

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Caption: Emily Koval
Caption: Anne Mauro
Caption: Matt Grassi

Refuge welcomes new interns

Three interns recently arrived to help J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge with manpower shortages this season, thanks to funding from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

Emily Koval, who graduated from Indiana University in May 2015 with a degree in marketing and public relations, serves as a shared-use intern for DDWS and the refuge. The Carmel, Ind., native specifically is assisting with digital content design projects and other outreach and refuge work.

“I grew up with Sanibel,” says Koval. “My family has been coming here since I was a kid -- my parents honeymooned here -- so I have always had a great appreciation for Sanibel's wildlife. One of my favorite parts of the island is the fact that I get to experience such a unique and diverse wildlife population. Also, being five minutes away from a beach isn't too shabby. The people at the refuge are also amazing. Everyone has been so welcoming.”

Anne Mauro and Matt Grassi have joined the refuge biology team. Mauro, from Whitehouse, Ohio, graduated from Ohio State University in December 2015 with a degree in forestry and wildlife management. She last worked as a biological science technician with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Lake Oahe in South Dakota, monitoring least tern and piping plover nests. She hopes to study the nesting success of wading birds at “Ding” Darling.

“I like the rich diversity of birds and all the unique rare birds that Sanibel attracts from time to time, such as the Great White Pelican and American Flamingo,” said Mauro, who will stay at the refuge through June 2017.

Matt Grassi, a Pittsburgh, Penn. native, comes to “Ding” Darling from Florida Panther/Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge east of Naples, where he served as a biological science aid. He earned his degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in May 2013.

“The staff has been great! And the birds have been plentiful, so it’s all good,” says Grassi, who is considering a human dimension study for the research project for his biology internship, which will extend into next summer.

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

“Our interns bring youthful energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to the refuge team,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “At the same time, the program gives students and recent graduates an opportunity to learn hands-on about the environment and refuge operations.”

For more information about the refuge’s internship programs, please contact Westland at 239-472-1100 ext. 237. To learn about supporting the intern program, contact Sarah Lathrop, DDWS associate director, at 239-472-1100 ext. 232.

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 proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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