



# Protect. Educate. Inspire.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption for COLORBLIND: This graphic shows a refuge scene as a colorblind person sees it (bottom) as opposed to a normal-vision viewer (top).

Caption for AARON: The colorblind scope will be accessible to visitors in wheelchairs and the general public atop the disabled-accessible Wildlife Drive observation tower.

### **'Ding' Darling first national wildlife refuge to unveil scope for colorblind viewers**

Among the 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island will be the first to expand its accessibility initiatives to include a spotting scope for colorblind visitors. The scope, specially engineered by SeeCoast Manufacturing with EnChroma's patented lens technology for color blindness, will be unveiled at the Wildlife Drive observation tower on Wednesday, Aug. 4. EnChroma eyeglasses will also be permanently available at the refuge for guests with color vision deficiency to borrow during visits.

Aug. 4 marks the newly declared Great American Outdoors Day in honor of the signing of the Great American Outdoors Act in August 2020. Admission to the refuge's Wildlife Drive will be free to all that day. Refuge staff will unveil its new colorblind scope at 10 a.m.; the public is invited to attend.

"It seems fitting to honor an act that provides funding for facilities and infrastructure at national wildlife refuges and other federal public lands by broadening this refuge's accessibility to a new audience of

visitors with color vision challenges,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “The new scope and EnChroma glasses will help colorblind people experience our natural, colorful beauty and wildlife as a normal-vision person would, plus the scope is wheelchair-accessible. It’s a very exciting step for people with vision and mobility limitations.”

One in 12 men (8 percent) and 1 in 200 women (0.5 percent) 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.

While people with normal color vision see more than a million hues and shades of color, those with color vision deficiency only see an estimated 10 percent of color variations. As a result, their color spectrum is more limited, and their world view is duller and muted, while certain colors are difficult to differentiate from each other.

“Ding” Darling is at the forefront of public lands and cities that are bringing this new technology to change the outdoor experience for colorblind people. The refuge’s is the first such public viewing scope in Florida and on any federal lands. Fewer than 20 other such scopes are available currently to the public throughout the nation.

In addition to the scope unveiling, the refuge offers free admission to Wildlife Drive that day from 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the refuge’s Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) mobile outreach classroom will be open for free touring at the observation tower.

Also in that time frame, refuge 2021 artist in residence Rachel Pierce will be doing a pop-up plein-air painting demonstration along the drive that illustrates the difference between colorblind and normal vision. Visitors will have the opportunity to watch her paint and meet the artist, whose year-long “residency” will culminate in an exhibition of her refuge-inspired and other works starting October 1.

“We will have color-blind people on hand at the unveiling to try the scope and EnChroma glasses for the first time and share their reactions,” said Westland, who led the project to bring the scope and glasses to the refuge. “This follows on the heels of numerous accommodations -- such as the observation tower’s accessible ramp, the lift at the Visitor & Education Center, and wheelchair accessibility on Tarpon Bay Explorers tram tours – to make visitor services at the refuge available to the greater public. EnChroma’s



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donation of corrective eyeglasses will allow colorblind children and adults eventually to check them out for use on Wildlife Drive.”

For more information about Great American Outdoor Days, visit [dingdarlingsociety/articles/events](http://dingdarlingsociety/articles/events).

## 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).

## ABOUT ENCHROMA

Based in Berkeley, Calif., EnChroma produces leading-edge eyewear for color blindness and low vision, and other solutions for color vision, sold online and through Authorized Retailers worldwide. Invented in 2010, EnChroma’s patented eyewear for color blindness combines the latest in color perception, neuroscience, and lens innovation to improve the lives of people with color vision deficiency around the world. EnChroma received an SBIR grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It earned the 2016 Tibbetts Award from the U.S. Small Business Administration in recognition of the firm’s innovative impact on the human experience through technology, and the 2020 Innovation Award in Life Sciences from the Bay Area’s East Bay Economic Development Alliance. For more information call 510-497-0048 or visit [enchroma.com](http://enchroma.com).

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