



The 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

We first want to mention the passing of Elsa Caldwell on July 10, 2023. Elsa lived in Miami and was one of the founding members of the Friends of Fakahatchee. She served as the second President in 2000. Elsa received the Mel Finn award in 2008 as a recognition for her dedication. For two decades Elsa stayed in touch and continued to attend FOF events. We have included more information and photos following this letter.

The Visitor Center renovation is finally moving along nicely with DEC Contracting Group. The installation of the exterior Hardie plank siding is finished and painted. After a complete electrical rewire the drywall was installed. Everything else has followed with just few items left to be done. As soon as the County's certificate of completion is issued, we'll be able to furnish the Visitor Center using the grants received from the FL State Parks Foundation and Lee County Electric Cooperative.



In all, the 1967 structure was at the end of its useful life. It was stripped down to the wall studs and rebuilt to meet current Collier County building codes. **We are grateful for your support, generosity, and patience to make this project possible.**

Cordially,

Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens

Welcome New Park Manager Joe Berger

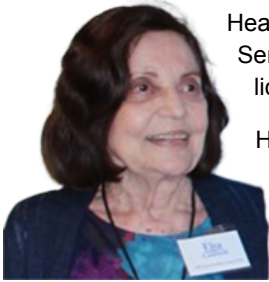
Joe Berger was confirmed as the Fakahatchee Park Manager on July 1, 2023. Joe previously was the Assistant Park Manager at Collier-Seminole State Park. He is pictured here with most of the Fakahatchee Park staff. Missing from the photo is Fakahatchee Biologist Cole Luttrell.

Left to right: Park Ranger William Green, Park Services Specialist Steven Bass, Volunteer Coordinator Alex Gobel, Park Ranger Rebecca Thornhill, New Park Manager Joe Berger.



Farewell to FOF friend Elsa Caldwell, 1932 – 2023

Elsa passed away peacefully on Monday, July 10, 2023. She was born in Puerto Rico and spent time in many parts of the world, but Miami had always been home. After graduating from the University of Miami, she held various positions as a Clinical Chemist, including Clinical Specialist at DuPont. She was Executive Director of a state professional association, and served on several boards and committees, including the Governor's Task Force on Articulation of Healthcare Education and the Florida Alliance for Healthcare Manpower. She received the Outstanding Service Award from the Florida Society for Clinical Laboratory Service, and won appointment from the State of Florida to provide Continuing Education approved by the State for licensure requirements.



Her most recent civic and cultural activities included the University of Miami Alumni Association, Friends of Chamber Music, the Historical Association of Southern Florida, and Fairchild Tropical Gardens. She was fluent in French and Spanish and pursued her interest in local history and historic preservation, as well as Everglades ecology. She was a founding member of Friends of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve, where she served as Board member and President, and received the prestigious Mel Finn Award.

Elsa is predeceased by her loving husband of 55 years, Allen Caldwell. She is survived by daughters Carolyn Caldwell of Columbus, Ohio and Jacquelyn Caldwell of Coral Gables.



Elsa Caldwell at First FOF Board meeting. From Left: Cindy Kackney, First President Roger Drykstra, Park Manager Greg Toppin, Elsa Caldwell, JoAnn Toppin, Unknown, Allen Caldwell.



Two decades later in 2018 Elsa Caldwell joins all FOF Presidents. From left: Glen Stacell, Elsa Caldwell, Patrick Higgins, Patty Huff, John Elting, Francine Stevens, Tom Maish.

News from the Strand

Enjoying Wildflowers

by Virginia Palmer Skok

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:

"Many Northerners anxiously wait for Spring rains to bring flowers. Unlike other parts of the country, South Florida can experience a kaleidoscope of shapes and colors of wildflower blossoms throughout the year. I am in awe when I see them all over Collier County. I take pictures to capture each beautiful masterpiece of nature, whether it is an endangered plant or what some consider a weed. They are everywhere; I see them in my work as a naturalist researching endangered plants in the Everglades."



Read more of the the article in the Coastal Breeze at <https://tinyurl.com/collierwildflowers>.

Garden prescribed burn by FOF Board member



Eric Foht, Director of Natural Resources at the Naples Botanical Garden, is no stranger to the benefits of prescribed burns. Despite his busy schedule he still finds time to serve on the FOF Board.

Visitor Center renovation nears completion

Executive Director Francine Stevens photographed the Visitor Center renovation progress in mid-July. The exterior and the interior are both looking great, and the improvement behind the surfaces is just as impressive. Thanks to the grants received from the FL State Parks Foundation and Lee County Electric Cooperative, we will be able to furnish the Visitor Center after we receive the County's certificate of completion. Our heartfelt gratitude for your support, generosity, and patience to bring this project to fruition!



Front of the renovated Visitor Center.



Side view.



Rear of building



Interior, looking toward the front door.



Interior, looking toward the rear of the building.

Seen in the Strand

Butterflies bless the Fak

Olga Ettrich was out in the Park recently. Fortunately for us she captured the lovely photos shared below. Many species of butterflies extract salts and minerals from damp sand or mud. In some species only males participate in "mud-puddling," and it is believed that the nutrients may be used as a gift during mating.

Butterflies are cold-blooded, which means they can't regulate their body temperature. Mornings – and during cooler days – they alight in the sun with their wings spread, raising their body temperature enough to fly.



Two Eastern Tiger Swallowtails "mud-puddling" and a White Peacock sunning.

Butterflies, turtles and woodpeckers, oh my!

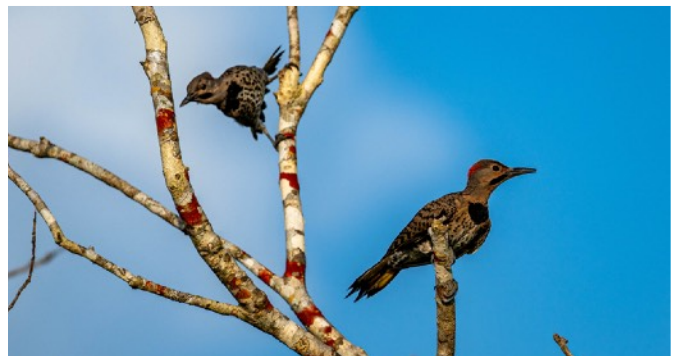
Phil McGuire also got out and enjoyed the Park not long ago, and he was fortunate to photograph these residents. Hatchling turtles can be especially difficult to see when driving, and sometimes even walking when your attention is drawn to the birds and butterflies all around, so remember to keep an eye out for them.



Is this Zebra Swallowtail sunning, nectaring, or simply resting on this Pickerelweed bloom?



Phil asks us to give this tiny Three-striped Mud Turtle hatchling (and all turtles) a chance.



Northern Flickers are members of the Woodpecker family.

Donation Strategies by Chris Fair

There's one thing AI will never do...

It's here, like it or not: AI (Artificial Intelligence) is the new landscape for corporate innovation. A recent publication from a high-end "boutique" money manager predicts AI on a desktop will become the boss's new assistant even to the point of analyzing the outcomes of proposed wills and trust instruments. (I am glad to be retired!) In the next few years we will see the effects of AI impact our lives in everything from medicine to banking.

But gratefully – and certainly in the spirit of the continued success of Friends – the very personal experience of gifting to charity will always be just that...personal. Our dedicated donors understand this and receive a level of satisfaction with every visit to this special place.

With this in mind, we take this opportunity to explore ideas and options to help you navigate the complex world of charitable giving. One opportunity that I encountered many times is the paid-up whole life insurance policy that has outlived its 'need' in your financial planning. Typically, when we are near or after retirement, there is no longer need for life insurance.

These policies are great candidates for gifts and really quite simple to transfer to us. A life insurance policy, like any other financial instrument, is an asset you own and can give. So, if there is tucked away in a safe deposit box that policy which no longer fits your needs, please consider donating it to Friends. Your CPA or estate planning attorney can give you guidance on how your taxes are impacted.

There is not one thing artificial about intelligent giving to a great cause like Friends of the Fakahatchee, and we are truly grateful to all of you that help.

*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.***

New Volunteer Coordinator Alex Gobel

Volunteer Coordinator Alex Gobel will be happy to assist you with any of your volunteer related inquiries.

You can contact Alex by e-mail at alex.gobel@floridadep.gov or you can phone him at 239-359-4927.



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

"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: Terry Brown, William Daily, Andres Vila, and Amber Shields.

Thanks to two new Life Members: Garry Johnson and Maria Sendmanat.

We have 364 members.

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:
#fakahatcheestrand, #friendsoffakahatchee,
#fakahatcheestrandpreservestatepark

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

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.

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/>)

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