



# Protect. Educate. Inspire.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton  
239-699-4754

[ChelleTrav@aol.com](mailto:ChelleTrav@aol.com)

Caption: "Ding" Darling Refuge manages nearly 6,500 acres of land on Sanibel Island.

### **'Ding' Darling grows by 36 acres**

Many years in the making, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island recently acquired a 36-acre parcel bordered on three sides by existing refuge property and on one side by the Gumbo Limbo neighborhood.

"Adding this parcel to the refuge is important as it is sizeable acreage surrounded almost entirely by mangrove forest," said Refuge Manager Kevin Godsea. "The acquisition will ensure that the bird habitat will be protected, and the mangroves will remain resilient in the face of storms and sea level rise."

The process of purchasing the parcel through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) began with previous refuge manager Paul Tritaik. The FWS purchased the land from property owners based in Miami for the appraised value of \$50,000.

The land is suitable habitat of mangrove cuckoos and other mangrove forest birds, said Godsea. It will require some restoration, namely the removal of exotic Australian pine trees, but there are no immediate plans to begin that project as the refuge team is currently working on restoration of its 68-acre Lee Anne Tauck Conservation Tract on the refuge's north side. A combined effort between the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), Lee County Conservation 20/20, and the refuge made that acquisition possible in 2019.

“The ‘Ding’ Darling Wildlife Society strongly supports the refuge’s mission to preserve as much wild land as possible for the future of our wildlife and planet,” said Birgie Miller, DDWS executive director. “We count on the collaboration of our partners in conservation to work together in preserving land both on and off the islands.”

#### ABOUT DDWS

As a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, DDWS works to support J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge’s mission of conservation, wildlife and habitat protection, research, and public education through charitable donations and Refuge Nature Shop profits.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit [dingdarlingsociety.org](http://dingdarlingsociety.org) or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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