officers: President, Lee Russell, Port of the Islands; Vice President, Patty Huff, Everglades City; Treasurer, Marilyn Russell, Port of the Islands; Secretary, Kerrie Chobot, Everglades City; **Board of Directors:** Franklin Adams, Everglades City; Howard Branch, Palmetto; Jan Brock, Ochopee; Karen Cochran, Chokoloskee; Nancy Fessenden, Naples; Betty Foster, Bonita Springs; Jack Horner, Fort Myers; Bill Mesce, Copeland; Vicky Nagle, Everglades City; Judi Pritchard, Bonita Springs; Russ Reay, Everglades City; Greg Toppin, Copeland