



FALL 2021

Society Pages

News from Friends of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, the non-profit Friends of the Refuge organization, supports the J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex through the generation of independent funds to undertake student education, internships, research projects, informational literature, advocacy, land acquisition, and facility enhancements. Efforts may extend beyond the Complex's borders and involve partnerships with like-minded conservation organizations.

OCTOBER 10

'DING' DARLING DAY @ LAKES PARK



To further its mission to reach and connect with underserved urban communities, the Refuge migrates its 33rd annual "Ding" Darling Day celebration to Lakes Park in Fort Myers on October 10.

The Refuge — in partnership with DDWS, Tarpon Bay Expeditions, and generous sponsors — has put together a schedule of tours and activities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on October 10.

The free celebration will center at Lakes Park's Main Pavilion, where the Refuge WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) mobile inter-

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DDWS Celebrates 40 Years

Facing staff shortages to handle its new administration building's "welcome area" in 1982, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge started a volunteer program. But it needed help. That's when the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) came together as a nonprofit organization to, at its inception, support the volunteer program. It incorporated on October 6, 1982, with volunteers stepping in as officers.

This year, DDWS, one of the first two friends group created for the National Wildlife Refuge System, begins celebrating its 40th anniversary. During the past four decades, its support of "Ding" Darling has widened broadly to embrace support of conservation education programs, water quality and wildlife research, land acquisition campaigns, internships, and staffing through retail operations — two physical and one online Nature Stores — and fundraising.

The celebration begins with the reveal of a new 40th anniversary logo for DDWS. The Refuge joins the group in planning a calendar of special events that include "Ding" Darling Day in October, the unveiling of "Ding"



DDWS recently unveiled its 40th anniversary logo.

Darling's own limited-edition Wild Daze Ale beer, the return of Project Refuge: A Couture Fashion Show Using Trash, a virtual walk/run challenge, a Roseate Spoonbill scavenger hunt in partnership with island businesses, four new specialty items (one for each decade) in the Nature Store, art exhibitions, special lectures, and other events.

"The Refuge would be a very different place without the support of our Society friends, so we are beyond excited to celebrate this milestone with them," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "We will

continued on page 6



In 2020, DDWS opened a second Nature Store on Sanibel Island to strengthen its Refuge support.

Invasive Plant Management Funding



FWC funding will help restore newly acquired habitat.


DID YOU KNOW?

Gopher tortoises can live up to 80 years in the wild and more than 100 years in captivity.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) recently awarded DDWS \$75,000 on behalf of the Refuge, which will use the monies for invasive plant management at the upland portion of its new 68-acre Lee Anne Tauck Conservation Tract.

Last year, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

(NFWF) awarded \$5,309,000 to the Refuge to further plans for restoring the tract's wetlands. DDWS partnered on the application for that Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund grant aimed at restoring bird populations affected by the catastrophic BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in 2010.

"This new funding will apply to the tract's acreage not considered wetlands," said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "Whereas the BP grant will help rehabilitate habitat for Refuge shorebirds, the FWC funding will help the Refuge protect Gopher Tortoises, Bobcats, and other upland species." 

TARPON BAY EXPLORERS SCHEDULE

(tarponbayexplorers.com; call ahead to 239-472-8900 to confirm schedule and make reservations)

Tram Tours of Wildlife Drive*: October Sat+Thurs 10am, 12:30pm, and 3pm; November and December Mon+Thurs 10am, 11am, 12:30pm, 1:30pm, and 3pm; Sat+Sun, 10am, 12:30pm, and 3pm

Kayak Trail Tour or Low Tide Paddle*: Mon-Fri 8:30am and daily 10am and 1pm

Sunset Rookery Paddle*: Mon, Wed, Fri, and Sat or Sun. All 2 hours prior to sunset

Breakfast Cruise: Mon, Wed, Fri 8:30am

Standup Paddleboard Tour*: Tues, Thurs, Sat 9am

Nature and Sea Life Cruise: Daily 11am and 2pm

Evening Cruise: Daily 2 hours prior to sunset


Aquarium and Touch Tank: Daily 3:30pm

Rentals and fishing charters: Daily 8am-5pm

*Additional times available Dec. 20-31

Celebrity Birders to Headline Lecture Series

The 2022 "Ding" Darling Lecture Series will bring seven authors and wildlife and art experts to Sanibel Island from February 4 through April 8, including highly acclaimed birding guide gurus David Allen Sibley and Richard Crossley. Lectures will cover topics from Bald Eagles to ornithology and nature art. Stay tuned to dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/lecture-and-film-series.

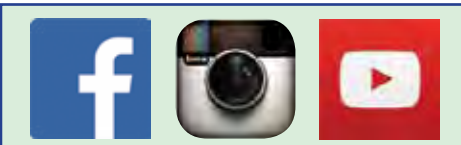
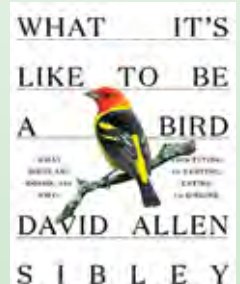
Sponsorships for the lecture series are available for \$5,000 per lecture, which can be shared by up to five individuals/businesses. Please contact April Boehnen at april@dingdarlingsociety.org or 239-472-1100 ext. 4. 



DID YOU KNOW?

At least one parent remains with young Bald Eagles almost constantly for their first two weeks of life. Both parents bring prey to the nest, tearing food into small pieces and feeding it directly to hatchlings for up to three or four weeks.

Renowned ornithologist David Allen Sibley and his newest book *What It's Like to Be a Bird* will headline the 2022 lecture series. Credit: *Erinn Hartman*



STAFF NEWS

Jeremy Gets Promoted

Jeremy Conrad, former Refuge Lead Biologist, has been promoted to the position of Regional Coastal Ecologist for the inventory and monitoring branch of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). While he will remain based at “Ding” Darling, his post will take him throughout the 12-state/territory USFWS Southeast Region.



Jeremy joined Refuge staff in March 2010. Before that, he served as an invasive species biologist at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in Boynton Beach, Florida, and earlier spent four years at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

During his 11 years at “Ding” Darling, Jeremy became known for his important research linking mangroves with sea-level rise mitigation and also as a popular speaker on everything from sea turtles to marshland ecology.

“It has been a great pleasure working with all of the staff and volunteers at the Refuge and the ‘Ding’ Darling Wildlife Society,” said Jeremy. “In my tenure at ‘Ding,’ we have weathered a few hurricanes, significant red tide events, HABs [harmful algal blooms], and massive fish kills; executed prescribed fires; battled non-native invasive plants; endured a coyote invasion; found a black bear on island; seen record sea turtle nesting efforts; completed several restoration projects; built a marine lab; acquired new conservation property; and served our community by prioritizing and protecting Sanibel’s natural resources through it all.”

During the transition, as the Refuge reviews steps it will be taking to fill his position, Jeremy says he will continue supporting “Ding” Darling’s biological program along with Refuge Manager Kevin Godsea and Deputy Refuge Manager Erin Myers. The Refuge and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society are also co-funding biological

technician Avery Renshaw to assist with the transition.

“Jeremy has been a valuable member of our team for many years. He will be missed from our team, but it is also exciting to see Jeremy grow professionally and be recognized as an ecologist who can be of value to the entire region,” said Kevin Godsea. “Luckily he will continue to work out of the Refuge office, so that we can continue to see and interact with him.”

New WoW Education Interns

David Iglesias and Kimi Birrer recently joined the Refuge team, thanks to DDWS funding. They fill roles as educators and bilingual interpreters for the Refuge WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) mobile classroom and other educational “Ding” programs.

A native of northern Kentucky near Cincinnati, Ohio, Kimi graduated from Hanover College in Indiana in May, then did some field work in Wisconsin and worked on a Kentucky horse farm before arriving to “Ding” Darling in August. She majored in environmental biology and Spanish.

Born in Rathway, New Jersey, David has lived the past 25 years in Lima, Peru. He graduated from Peruvian University Cayetano Heredia with a bachelor’s degree in biology in 2018 and since has been working in the field of botany, specifically palynology. Before moving to “Ding,” David was working as a biology teacher assistant for his honors thesis.

“Kimi and David are fluent in Spanish, so they will be such valuable resources in helping us fulfill our mission to reach the local Latino community,” said “Ding” Darling Urban Education Leader Melissa Maher.

“I’ve been studying Spanish seriously since entering college and have volunteered at a local nonprofit at my school that aids immigrants in many ways, mostly with learning English and civics,” Kimi said. “I also spent a year abroad in Costa Rica, where I worked with biologists on projects. I really enjoy language learning and being able to communicate with more people as a result. I’m looking forward to being able to combine my passions for conservation, cross-cultural understanding, and learning.”



“The thing I’m looking forward to the most is learning as much as I can, and to be able to help and teach the children with the WoW outreach program,” said David. “So far, what I like the most about the Refuge, it’s the team. Everyone has been so welcoming and friendly. They make you feel like you are at home. Also, I’ve been amazed by the mangrove ecosystem. All the biodiversity and seeing the interactions between the animals and plants is priceless. It is like living inside the textbook.”

DDWS provides living stipends and other benefits for about a dozen interns each year. For more information about the Refuge internship programs and supporting them, contact Lynnae Messina, DDWS Associate Director, at 239-472-1100 ext. 233. DDWS currently stewards two named internships for the 2020-21 year and is accepting donations for three future named intern funds at \$12,500 a year, which is the cost for supporting one intern.

Farewell, Officer John

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has appointed former Refuge Law Enforcement Officer John Thompson to the position of Criminal Investigator Special Agent. He will be responsible for investigating federal wildlife crimes in upstate New York. “It has been an honor to serve with you,” John told the “Ding” Darling team. “Thank you for your support and service. I wish you continued success in our joint wildlife conservation mission.” Congratulations and best of luck to John! 



DECEMBER 4

Wild Daze Ale Rollout

Mark your calendars and watch “Ding” on the Wing and social media for more information about the rollout of DDWS’s exclusive Wild Daze Ale on December 4 starting at 4 p.m. at Fort Myers Brewing Company in Fort Myers -- part of our 40th Anniversary Celebration. The WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) mobile interactive experience will be onsite for the occasion, along with food trucks and other special goings-on.

JJ Taylor Companies will distribute Wild Daze Ale


throughout Southwest Florida to restaurants and bars, on tap and in cans. The DDWS team encourages all island restaurants to carry Wild Daze. The special brew will be available for a limited window of time — about six months. Already, Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grill and Bailey’s General Store have signed on to make the beer available.

“We have a lot to celebrate in 2021 and 2022, and Wild Daze Ale promises to add fizz and buzz to the celebration,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “We thank Fort Myers Brewing for this spirited collaboration. Our goal is to expand ‘Ding’s’ appeal to a wider, young, multi-cultural audience in a fresh, new way.”

Anyone interested in more information about distributing or purchasing the beer should contact DDWS



Latina artist Emily Alvarez, who grew up in Miami, designed the label for Wild Daze Ale.

Development Officer and project leader April Boehnen at 239-472-1100 ext. 4. 

DDWS 'Friends Group of the Year'

In a recent virtual award ceremony, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) Southeast Region honored the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society with its 2021 Regional Director's Friends Group of the Year award. DDWS supports "Ding" Darling, one of 146 refuges and fish hatcheries within the Southeast region, which encompasses 12 U.S. states and territories. DDWS was one of only two refuge friends groups out of 49 to receive the award this year.

"This stands as a testimony to the hard work each of you put in to make the Lee Anne Tauck Conservation Tract acquisition happen," said Refuge Manager Kevin Godsea in congratulating DDWS. Kevin nominated the group for the award.

In partnership with Lee County Conservation 20/20, DDWS worked to raise \$9.5 million to acquire the largest remaining parcel of undeveloped land on Sanibel Island in 2019. The 68-acre tract was deeded for up to 29 luxury homes. As an important corridor between the Refuge and SCCF (Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation) lands, the property originally known as Wulfert Bayous was deemed critical to the Refuge's conservation mission.

The Refuge now manages the 68 acres as part of the "Ding" Darling complex. The Lee Anne Tauck Con-



DDWS Executive Director Birgie Mille and DDWS-Refuge liaison Ranger Toni Westland display the 2021 Regional Director's Award.

servation Tract soon will be undergoing restoration, thanks to grants DDWS helped facilitate.

"Our amazing staff, donors, and Board of Directors so deserve this award, but it also could not have happened without our wonderful partnerships with the Refuge team and Lee County," said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "This is a huge honor, but even more gratifying is knowing what we all achieved in the name of keeping Sanibel a sanctuary island and this property a valuable habitat for wetland and upland species."

Birgie was among the six specific award recipients named, along with Immediate Past Board President Mike Baldwin, current President Sarah Ashton, Acquisition Project Leader John McCabe, and board members Wendy Kindig and Bill Valerian.

The Regional Director's Honor Award goes out annually to volunteers, partners, and employees who have contributed to the accomplishments of FWS's mission and vision in the South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin Interior Regions.



INCLUDE



Ding

IN YOUR WILL OR ESTATE

PROTECT THE FUTURE... NOW.

Ensuring wildlife has a place to thrive in the future is as easy as naming "Ding" Darling in your will, or designating it as a beneficiary to your retirement plan, IRA, or other financial account.

AN EASY WAY TO GIVE...

- There is no minimum amount for the gift.
- You can change your plans at any time.
- Help protect "Ding" Darling and its wildlife and inspire future generations to do the same.

HOW TO WORD IT:

I give, devise, and bequeath to The "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, Inc., a Florida non-profit corporation located on Sanibel Island, Florida [written amount or percentage of the estate or description of property] for [designate the purpose, if desired, or leave blank for gifts to be used to address the greatest need].



WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU



239-472-1100 EXT. 4 dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/include-ding-in-your-will

Year-End Giving

Help Wildlife and Conservation with a Tax-Deductible Year-End Donation

'Tis the season of giving: Gifts, family, time, parties and celebrations, and donations to non-profit charities. Nationwide, more than 40% of all individual charitable donations are made in December by people wanting to make a difference. It is also an opportunity, through giving, to generate income tax deductions that may help reduce your tax bill for 2021.

Now's the time - up to December 31 - to make a deductible gift.

As 2021 draws to a close, please consider the value of donating to the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society to support the conservation and education efforts at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Your tax-deductible gift helps support the Refuge in areas such as conservation education, water quality and wildlife research, internships, walkways and trails, interpretive exhibits, land acquisition and restoration, and so many other ways to preserve and protect this vital land and inspire future conservation stewards. With so many wonderful charities around the world doing work that makes a difference, please know how much we appreciate that you choose to support the work taking place here at the Refuge.

Your gift, regardless of its size, will make a difference.

Ways to support conservation through the Society:

Online with a Credit Card

On our website (dingdarlingsociety.org), it's easy to make a secure, online, year-end gift to the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society. Options include Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover. Tax-deductible gifts for 2020 can be made any time before 11:59 p.m. (Central Standard) on December 31, 2021.

Checks

Those wishing to receive year-end tax credit need to have a postmark and check date on or before December 31, 2021. Gifts can be made out to the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society and mailed to: "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, P.O. Box 565, Sanibel, FL 33957.

Gifts of Appreciated Stock

Donated appreciated stock (if owned for more than one year) may help you gain a deduction on the fair market value and avoid capital gains tax that might be due if sold outright. Stock transfers should be initiated and received on or before the close of the market on December 31, 2021. To ensure appropriate credit, it is important that you contact the DDWS office when you are ready to make your stock transfer gift by calling 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

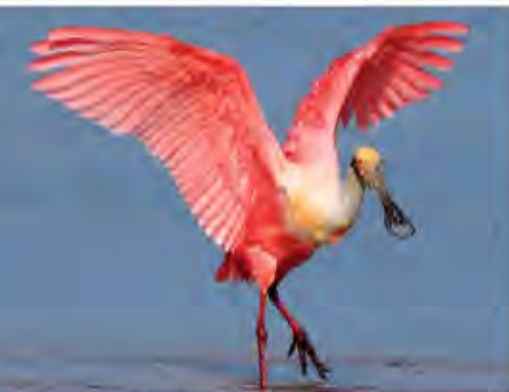
IRA Charitable Rollovers

Congress permanently extended the Qualified Charitable Distribution provision which allows people over age 72 (70 ½ if you reached that age before January 1, 2021) to transfer money from their IRA assets to qualified charitable organizations and have it count as their required minimum distribution without increasing their gross income.

If you are age 72 or older, you can request your financial advisor to make a direct transfer from your IRA to a charity in any amount up to \$100,000 without reporting it as taxable income. Contact your account administrator to write a check to the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society and deliver to the address below. For a year-end tax deduction, envelopes must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2021.

With any charitable gift, we encourage you to check with your professional advisors to see if this type of giving makes sense for you.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, Inc.
Tax Identification #59-2240895
Attn: Birgie Miller
PO Box 565, Sanibel, FL 33957





2022 "DING" DARLING REFUGE

Wish List

Membership donations and annual gifts are essential for the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society to continue its support of conservation and education efforts at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Below are just a **few** unique giving opportunities to enhance the impact of support at the Refuge. To see the scope of the Society's impact and for more ideas and opportunities for giving, please contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext 232 or visit dingdarlingsociety.org.

All gifts are tax deductible.



Honor or Memorial Gift: Any Amount

A gift in honor or memory of a loved one to the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society is a wonderful way to pay tribute to those special in your life. Send a general gift or designate it to a specific area. Gifts of all levels are appreciated and the honoree will be notified (without the amount) of your thoughtfulness. For a gift of \$10,000 or more, a permanently endowed fund can be established.



Tice Elementary School Supplies: \$6,000

As a part of our urban community initiative, we have partnered with the local Tice community in Fort Myers, Florida. Our goal is to meet community needs, build strong relationships, and develop an important conservation ethic for the good of all. One of our first investments was to buy school supplies for all 600 students. Removing that financial burden gives families more time and mental clarity for learning about the environment and other topics.



Everyday Education Supplies: \$50 per class or \$12,500 per year

From owl pellets to nature journals to pencils, countless classroom supplies are in demand by our educators to support the thousands of children who have the chance to learn from the J.N. "Ding" Darling Environmental Education Resource Teacher, in-person or virtually. As the federal education budget continues to decrease, we hope that you will choose to support our educators, who tirelessly teach and inspire our next generation of conservation stewards.



Support a DDWS Development & Communications Intern: \$240/week or \$12,500/year

Throughout the year, two interns come to the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge to gain experience and assist DDWS staff with overall planning and stewardship. These interns, usually recent college graduates, provide invaluable support to the Refuge while gaining hands-on, practical experience as they enter their career field. Help support their living and travel stipends.



WoW Gas Cards: \$50 per card

As our new Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) Mobile Classroom rolls into its second year of educating the surrounding communities, we hope to continue impacting many schools and communities that are often not within a possible or practical driving distance for a daylong trip to the Refuge. Purchase gas gift cards to Speedway, Mobile, Shell, or Wawa to assist with the travel costs. You can send directly to DDWS or via Amazon.



Intern Laptops

Our interns in multiple departments need updated laptops that can handle taking care of visitor requests, virtual teaching, graphic design, and data collection. Help support a much-needed tech improvement to our intern program.



"Ding" Darling Annual Lecture Sponsorship: \$5,000 each (can be split between 5 individuals)

The "Ding" Darling Lecture Series continues with an impressive lineup for the 2022 season. Big names such as David Allen Sibley and Richard Crossley star in this year's series. Show your support for the Refuge by helping us provide this free educational experience for all.

This year, we hope that you choose to support the many conservation and education efforts at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Best wishes in the new year from our "Ding" family to yours.

For more information about making a gift to support an item on the Refuge's 2022 Wish List, please contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 232 or visit dingdarlingsociety.org.

MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

June 1, 2021 – August 31, 2021

Memorial gifts and gifts made in honor of special occasions are a wonderful way to pay tribute to family and friends who are important to us. Throughout the year, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society has received gifts in memory and in honor of loved ones. Thank you to everyone who supported the Refuge in this thoughtful and meaningful way.

We recently received gifts in **MEMORY** of the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| David J. Baues | Dave Jensen |
| Mary Behar | James Kallman |
| Mickey Bowers | Kathryn Kern |
| Jeff Butler | James E. Kowalski |
| Barbara Ann Carter | William and Helen
Kronmueller |
| John E. Carney | Ted Kucera |
| Steve Casler | Bonnie Kuhrt |
| Sydney Chayes, Jr. | Dorothy Kwicklis |
| Richard Cohan | Sue McIntyre |
| John “Jack” Covert III | Judith Moore |
| Nelson Cross III | Bella Netel |
| Clifford Culp | Anna T. Olay |
| Sheila Dann | Deborah Buhse Plonski |
| Mary Carol Dillinger | Whitman Smith |
| Dr. David Drachman | Jim Swisher |
| Gerald Fondessy | Harry and Betty Taif |
| Joann Fosselman | Polly and Doug Talbott |
| Dr. Elizabeth “Betty”
Gazda-Smith | Polly Talbott |
| Cap Grathwohl | Joann R. Tomes |
| Margaret & George Howe | Toshi |
| Elaine Jacobson | Roddy West |

We recently received gifts in **HONOR** of the following:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Sarah Ashton | Peter and Sally Ettlinger |
| Diane Behar | Madeleine Metz |
| Howard Buhse, Jr. | Gordon O’Brien |
| Harriet Edwards | Patty Reynolds |



Once-a-Month Givers

Become a Once-a-Month Giver

Visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/once-a-month-giver to learn how to become a sustainable OMG donor to make sure your support for Refuge wildlife and conservation is continuous and easy.



Color-blind Kieran Loerns, 10, from Tampa, tries out the new scope.

Great American Outdoors Day & Colorblind Scope Unveiling

August 4 marked the first celebration of Great American Outdoors Day across federal lands. At “Ding” Darling Refuge, it also meant the unveiling of a spotting scope engineered specifically for colorblind viewers.

The unveiling drew local print and broadcast media and featured five color-blind testers who shared their impressions seeing colors at the Refuge for the first time. They registered emotions from surprise to wonderment as they described the different colors they were seeing in the water and on pictures of a Roseate Spoonbill that Supervisory Refuge Range Toni Westland showed them.

Toni told those gathered at the observation tower, where the new scope is mounted, that this was the latest in measures the Refuge is taking to increase its accessibility to the greater public.

Among the 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Ref-

uge System, “Ding” Darling is the first to expand its accessibility initiatives to include a colorblind-friendly spotting scope, specially manufactured by SeeCoast Manufacturing using EnChroma’s patented lens technology for color blindness. It is also the first such public opportunity in Florida.

Besides the scope unveiling, the Refuge offered free admission to Wildlife Drive that day, and the Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) mobile interactive experience was available to tour for free. 2021 Artist in Residence Rachel Pierce also did a pop-up plein-air painting demonstration to illustrate the difference between colorblind and normal vision.

One in 12 men (8%) and 1 in 200 women (0.5%) are color-vision challenged; 13 million in the United States alone are born with the genetic deficiency. That means that out of the Refuge’s nearly 1 million visitors annually, statistically, an estimated 42,500 are color blind.



This graphic demonstrates how differently color blind and normal vision viewers see Roseate Spoonbills at the Refuge. Credit: Theresa Baldwin; color-blind conversion courtesy of EnChroma



Visit WoW and enjoy other hands-on activities at "Ding" Darling Day.

'DING' DARLING DAY GREAT EGRET

continued from page 1

active experience will be open for touring, and partner exhibitors will host Conservation Carnival games and informational booths. Visitors can earn tickets from playing games to exchange for a free Southern SnoBall treat (while supplies last), courtesy of DDWS, and prizes.

Among the carnival games, "Ding" Darling hosts a dunk tank featuring a variety of "celebrity dunkees," including Refuge Director Kevin Godsea, Ranger Tom Riemenschneider, and Tice Elementary Vice Principal Riemenschneider.

Scheduled to be a bring-your-own-bike to the refuge, including walks in Spanish or English, Business Walk, and Nature Journaling. Refuge 2021 Artist in Residence [Name] 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.

A big thanks to our sponsors to date:



GREAT BLUE HERON



REDDISH EGRET

400 Rabbits, Mike & Terry Baldwin, 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.

SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society Members & Friends:

This is your formal notice of the Annual Business Meeting of the Society scheduled for **Wednesday, December 1, 2021, at 1 p.m.**, tentatively over Zoom. Please check dingdarlingsociety.org for updates.



40 YEARS

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be honoring a long history of support that has helped make 'Ding' Darling one of the top, most robust refuges in the nation and its friends group a respected model for those that have followed."

Through the 40 years, DDWS has augmented Refuge facilities starting with the current Visitor & Education Center, which was later built in 1999 by dedicated leaders and community support. Most recently, DDWS helped the Refuge bring the ambitious Wildlife on Wheel (WoW) mobile classroom project to fruition.

Other major recent accomplishments include the Wildlife Education Boardwalk, the upgrading and addition of numerous exhibits and trails, the completion of the award-winning America's Best Restroom 2018, the addition of solar paneling to Refuge buildings, and the acquisition of more than 92 acres of land on Sanibel Island. It has bused thousands of students each year for onsite education and will reach thousands more with WoW.

"October 6, 2022, marks our official 40th anniversary, and we have a special committee headed by Terry Baldwin and Dick Levinson working on all the ways we plan to celebrate," says Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director for more than 10 years. "We plan to include all the friends, partners, and supporters we have worked with over the years. Without them, we would not have been able to accomplish all that we have."

Watch dingdarlingsociety.org events to learn more as plans unfold for the 40th anniversary celebration and to learn how to support immediate needs for land acquisition, habitat restoration, education, and biology staffing.



OCTOBER 15

Deadline for Project Refuge Designs

By popular demand, Project Refuge: A Couture Fashion Show Using Trash returns to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. We first introduced Project Refuge in 2019 as part of the Refuge 75th anniversary, and it was a huge hit. This year’s runway-luncheon event takes place March 31, 2022, at The Community House on Sanibel Island.

2019 Project Refuge winner with emcee Rachel Pierce

There’s still time to submit a fashion design using materials destined for the trash bin and landfill. Go online to dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/project-refuge for rules and a design application. Compete for cash prizes but, more importantly, join us in our mission to raise awareness about the importance of repurposing used items and educate about trash management and recycling. For more information, contact April Boehnen at april@dingdarlingsociety.org or 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Responding to Threats to the Refuge

by Jim Metzler, DDWS Advocacy Committee Co-Chair

Protecting “Ding” Darling Refuge from water-related threats requires constant vigilance. Below is a description of our response to two current environmental threats.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Army Corps is wrapping up a project to create a new manual for water

releases from Lake Okeechobee. The Lake Okeechobee System Operation Manual (LOSOM) will dictate if the Refuge can get the water it needs in the dry season and avoid too much water in the wet season.

We and the Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce sent two letters to the Army Corps detailing some key issues that LOSOM must address. We also is-

sued a call to action asking members of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society to send a letter to the corps expressing their views on LOSOM. Thanks to all who responded.

There currently are plans to build a 15-story condominium just before the entrance to the Sanibel causeway. We are not anti-growth, but we recently attended a zoning hearing on the project to register our concerns. Our primary concern is that the developer wants to remove mangroves, which help defend our area against both sea-level rise and harmful algal blooms.

WILDLIFE SPOTLIGHT

Thanks to volunteer Karl Werner for sharing photos of the white morph Reddish Egret that occasionally makes Refuge appearances. Once thought to be a separate species from the more common Dark Morph Reddish Egret, it actually is the same species but with different plumage color.



DID YOU KNOW?

It is estimated that only 10 percent of the Reddish Egret population are white morphs.



One Wildlife Drive
P.O. Box 565
Sanibel, FL 33957

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*Photographic artists
Clyde and Niki Butcher
will make a Nature Store
book-signing meet-and-
greet appearance in
November.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Artist-in-Residence Exhibition October 1-November 10, 2021

"Ding" Darling Day @ Lakes Park October 10, 2021

Clyde & Niki Butcher Meet & Greet @ 2250 Periwinkle
Way Store November 20, 2021

Holiday Shopping @ 2250 Periwinkle Way Store
November 18, 2021

Holiday Shopping @ the Refuge November 23, 2021

DDWS Annual Meeting December 1, 2021

Luminary Shopping @ 2250 Periwinkle Way Store
December 3, 2021

Ding's Wild Daze Ale Rollout December 4, 2021

2022 Lecture Series February 4-April 8, 2022

2022 Film Series on Zoom Dates TBD

Go Wild for "Ding" – Year of the Anhinga, Soar for 40
More February 9, 2022

Project Refuge: A Couture Fashion Show Using Trash
March 31, 2022

10th Annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon
Tournament May 13, 2022