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PRESS RELEASE

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Caption: The family gathered recently to honor Stephen Oresman's 90th.

Family funds 'Ding' intern project in father's name

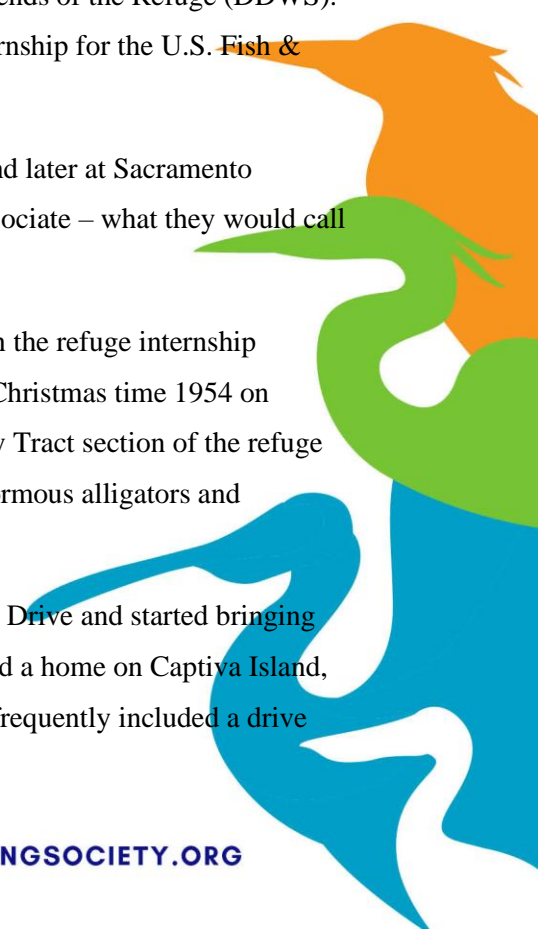
Stephen B. Oresman grew up in New York City, haunting Central Park and the American Museum of Natural History. By age 15, he was elected a member of the Linnaean Ornithological Society of New York City. He was well on his way down a lifetime conservation path that culminated this year when, for his 90th birthday, Oresman's family gifted him with a named fund at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, an internship fund that will inspire future generations of naturalists such as himself.

The permanently endowed Stephen B. Oresman Intern Project Fund will support the refuge's internship program through its non-profit arm, the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). Oresman himself, as a high school student, served in a role similar to an internship for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which oversees the refuge system.

"I worked in an unpaid position at Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland and later at Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge in California," Oresman said. "I was a research associate – what they would call an intern these days."

His lifelong interest in birds and nature led his family to honor Oresman with the refuge internship endowment fund. He and his wife, Enid, first discovered "Ding" Darling at Christmas time 1954 on vacation from the Air Force base in Mobile, Ala. At the time, only the Bailey Tract section of the refuge complex was open to the public for wildlife viewing. He remembers two enormous alligators and thousands of white ibis and egrets flocking in to roost for the night.

On subsequent birding trips to the refuge, Oresman was able to tour Wildlife Drive and started bringing his children and grandchildren along. By 1974, he and his wife had purchased a home on Captiva Island, and their regular shopping trips to Bailey's General Store during their stays frequently included a drive





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through the refuge. He stayed involved with “Ding Darling, donating funds to help build the Visitor & Education Center in 1999.

Back up north in Connecticut, Oresman balanced his business consulting work with conservation pursuits, serving as president of the Connecticut Ornithological Society, chairman of the Connecticut Audubon Society (an organization separate from the National Audubon Society), and a director of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania.

In later years, Oresman was taking his great-grandchildren through the refuge. His daughter Pam and husband Keith Browning now own his home in Captiva. It was her idea to establish an endowed fund in her father’s name to keep alive his legacy and passion for birds, their habitat, and conservation.

“Years ago, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary started an international intern program that was very successful, and I’ve known a number of interns from Hawk Mountain who have gone on to do very good things for raptor conservation in Africa and Asia and South America, so I understand the value of internships,” said Oresman. “You need to know where the next generation of conservationists is coming from. You have to continue to create more generations, and the only way you can do that is to create opportunity, create actual field work that exposes them to the complicated world of conservation.”

“With their gift, the Oresman family honors their father’s commitment to the environment while supporting the refuge in a crucial way,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “Our interns fill in gaps created by federal budgeting shortfalls. They become those stewards of conservation, and many have moved on to impressive roles with private and government conservation organizations.”

For more information on contributing to the existing Oresman Fund or, with a gift of \$10,000 or more, establishing a new permanently endowed fund, contact DDWS Associate Executive Director Sierra Hoisington at 239-472-1100 ext. 233 or shois@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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.

