



www.dingdarlingsociety.org

SPRING 2017

Society Pages

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

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, the nonprofit Friends of the Refuge organization, supports environmental education, services, and conservation at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Education and conservation efforts may extend beyond the complex's borders. We partner in these efforts where possible with like-minded conservation organizations.



Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille once again stands as tournament Title Sponsor.

Tarpon Time!

May 19 marks the sixth annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament. Registration for the 50 available boat entries has already filled as anglers anticipate another exciting tournament, with the highest purse ever due to the rollover from last year's tournament, which resulted in only two winning teams.

As 100% of the purse goes to awards, we raise money from this fundraiser for the Refuge strictly
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Our Go Wild for "Ding" – Give a Hoot annual fundraiser had the crowd booting and opening up their wallets to benefit land acquisition for the Refuge through live auctions on February 10. We raised a total of more than \$90,000 for Refuge support through sponsorships and live and silent auctions.

What a Hoot!



Jim Sprankle with Bill and Diane Valerian, winners of the bid for his Screech Owl slider. The Valerians also won the honor of heading the Sprankle Feather Club next season. Right, Richard Finnan won the Alligator-Heron Sculpture in live auction. Pictured with Richard Johnson, auctioneer, and Cathy Chern



INSIDE: VOLUNTEER AWARDS • NEW RUBBING TABLE • EARTH DAY

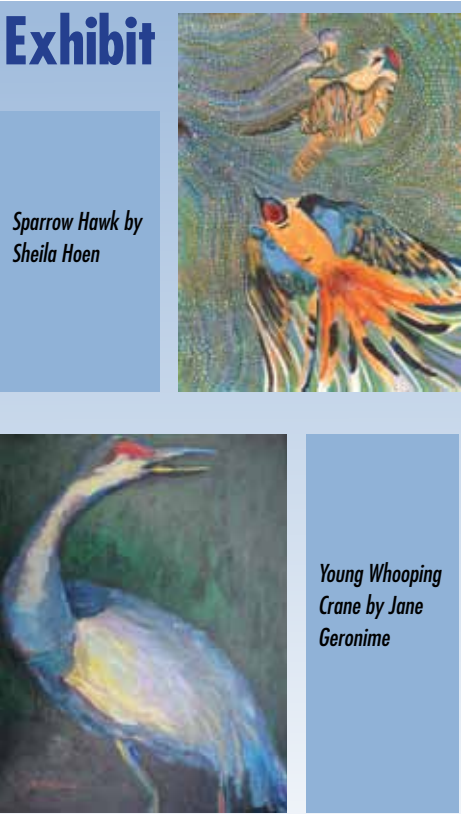
Audubon-Inspired Art Exhibit

A group of local fine artists are displaying their works at the Visitor & Education Center through April 27, 2017. Cello Bennett, widow of the late artist Gale Bennett (1939-2008), curates the “Audubon Inspiration” exhibit, along with artists Marcy Calkins and Jane Hudson.

Before his death in 2008, Gale, a local artist with an international reputation, taught for 40 years at art centers in the area. He was planning a series of paintings inspired by the works of famed bird artist John James Audubon.

“Unfortunately Gale did not live long enough to do this project,” said his wife. “Almost all of the painters preparing the works for the Audubon exhibit... were students of his.” The “Inspiration” group includes Marcy, Pat Dunn, Jane Geronime, Marilyn Hedlund, Sheila Hoen, Jane, Teri Mills, Caroline Nuckolls, and Alicia Schmidt.

“The idea was to use Audubon’s masterpieces as a jumping-off point for original new works depicting birds of North America,” adds Cello. “I am confident Gale would have been thrilled to see his idea carried out by such an accomplished group of artists.”



TARPON TIME!

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through sponsorships and silent auction. For information on the event and becoming a sponsor or auction donor, please visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/tarpon-tournament-1 or contact Executive Director Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

Thanks to our sponsors who have already stepped up to support the tarpon tournament: **Title Sponsor:** Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille; **Premier Sponsors:** Diversified Yacht Services, Nimrod, Raiser’s Edge; **Pre-senting Sponsors:**

Mark & Gretchen Banks; **Platinum Sponsors:** Mabry Brothers, Inc.; **Gold Sponsors:** Bella Signs & Designs, Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto, Captiva Diva, Fort Myers Marine, The Historic Bait Box, Island Inn, Jensen’s Marina, John Grey Painting, Law Office of Janet Strickland PA, On Island, Organized Chaos, Trophy Case of Fort Myers, Whitney’s Bait & Tackle, Don & Ann-Marie Wildman; **Silver Sponsors:** Anisa Jewelry Designs, Dex Imaging, Inc., Lighthouse Recovery Institute, Misty Wells’ “Let’s Take It Outside,” Sanibel-Captiva Community Bank.



New Rubbing Table

The Refuge invites young visitors to “Create Your Refuge Memory.” That is the vision behind the new and improved Rubbing Table in the Visitor & Education Center’s children’s hands-on section. Island glass-etching artist Luc Century created the table, incorporating the Refuge’s request for a greater variety of its flora and fauna.

“The original table became over-rubbed from so much love and use over the years,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “Originally, it was the idea of cofounding member and first president of the ‘Ding’ Darling Wildlife Society, Bud Ryckman.” The family of the late Bud and Martha Ryckman contributed toward the new table, along with the Seraph Foundation.

“The new Rubbing Table builds on the vision of the Ryckmans to familiarize kids with Refuge wildlife through crayon rubbings,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “It gives kids more options in terms of size and variety of the different images. It challenges kids to create entire Refuge scenes based on their expectations, experiences, and imaginations. Easy to move, it’s also more flexible for using with school field trips and at educational events.”



Luc Century, Doug Ryckman, Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, Fred Ryckman, and DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller



Free summer programming from June 7 through August 5, 2017, is made possible by support from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. The schedule of weekly activities follows. No pre-registration is necessary.

- **Reading at the Refuge, every Wednesday at 10 a.m.:** Attendees of each 45-minute reading-and-crafts session learn about a Refuge animal and make a take-home craft related to it. Meet in the Visitor & Education Center classroom.
- **Indigo Trail Hike, every Thursday at 10 a.m.:** Join Refuge naturalists as they lead a one-hour tour to the Wildlife Education Board to identify and discuss the ecosystem’s plants, mammals, birds, and reptiles — fun for adults and children alike. Bring water, sunscreen, and bug spray. Meet at the flagpole in front of the Visitor & Education Center.
- **Family Beach Walk, every Friday at 9 a.m.:** The one-hour program convenes at Gullside Park to explore the Refuge’s gulf-front Perry Tract. City parking fees apply. Bring water, sunscreen, and bug spray.
- **Wildlife Wonders, every Saturday at 11 a.m.:** Refuge education staff lead this 30-minute indoor program about the mysteries of manatees, alligators, crocodiles, and birds in the Visitor & Education Center auditorium.

For more information on the Refuge summer programs, call 239-472-1100 or visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/free-refuge-programs.



Winter Series Success

Our best Friday Lecture and Biweekly Wednesday Film series yet brought in record numbers this season. Visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/lecture-and-film-series to see April’s upcoming events. Suggestions for next season? Please email nature-store@dingdarlingsociety.org.

A round of applause to those who helped make the series season a success:

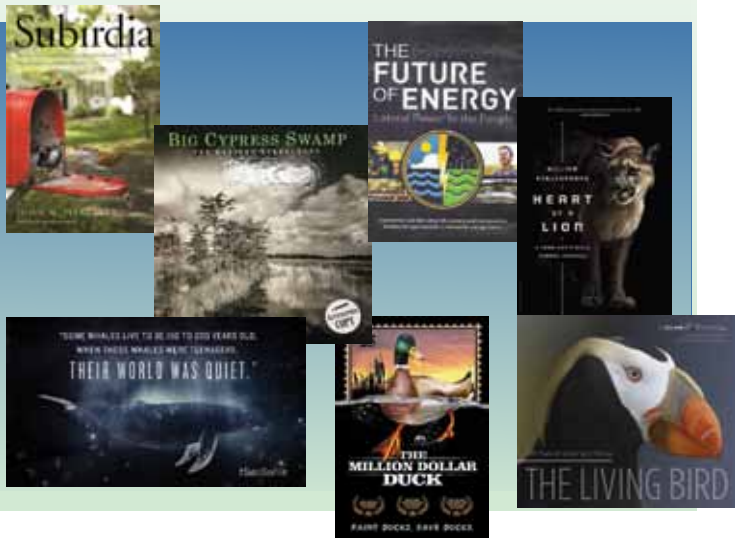
HIGH TOWER
FORT MYERS
THOMAS & SWARTZ
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Lecture Series Sponsor

Sanibel-Captiva
BEACH RESORTS

TWEEEN WATERS INN
BEACHVIEW
CASTAWAYS
SUNSET BEACH

Film Series Sponsor



MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

December 1, 2016 – February 28, 2017

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:

Harriet E. Babineaux	Theodore Kucera
Richard Bailey	Donna Kurty
Virginia Bates	Sue Ann Larrott
Frank and Jane Bopp	Herbert Lieberman
Mickey Bowers	Francine Litofsky
Susie Brown	Susie Marks
Barbara Ann Carter	Marion Marshal
LuLu Molloy	Martin Mauney
Catharine Cole	Gordon and Cecil McLelland
Diane Gibson Cushman	Dr. Margaret Morgan
Dr. Howard Randall Deming	Ballard Morton
Mary Dow	Shirley Mueller
Dr. David Drachman	William Peck
Suzanne Dubuc	Paulette Pitrak
Sidney Ecker	Suzanne L. Rogers
Dr. Mary Alice D Edwards	Richard Ross
Edson and Mary Eldredge	Susan Raber Satterfield
Milly Ellis	Florence Savage
Pat Finn	Lisa Schill
Theodore Ted Flint	Robert Schuman
Wilfred E. Gardner	Rex Seigler
Doug and Geraldine Geib	Thomas and Bobbie Sharp
Christine Glancy	Francis Shepherd
Ed and Lucy Hand	Eugene Skoczen
Arnold Hobbs	John and Ellen Stevens
Louise ter Horst	Jerry Tabern
Pete Ingham	Lisbeth Walker
Elaine Jacobson	Jane Werner
Bill Kinsman	

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

Roger and Glenna Ball	Dwight and Gerda Knoll
Kim Milling and Joyce Barney	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lambiase
The Bass Family	Max Mason
Wayne and Linda Boyd	John McEllen
Donna Ford and Shirley Boyd	Paul McKenney
Ralph and Audra Clarkson	Kent and Sue McNew
Claude and Marsha Crawford	Robert Meeker
Jane Desforges	Birgie Miller
Janet Falcone	James and Nancy Poole
John and EJ Fitzpatrick	Bill and Carol Redeker
Mark and Jill Frankhauser	James and Joan Reynolds
Barbara Frizzell	Donald and Elizabeth Schoenewolf
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Galbraith	Randy and Susan Shellhorse
Alan Gast	Donnie Smith
Edward and Mary Guillette	Joe Stack
Ms. Lorraine Holley	Mr. and Mrs. Philip Weyman
Alan and Carol Landholt	John and Martha Wolf
Marilyn Kloosterman	Carl Knight

DDWS New Board Members

The “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society Board of Directors recently welcomed three new members: Brett Gooch, Phyllis Gresham, and Bill Valerian. The Board reelected incumbent director and Vice President Mike Baldwin for another term.

Brett has been working for Tween Waters Inn Island Resort & Spa on Captiva Island since 2007. He currently serves as General Manager for it and West Wind Inn.

Phyllis, a retired nurse, has volunteered at the Refuge for 14 years and also serves as chair of the City of Sanibel’s Vegetation Committee and on the board of Sanibel-Captiva Audubon.

Recently retired Chairman, President, and CEO of Liberty Bank NA, Bill has held leadership positions with several organizations including chair of the convention and visitors bureau of Greater Cleveland, Ohio, and national chair of the Institute of Financial Education.



Mike Baldwin



Brett Gooch



Phyllis Gresham



Bill Valerian



Your Board of Directors for 2017

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars, and join us! Visit dingdarlingsociety.org for details.

Biweekly Wednesday Film Series – Through April 12, 2017 – *sponsored by Sanibel-Captiva Beach Resorts*

Friday Lecture Series – Through April 14, 2017 – *sponsored by HighTower/Thomas and Swartz Wealth Management*

FILLED Sixth Annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament – May 19, 2017

29th Annual “Ding” Darling Days - October 15-21, 2017

Go Wild for “Ding” – February 14, 2018



Marilyn Kloosterman, pictured with rangers Jeff Combs, Paul Tritaik, and Nate Caswell, won an award for 30 years of refuge volunteer service. Right, 1,000-hour award winners



Volunteer Awards Luncheon

“Ding” Darling Refuge and DDWS celebrated their annual Volunteer Awards Luncheon on February 10, 2017, at the Sanibel Community House. Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik reported that in fiscal year 2016, 298 volunteers worked 47,232.5 hours at the Refuge, representing a labor and benefits savings of \$1.16 million or almost 23 full-time employees.

“I want to thank you for making a huge difference to us in fulfilling our mission and serving our visitors,” Paul told the gathered volunteers. “The Society would not be the Society without you because you make us look good,” said DDWS President and active volunteer Doris Hardy.

“Refuge staff has been slashed by more than 50 per-

cent in recent years,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “We would be facing cuts in visitor services, hours of operation, and maintenance if not for our wonderful volunteers. Thanks to our friends group for its super support of the volunteer program.”

Below is a list of volunteers who won awards for reaching hour and year achievement levels.

YEARS AWARDS

30 years: Marilyn Kloosterman
20 years: Shirley Bohnert, Marge Keller, Jim Sprinkle, Alice Walzer, Ann Wollschlager
10 years: Mike Baldwin, John McCabe, Darst McNairy, Karl Werner, Pam Windust

HOURS AWARDS

10,000 hours: Jeanne Rankin
8,000 hours: Bill Rankin
6,500 hours: Doris Hardy

6,000 hours: Doris Hardy
5,500 hours: Norm Honest
5,000 hours: Is Cloak, Ed Combs
4,000 hours: Jack Wettstein, Patty Wettstein
3,500 hours: Carroll Branyon
3,000 hours: Anne, Bresslau, John McCabe
2,500 hours: Patsy Dicken, Robert Dicken, Malcolm Harpham, Mary Jo Hobbs, Alan Parker, Linda Parker
2,000 hours: Tom Edgar, Ginny Kopperl, Ken Kopperl
1,500 hours: Iver Brook, Joyce Jacobs

1,000 hours: Brian Mishell, Dolores Mishell, Marie Monick, Kathy Mustachio, Bill Overton, Greg Scherer, Helen Taylor
500 hours: Donna Adams, Mike Baldwin, James Bennight, Lyndon Borrar, Claudia Burns, Barb Guidotti, Jan Lucree, Bill Lupfer, Ilona Menzel, Nancy Riley, Garold Schudel, Ruth Schudel, Gerri Sylliaasen, Amanda Wilkinson
250 hours: Caroline Bergen, Stan Bunsick, Tom Flemming, Mary Hackett, Zdenko Krizan, Alice Lavimoniere, Gary Lavimoniere, Buck McDonald, Kim Milling, Mike

Mullins, Mike Rice, Gus Santos, Anne Suss, Cathy Swerdlick, Ray Vasquez, Tom Ware, Wanda Werner, Grant Wilkinson, Jim Winn
150 hours: Sarah Ashton, Susan Beitel, Mark Banks, Muriel Blaisdell, Randi El-assal, Christine Mackenzie, Paul McKenney, Jen McSorley, Maureen Napier, Sherri Newes, Pat Rawert, Inge Santos, Vasanta Senerat, Frances Slane, David Trout, Pam Weiner, Dan Wexler, Diane Wien, Don Wildman, Grant Wilkinson, Jim Winn, Rich Yanke

Earth Day at the Refuge

Bike or hike Wildlife Drive for free, watch a free film, and take advantage of free programs at this year’s Earth Day on Saturday, April 22, 2017. The Refuge will celebrate the 47th anniversary of Earth Day in partnership with the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. The day’s highlights include an earth-friendly Family Story & Craft, free Gators & Crocs and Birding the Refuge programs, and the appearance of Bagzilla, a “bag monster” dressed in the average person’s annual plastic bag consumption. The multi-award-winning film *Bag It!: Is Your Life Too Plastic?* reveals, in an entertaining manner, just how plastic crazy we really are and how we can change the pattern.

Below is the full schedule for earth-friendly and free fun throughout the day:

- **7 a.m.-7 p.m.** Wildlife Drive is open free to bikers and hikers only (\$5 fee per vehicle).
- **10-10:30 a.m.** Family Craft & Story, Visitor & Education Center
- **10 – 10:30 a.m.** Gators & Crocs Program, Crossdike Pavilion
- **11-11:45 a.m.** *Bag It!: Is Your Life Too Plastic?* Film Showing, Visitor & Education Center Auditorium
- **1-1:30 p.m.** Birds of the Refuge Program, Crossdike Pavilion



Meet Bagzilla, an incarnate reminder of our plastic bag addiction.



Thanks again to ALL our sponsors for making this year better than ever!

Champion Level

Mark & Gretchen Banks Wayne & Linda Boyd
Jim & Patty Sprankle John & Kathy McCabe

Guardian Level



Protector Level

Sarah Aston & Jim Metzler Mike & Terry Baldwin Amanda Cross Don & Ann Marie Wildman



Defender Level

50% Off Framing Doug & Sherry Gentry John Grey Painting
Barefoot Charley's Painting Co. Greenwood Consulting Group John & Kay Morse
Barrier Island Title Services Phyllis Gresham Hank & Linda Spire
Peter & Paula Bentinck-Smith Gulf Coast Landscape Nursery & Supply Superior Titles Services of Sanibel
Tree West, LLC

We would also like to thank all of those who donated to our auction:

- | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 50% Off Framing | Cast About Charters | Floral Aristry | J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge | John McCabe | South Seas Island Resort | Sue Thoresen |
| Pat Appino | Cedar Chest Fine Jewelry | Ford's Garage | Jacarana | Jeff Mistler | Jim Sprankle | Totally Baked |
| Aquatica | Luc Century | Harry & Carolee Gardener | JetBlue Stadium Store | Birgie Miller | Patty Sprankle | Vortex Binoculars |
| Laura Ball | Cip's Place | George and Wendy's Seafood Grille | Joey's Custard | Over Easy Café | Anisa Stewart | Chelle Walton |
| Mark & Gretchen Banks | Sherry Crawford | Nancy Giffin | Key West Express | Queenie's Ice Cream | Mac Stone | Pam Weiner |
| Barbara B Mann | Disney World | Gulf Coast Landscape Nursery & Supply | Sarah Lathrop | Sandbar | Sunny Day | Don & Ann Marie Wildman |
| Big Arts | Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille | Island Cinema | Lazy Flamingo | Sanibel Catering by Bailey's | Synergy Sportswear | |
| Blue Giraffe | Jerry Edelman | Island Inn | John MacLennan | Seashells.com | Tarpon Bay Explorers | |
| Broadway Palm Dinner Theater | Fish House of Sanibel | | Matzaluna's | Sea World | Robert Thoresen | |



Helping Wildlife & Conservation with a Tax-Deductible Gift

Tax-deductible gifts help support the Refuge in areas such as conservation education, water quality and wildlife research, internships, walkways and trails, interpretive exhibits, land acquisition, and so many other ways to preserve and protect this vital land and educate 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.

Do you have a special occasion — birthday, anniversary, work promotion, graduation — you wish to commemorate with a thoughtful gift? 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.

TERRY BALDWIN

Your gift, regardless of its size, will be appreciated and put to good use. Only with the help of people like you, who have compassion for our wildlife and its protection, can we truly make a difference.

Ways to Support Conservation Through the Society

Online with Credit Card

On our new website (dingdarlingsociety.org), it's even easier to make a secure, online, year-end gift to the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. Options include Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover. You can make notations on the gifts if they are in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special occasion.

Phoned-in Credit Card Gifts

If you don't like making gifts online or do not have access to the internet, the DDWS office is always be happy to accept your credit card information over the phone. Call 239-472-1100 ext. 233, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Checks

Gifts can be mailed through the U.S. Postal Service. Gifts can be mailed to: “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, P.O. Box 565, Sanibel, FL 33957.

Securities/Gifts of Appreciated Stocks

Donating appreciated stock (if owned for more than one year) may help you gain a deduction of the fair market value and avoid a capital gains tax that might be due if sold outright. To ensure appropriate gift credit, it is important that you contact the DDWS office when you are ready to make your stock gift transfer. Call or email the DDWS office to receive transfer instructions at 239-472-1100 ext. 233 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org. With all gifts, but in particular stocks, please check with your financial advisor or attorney to see if this type of gift makes sense for you and your family.

IRA Charitable Rollovers

Congress recently passed a tax bill that permanently extends the Qualified Charitable Distribution provision, which lets people over age 70 ½ to transfer money from their traditional or Roth Individual Retirement Account (IRA) assets to qualified charitable organizations and have it count as their required minimum distribution without increasing their adjusted gross income.

If you are age 70 ½ or older, you can request your financial advisor to make a direct transfer from your IRA in any amount up to \$100,000 to a charity without reporting it as taxable income. It is simple to make a transfer. Contact your account administrator to request a check be made out and addressed to the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society and delivered to the address below.

As with any charitable gift, we encourage you to check with your professional advisors to see if this type of giving makes sense for you as you consider gifts to the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society and other organizations important to you.



Estate Planning

See “Planned Gifts/Gifts Through Your Will,” below.

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, Inc.
Tax Identification # 59-2240895
Attn: Birgit Miller, Executive Director
P.O. Box 565
Sanibel, FL 33957

Planned Gifts/Gifts Through Your Will

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society (DDWS) is proud to have been mentioned in many of our departed benefactors' Last Wills and Testaments. It's quite simple to do.

You may name the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society in your will as follows:
“I [name], of [city, state, ZIP] 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].”

The IRS has granted the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, Inc., tax-exempt status, and any gift to our organization is tax-deductible and will help offset inheritance taxes your family or friends might otherwise be obligated to pay. Thank you for considering a true legacy gift.
DDWS recommends that you consult with estate planning, legal, and accounting professionals to determine the proper gift vehicle that best fits your tax and financial interests.
Questions? Please call the Society at 23-472-1100 ext. 233 or through email at director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

High School Photo Contest

During a special ceremony at the Refuge on February 18, 2017, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society announced winners and finalists in the fourth annual “Ding” Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest.

Sponsored by the Theodore Cross Family Charitable Foundation, the competition invited high school students from Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties to compete for prizes that included a Canon digital SLR camera package, chartered class trips to the Refuge, Tarpon Bay Explorers excursions, and copies of Waterbirds: Portraits and Anecdotes from Birding Adventures by contest namesake, the late Theodore Cross.

Ted Cross, who lived part-time on Sanibel Island and has family still living here, marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; advised the Johnson and Nixon administrations on anti-poverty programs; and wrote the influential book Black Capitalism, among others.

Late in life, Ted decided to indulge his love for birds and photography and traveled the world to collect stunning portraits and stories to chronicle his adventures. He photographed often at “Ding” Darling, and a number of the images in his book reflect his love for the Refuge. Ted published Waterbirds in 2009 at age 85; he passed away shortly after that in February 2010.

World-renowned New York photographer and friend of the Cross family, Arne Svenson, judged the contest, along with Deputy Refuge Manager Nate Caswell and Sanibel resident Deb Szymanczyk. First place went to a perspective from a close-up animal’s eye titled “Through Her Eyes” by Kaylee Robinson.

“I love the extraordinary mystery of the photo,” said Arne. “Not just what the animal is, but also where it is, and what is the scale. There is a beautiful play with scale with the huge animal in the front as nature recedes in the background. This photo creates a narrative and leaves the viewer with an open-ended story.”

In second place, Yenori Alvarez captured an an-hinga. “I love the mysterious predator and prey feeling of this photo,” said Deb. “The natural fiber of the grasses, the skeleton-looking tree roots, and the foggy background work together to create a mystery.”

Sharleen Julot took third place with her flower photo titled “Bold.” “I love the color and detail of this shot,” said Nate. “It was the first photo that stood out to me and it continued to catch my eye for the whole judging process.”

Honorable mention winners and other finalists are listed below.

“Theodore Cross’ family made this contest possible, and it has become a quick success story,” said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director. “We couldn’t be more thrilled that the family wanted its donation used in this way – to reach an age group that often falls through the

Yenori Alvarez from Lehigh Senior High placed second with an anbinga portrait.

Sharleen Julot from Cape Coral High took third place with her macro shot of a flower.



cracks of conservation education. Kudos to our Philanthropic Coordinator Carrie Alexander and our interns for a fabulous job of running the contest.”

“We were delighted that we had more than 297 amazing photo entries from 13 different schools,” said Carrie. “Teachers, advisors, and volunteers worked hard at helping to encourage students to enter.”

“We are so happy to be supporting a contest in my

father’s name, a contest that will get our youth involved with nature by looking at it – as my father so loved doing – through a camera lens,” said Amanda Cross.

Students were able to submit up to two photographs. Winning and honorable mention images are on display at the free “Ding” Darling Education & Visitor Center and are available to view by Facebook album on DDWS’ page www.facebook.com/dingdarling.

Winners

1st Place: Kaylee Robinson, Riverdale High
2nd Place: Yenori Alvarez, Lehigh Senior High
3rd Place Sharleen Julot, Cape Coral High

Honorable Mentions

(in alphabetical order)
Erica Campbell, Classical Christian Academy
Josie Fjelsted, Lehigh Senior High
Ryan Grau, Lehigh Senior High
Breanna Hornick, Cape Coral High
Sabrina Hutto, Lehigh Senior High

Sydney Luzik, Lehigh Senior High
Brandon Newell, Dunbar High
Bihn (Julie) Nguyen, Cape Coral
Michael O’Dell, Estero High
Sascha Sealie, Lehigh Senior High
Sadie Williams, Riverdale High
Andrea Wilson, Golden Gate High

Finalists

(in alphabetical order)
Kolab Allwood, Lehigh Senior High
Erica Campbell, Classical Christian Academy

Alyssa Fraser, Estero High
Jaheim Germain, Lehigh Senior High
Geneieve Lemus, Lehigh Senior High
Nicolas Lopez, Lehigh Senior High
Stacey Mora, Lehigh Senior High
Laura Palacio, South Ft Myers High
Crystal Perez, Lehigh Senior High
Jonathan Roman, Lehigh Senior High
Caitlyn Sims, Lehigh Senior High
Susie Wang, Lehigh Senior High
Shawna Werner, Lehigh Senior High
Shamar Womack, Cape Coral High

San-Cap Connect Legacy Continues

Bailey’s General Store was one of four businesses/organizations on Sanibel Island that participated in the San-Cap Solar Connect program, initiated by the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society in 2015 to offer affordable solar conversion to area residents and businesses. Sanibel-Captiva Community Bank and SCCF also converted under the program, and the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge will be completing its conversion this year.

An additional 24 residential homes converted, including Fred and Alice Stanback, who provided partial funding for the initiative. “I am very pleased with my solar installation,” said Fred

Stanback. “For the first 10 months it has produced more power than we have used, so that my only electric bill has been the \$20.34 monthly fee to be connected to the grid.”

San-Cap Solar ran its program through March 15, 2016, after which Committee Chair John McCabe and DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller met state leaders and board members of the League of Women Voters, who has stepped in to continue the program Florida-wide. “This is exciting and wonderful to see how our small program has now moved statewide and maybe even nationwide if it goes well,” said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director.



Solar panels atop the roof at Bailey’s General Store on Sanibel Island

New Signage

You may have noticed new signage around the Visitor & Education Center and along Indigo Trail. The Monarch Waystation signs are a result of a recent certification as Monarch butterfly habitat by Monarch Watch. The Refuge is proud to provide food and shelter for the threatened population of Monarchs.

Colorful new botanical signs go beyond naming vegetation species, they help identify with vibrant pictures by our Refuge volunteer photographers. Thanks to all who contributed.



New TBE Green Initiative

In keeping with the Refuge’s vigorous go-green efforts, Tarpon Bay Explorers is encouraging its visitors to be environmentally conscious by taking an alternative mode of transportation to travel to Tarpon Bay: biking. Visitors who ride a bicycle to Tarpon Bay Explorers for their tour, rental, or shopping will receive a free gift. “A gift initiative will hopefully entice people to take an eco-friendly route. It’s really a win-win situation,” explained General Manager and Part Owner, Wendy Schnapp. “The environment wins by reducing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and the people win by not only receiving a free gift, but also the self- satisfaction of helping the island’s environment.”

TARPON BAY EXPLORERS SCHEDULE*

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

Tram Tours of Wildlife Drive: April Mon-Thurs hourly 10am-4pm; Sat-Sun 10am, 11:30am, 1pm, 2:30pm, and 4pm. May and June: Mon-Thurs 10am, 11:30am, 1pm, 2:30pm, and 4pm; Sat-Sun 10am, 1pm, and 4pm
Kayak Trail Tour: April Mon-Fri 8:30am, 10am, 11:30am, and 1pm; Sat and Sun 10am and 1pm. May and June: Mon-Fri 10am and 1pm; Sat and Sun 10am (any and all times substituted with low tide paddle when trail not accessible)
Sunset Rookery Paddle: April daily. May and June: Mon, Wed, Fri, and Sat or Sun. All 2 hours prior to sunset
Breakfast Cruise: Mon, Wed, Fri 8:30am
Standup Paddleboard Tour: April: Mon-Sat. May and June Tues, Thurs, Sat. All 9am
Nature and Sea Life Cruise: Daily at 11am and 1:30pm
Evening Cruise: Daily 2 hours prior to sunset
Aquarium & Touch Tank: Daily at 3pm
Rentals and fishing charters: Daily 8am-6pm

STAFF NEWS

DDWS Staff Changes

Joann Hinman recently accepted a promotion for the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society from part-time Nature Store Assistant to full-time Office Manager. Joann began working for DDWS in July 2016. She brought with her more than 20 years of nonprofit experience that included serving as director of finance and administration for Zion National History Association (ZNHA) in Utah’s Zion National Park. Her current duties include bookkeeping and overseeing DDWS office operation.



Joann Hinman

A native of Los Angeles, California, Joann graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, with a degree in biology. At ZNHA, she started as the Nature Center Store Manager before moving up the ladder. She first toured “Ding” Darling 10 years ago while visiting a friend in Cape Coral, where she now lives.

Christopher R. Galloway inherits his “Ding” Darling connection from his parents, Sanibel residents Nancy Riley and Michael Galloway, both of whom have been volunteering in the Visitor & Education Center for several years.



Christopher Galloway

In his new position as part-time assistant for the “Ding” Darling Nature Store, Christopher is excited to learn new skills. A recent graduate from Florida Southwestern State College, he holds a degree in network service technology and post-secondary vocational certificates in network security and information technology support.

Since graduation, the Florida native — originally from Inverness in Citrus County — has been freelancing in home tech support and property management. He began working in the Nature Store December 31, 2016, assisting Store Manager Jeanne Walsh, and since then has proved invaluable assisting DDWS staff with tech issues.

“I’ve really enjoyed my time working here,” Christopher said. “All of the people have been extremely helpful and kind. Getting to meet all of the many volunteers who come to help us on a daily basis has also been a real treat.”

FOLLOW AND LIKE US

DDWS is currently active on three social media platforms. Please “LIKE” us on **Facebook** (join our 10,500+ fans!) by searching for “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society.” (You can also “LIKE” the Refuge by searching for its “Official” page.) **Instagram** users can find us at @dingdarlingwildlifesociety. Also visit our YouTube channel by searching “ding darling wildlife society.”



“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society operates the Refuge Nature Store, proceeds from which benefit wildlife, habitat conservation, education, and research projects.

New Refuge Staff

Four new staff members have joined the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge team to fill key positions recently vacated. Former administrative officer Ivette Gonzalez has been promoted to Zone Budget Analyst for three refuge complexes, including “Ding” Darling, Loxahatchee, and Florida Keys.

“We are so relieved to welcome new staff to lighten the heavy work load caused by severe federal budget cuts,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “In the past decade, our annual visitor numbers and acreage have grown at the Refuge, while staffing has been cut almost in half. We continue to struggle to keep the Refuge open on a full schedule, but are fortunate for the assistance of a great volunteer corps and interns supported by our fabulous friends group, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. We couldn’t do it without them.”

Most visible of the new staff, Monica Scroggin has been promoted from Visitor Services Intern to a part-time Refuge Ranger position. She helps run the Visitor & Education Center on weekends and assists with all other visitor services functions. Monica, who had been interning since September 2016, graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) with a B.S. in environmental studies and a minor in biology. A South Miami native, she worked previously for an oyster monitoring research project at FGCU’s Coastal Watershed Institute.



Ranger Monica Scroggin

Behind the scenes, Preston Heaton has been hired as Administrative Support Assistant. He arrives from southern Utah, where he served as an administrative assistant for the Bureau of Land Management since 2012, working at the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and recently designated Bears Ears National Monument. Preston holds a B.S. in communication studies from Southern Utah University.

Thomas Plank fills a term position as Wildlife Refuge Specialist to assist with Refuge management, biology, maintenance, and visitor services. Tom, who holds a B.S. in fisheries and wildlife science from Oregon State University, comes to the Refuge from Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Idaho, where he had worked as a Biological Technician since June 2016. He has also worked as a Field Technician at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho and Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska and in the private sector as a Boys and Girls Club coordinator and volunteer firefighter.

John Thompson has taken the position as Federal Wildlife Officer to help ensure public safety and natural resource protection. He most recently served in the

same position at San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex in central California, where he worked since 2014 and earned recognition for a record drug seizure. John, who grew up near Albany, N.Y., earned a B.S. in wildlife management from Cobleskill State University in New York and an A.A.S. in criminal justice from Hudson Valley Community College.

New Bio Intern

New Biology Intern Jessie Looney recently joined the Refuge team effort as part of the intern program supported by DDWS. Originally from San Diego, California, she most recently worked for the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research on San Clemente Island, one of the Channel Islands off the coast of southern California.

“My job as a research assistant was to support the captive breeding program of endangered San Clemente Island Loggerhead Shrikes by providing daily care and behavioral monitoring,” said Jessie. “I’ve worked for four years with captive wildlife programs — zoos and nature centers — but my interest is in avian ecology in the field. This internship will provide me with experience to transition from captive work to field work.”



Jessie Looney

For her internship project, Jessie envisions studying the impact of Refuge visitors on the wildlife. “San Diego is similar to coastal South Florida in that it attracts many tourists,” she said. “It’s important in these areas to understand the balance of protecting habitat and wildlife while simultaneously providing an enriching, educational experience for the public.”

DDWS provides living stipends and other benefits for about a dozen interns each year. The Refuge supports interns and resident volunteers with free housing.

“The intern program not only fulfills the Wildlife Society’s mission to educate a new generation of conservation stewards, but it also fills a government budget void. Interns provide valuable manpower to assist the Refuge’s overworked staff due to federal cuts and hiring freezes,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “We are pleased we can help the Refuge in this capacity.”

Farewell to Becky

Staff and volunteers celebrated a bittersweet send-off for Ranger Becky Larkins, who left her position as Refuge Education Specialist on February 18 to take the position of Supervisory Refuge Ranger at the Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex in Lacombe, Louisiana, about 45 minutes north of New Orleans. Farewell and warm wishes to the Larkins family, which is, by the way, expecting Baby Girl Larkins in mid-May.



WILDLIFE STUDY REPORTS

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society is currently funding three wildlife species studies at the Refuge. Here are updates on the season’s research.

Sanibel Island Rice Rat

by Wesley Boone, Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, University of Florida

The Sanibel Island Rice Rat research team concluded its fourth of six field research seasons in February. This field season was noteworthy because of the high numbers of Rice Rats captured relative to past seasons of summer 2016, winter 2015-2016, and summer 2015: 25 individuals were caught this winter. The previous record high was nine individuals. Large population fluctuations over relatively short time periods are not uncommon among rodent species, but they are worthy of further investigation. Future data analysis efforts will focus on determining which environmental and/or vegetative variables account for these recent population fluctuations. Two more field seasons remain: summer 2017 and winter 2017-2018.



Sanibel Island Rice Rat in its natural habitat

Reddish Egret & Mangrove Cuckoo

by Dr. Ken Meyers, Avian Research & Conservation Institute

Mangrove Cuckoo

We are awaiting the spring return of the breeding birds before further tagging, because the satellite-tracking study’s main question is where the Refuge’s nesting population overwinters. There are Mangrove Cuckoos on the Refuge all year, but we need to tag birds during the breeding season to be sure we will be tracking members of the local breeding population. This means we won’t begin trapping to deploy the two newest transmitters until late April.

Reddish Egrets

With considerable effort and care, the research team has deployed GPS-equipped satellite transmitters on five adult Reddish Egrets, including three tagged close to Wildlife Drive in October 2014 (two) and January 2016 (one); and two additional birds tagged at Bunche Beach in January 2016. One of the two Wildlife Drive egrets tagged in 2014 is a female; the other four birds are males. All five continue to produce abundant data, consisting of highly-accurate GPS fixes every two hours each day. This amounts to over 20,000 fine-scaled foraging, loafing, roosting, and, in some cases, nesting locations for these five Reddish Egrets — very valuable data for this relatively unstudied species.

The female, known as Ding 1, is the only tagged bird that has moved beyond the Refuge and surrounding area during the study. These movements, unlike any previously reported for this species, are particularly interesting in that she has gone to the same destination in each of the two years she has been tracked. Most recently, she left the Refuge June 2, 2016, to spend the late summer months on the coast of Dixie County, Florida, through August 17, 2016. In 2015 she made a similar migration to the same location at the end of May, but stayed only a few weeks.

Based on her breeding-season movements relative to



Movements of satellite-tracked Reddish Egrets on and near the Refuge from October 2014 to January 2016.

wading bird nesting colonies in Lee County, we do not think this female nested in the spring of 2016, or at least not successfully. This could be why she spent more time on her Dixie County range in 2016. Her northbound migration was direct and punctuated by only one overnight stop, seaward of Homosassa in Citrus County. Once at her “winter” destination, she used a single foraging area on the coast of the Big Bend Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Dixie County, from which she flew 5 miles offshore each evening to spend the night on a small island. This pattern continued for 11 weeks.

On August 18, Ding 1 started south by the light of the full moon. This is the only time we’ve ever recorded a Reddish Egret embarking on a long flight at night. We also were interested to see offshore night locations, perhaps on a channel marker or stationary boat, where Ding 1 rested for at least two hours. After resuming her southbound night flight, she took one more rest just before dawn in a tree overhanging a house in a busy subdivision in Largo, Florida. After sunrise, Ding 1 made a beeline to Pine Island and may have fished there for a few hours before returning to her favorite roost near Wildlife Drive. She completed her 230-mile southbound trip in less than 24 hours, including rest stops.

We are grateful to the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, and other donors for supporting this study. Watch for updates on this exciting project, including the results of our newest fish prey study, in a future newsletter.

IN THE REFUGE NATURE STORE

Store Highlights

Fun, new items arrive every month in the Refuge Nature Store. Here’s a quick snapshot of some of our latest and greatest.



Give a Gift Card

Now, for the easiest possible “Ding” gift-giving, we suggest the Refuge Nature Store gift card. Purchase one in any amount from \$25 up for friends and family you know

will be visiting the Refuge soon.

To order items by mail, email manager Jeanne Walsh at naturestore@dingdarlingsociety.org or call 239-472-1100 ext. 241.

Remember, all proceeds from Nature Store sales go directly to Refuge education and wildlife research projects.





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Photo Contest Winner

First place in the fourth annual "Ding" Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest went to this close-up of an animal's eye, titled "Through Her Eyes," by Kaylee Robinson, a ninth-grader at Riverdale High School. See page # for other winners and to read more about the contest.

