



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 begin our letter with a message of appreciation to Eric and Rita Bauer for a one-of-a-kind donation. Eric & Rita authored a book titled the "Orchids of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park," and they authorized the FOF to reproduce the book for the sole purpose of raising funds to support the park.

This beautiful 42-page color picture book catalogues 40 orchids living the Fakahatchee. Made of heavy weight paper and 8" x 5" in size, the book is sturdy and small enough to carry with you and yet big enough that you won't need a magnifying glass to read the text. The book



answers once of the most common questions asked: "When do the orchids bloom?"

The "Orchids of the Fakahatchee" will be available for sale at the renovated Visitor Center which we are working to open around Thanksgiving. Of course the book will be available at the December 16th Members Welcome Back Picnic Luncheon.

If you would like to reserve your book for pick up at the Visitor Center or at the Members Welcome Back picnic, please e-

mail FOF_90@hotmail.com and we will personally respond to you with the information we require to reserve your \$20.00 book.

Our sincere gratitude to Eric and Rita!

*Cordially,
Glen Stacell and Francine Stevens*



Save the Date!



Save **Saturday, December 16** for the Annual Welcome Back Luncheon picnic. This year we are celebrating the Friends 25th Anniversary! Members will receive a special bulletin in November with more details about the event. The event will be in the Park under the pole barn.

Tickets now on sale for 2023-2024 Tours

Thanks to our fabulous Volunteers, the Friends Tours program is scheduled. To view the complete schedule of all tours October through mid-April 2024 – and to purchase tickets – please visit this link to reach the FOF Eventbrite page: <https://tinyurl.com/FOFtours>.

You can also go directly to the FOF Eventbrite page for each tour by using the link for each tour.

Remember! Tickets go fast – and they make terrific gifts!

Did you know we can organize a group tram tour for you? For a group of 12 or more please call the Friends office at 239-695-1023



The season begins with the first Night Sky Tour on Saturday, October 7 – <https://tinyurl.com/night-sky-tour>. Photo by Elizabeth Williams.



Moonlit Tram Tour are SOLD OUT! Photo by Glen Stacell.



Friday Morning Tram Tours begin on December 1 – <https://tinyurl.com/tram-tour> Photo by Francine Stevens.



Advance Swamp Walk Saturday Tours start January 20 – <https://tinyurl.com/swamp-walk> Photo by Andy Skok.

News from the Strand

Volunteers needed for new Visitor Center



We are seeking dedicated volunteers to provide services at the newly renovated Visitor Center off Janes Scenic Drive. Volunteers will be responsible for informing visitors on how to best enjoy their experience in the Park. They will also manage selling merchandise for the Friends of Fakahatchee, raising funds to support the Park, keeping track of the inventory and completing daily paperwork.

Please note that **each volunteer is not required to do all the above**; we can accomplish all this by teaming up volunteers.

Volunteers will be trained (by the Friends) on how to operate the point-of-sale device for credit card sales of the merchandise. *They will also have the opportunity to attend regular outings in the park to gain helpful knowledge to inform visitors.*

Our new Visitor Center offers a professional yet relaxing atmosphere, and having fun while volunteering is expected!

Interested individuals can contact Volunteer Manager Alex Gobel at: Alex.Gobel@FloridaDEP.gov

Office Phone: (239)-961-1925

Calling all Volunteers!



Alex Gobel is ready and waiting for your call or e-mail regarding **volunteer opportunities to assist Park Staff working in the Park**. There are opportunities for many kinds of help! Work such as greeting and orienting visitors – and in the near future volunteering at the new Boardwalk site – are needed and can be enjoyed by anyone who prefers less strenuous tasks.

Projects such as clearing trails, wildlife and plant surveys, equipment maintenance and more are always in need of volunteers. Park Staff will provide you with the training to conduct surveys and/or operate equipment safely to work in the field.



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

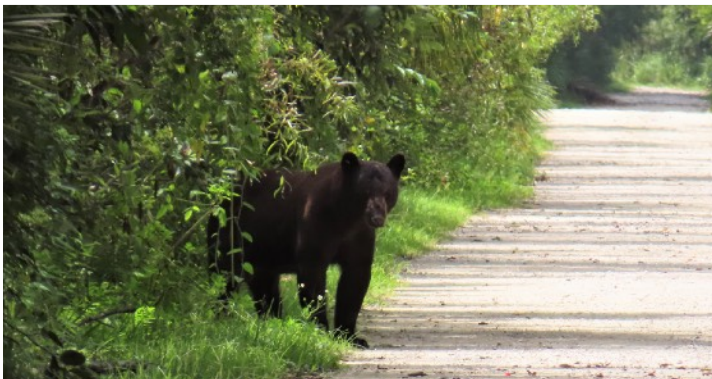
Late Summer in the Fakahatchee



Phil McGuire quietly captured this deer peacefully crossing Janes Scenic Drive.



Looks like this big gator was posing for Dino Barone's camera.



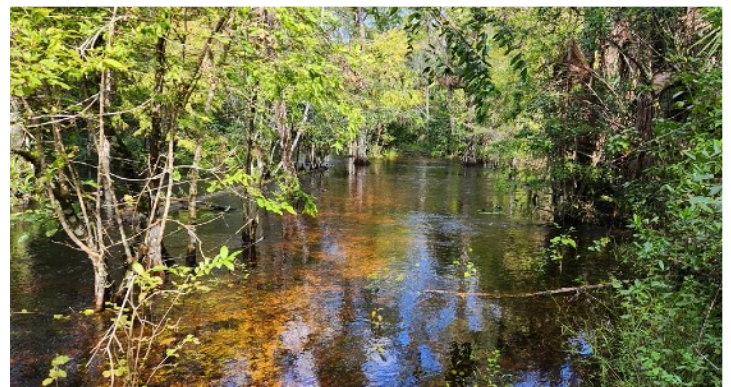
Dino Barone was recently out in the Fak with his camera. Here's the evidence of his stealthiness and patience. These two photos show the arrival and departure of a Florida Black Bear on Janes Scenic Drive.



Dino also snapped this cute baby gator's picture.



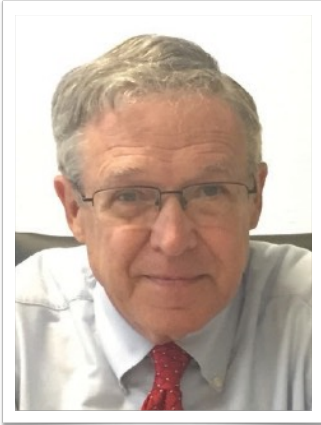
You'll have to ask Dino just how large that turtle was; that is no baby alligator!



The beautiful waters of the Fakahatchee are on display in these photos by Dino.

Donation Strategies by Chris Fair

If you want to get less sooner, simply tax it.



That maxim applies to charitable gifting as well. Consider the case in Michigan in 2011 when the state legislature repealed the benefit of a state tax credit for gifts up to \$400 for particular charities. The result was an immediate decrease of one-half of \$400 donations. Thank goodness for Florida's Constitution that prohibits a state income tax.

Seen the other way, in 2020 Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act which granted a \$600 charitable deduction to most tax payers for gifts of cash. Note that less than ten percent of us can itemize our deductions. The result: over forty million households took advantage of the \$600 deduction and gave over ten billion in charitable donations!

The point here is the landscape of our legal and tax laws is ever-changing and complex at both the state and federal level. What to give and from what source? What is the tax impact of giving cash instead of appreciated securities, or perhaps some of each? Can I provide for my family and the Friends at the same time? While there is no end of websites offering ideas and guidance, there is only one YOU and your situation is unique.

I have enjoyed the privilege of working with the dedicated folks at Friends long enough to know how sensitive and attuned they are to their donor's goals.

I also know how easy it is to make a mistake in the absence of professional guidance. **Don't let buyer's remorse become donor's remorse – work with a qualified advisor to explore all your gifting options.** Friends is there to help with the promise that your gift will be put to the best of use.

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

“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!

No new members.

We have 350 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

Nov 19, 2023
Dec 16, 2023
January 21, 2024
February 18, 2024
March 23, 2024

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 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