



# Protect. Educate. Inspire.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) tours, guided hikes, carnival games, and other family activities will introduce the greater community to the refuge on "Ding" Darling Day, April 22.

### **Save the date: 'Ding' Darling Day Conservation Carnival to return to Lakes Park**

To further its mission to reach and connect with underserved urban communities, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge returns to Lakes Park in Fort Myers for its 34th annual "Ding" Darling Day Conservation Carnival on Saturday, April 22. The celebration also observes Earth Day and LeeTran's Free Transportation Day.

The refuge and "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) have been keeping in sync with the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, a national refuge system-wide initiative to encourage community connection. The WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) project was the first big step refuge educators took toward spreading the word about conservation beyond refuge borders. Since December 2020, it has reached more than 20,000 students, parents, and others across the region.

WoW will be at the center of the free "Ding" Darling Day at Lakes Park. Besides tours of the mobile, interactive nature experience, the refuge and DDWS have planned a full day of Conservation Carnival activities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Special free outdoor activities include carnival games, prizes, archery, a dunk tank, a rock-climbing wall, Earth Day crafts, artist-in-residence programs, guided bilingual birding walks, a biking tour, guided mindfulness programs, live music, food, and educational interactions with other local conservation organizations.

“Last year, we moved ‘Ding’ Day to Lakes Park for the first time, and it was a fabulous success,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland, who chairs the event. “We’re still ironing out the details for this year’s celebration, but expect more fun and enrichment for the entire family.” Watch [dingdarlingday.com](http://dingdarlingday.com) for details as they unfold.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), and ???Tarpon Bay Explorers cosponsor “Ding” Darling Day with generous support from the local community and businesses.

DDWS seeks sponsors for the event, which will be highly publicized throughout the Southwest Florida area. Contact April Boehnen at [april@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:april@dingdarlingsociety.org) or 239-292-0566 for more information.

Sponsors to date include (TBE as sponsor instead of one of the hosts?)

#### 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 239-292-0566 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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