



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

Caption: Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille sponsors the 2021 "Ding" Darling Day at a top level.

'Ding' Darling Day @ Lakes Park takes shape

To further its mission to reach and connect with underserved urban communities, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge migrates its 33rd annual "Ding" Darling Day celebration to Lakes Park in Fort Myers on Sunday, Oct. 10, 2021. The refuge, in partnership with the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), Tarpon Bay Explorers recreation concession, conservation partners, and community sponsors – is drawing up a schedule of tours and ongoing activities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. that day.

The free celebration will center at Lakes Park's main pavilion, where the refuge WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) mobile interactive experience will be open to touring, and partner exhibitors will host Conservation Carnival games and informational booths. Visitors can earn tickets by playing games to exchange for a free Southern SnoBalls treat (while supplies last), courtesy of DDWS, and other prizes.

Among the carnival games, "Ding" Darling hosts a dunk tank featuring a variety of "celebrity dunkees," including Refuge Manager Kevin Godsea, Ranger Toni Westland, and Tice Elementary vice principal Katie Riemenschneider.

Scheduled tours that visitors can sign up for that morning will include a bring-your-own-bike tour, guided birding walks in Spanish or English, a Mindfulness Walk, and Nature Journaling with Refuge 2021 Artist in Residence Rachel Pierce.

“We are having so much fun reinventing ‘Ding’ Darling Day to make that connection actually out IN the community as part of the refuge system’s Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, who chairs the event’s committee.

DDWS still seeks sponsors for the event, which will be highly publicized throughout the Southwest Florida area. Contact April Boehnen at april@dingdarlingsociety.org or 239-472-1100 ext. 4 for more information.

Sponsors to date include: **Great Egret:** Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille; **Great Blue Heron:** John R. Wood Properties, Island Sun/The River Weekly News; **Reddish Egret:** Bank of the Islands, Mitchell’s SandCastles; **Snowy Egret:** Florida SouthWestern State College Foundation, Florida Weekly, Jensen's Twin Palm Cottages & Marina Resort, McCallion & McCallion Realty, Media Source, Sanibel Moorings Resort, Southern SnoBalls.

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 or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

###