

PRESS RELEASE

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Captions:

First Place: Tom Korbutt's "My Sandy Look"
Second Place: Bill Fischer's "The Great Chase"
Third Place: Cathi Bodine's "See You Later!"

PHOTOJUDGES: Contest organizers Terry Baldwin (far left) and Carrie Alexander (far right) with judges Rick Zurbriggen, Chuck Vilardi, and Jeff Combs.

Note to Editors: Please contact me if you wish to receive images of any Honorable Mention winners.

DDWS announces 'Ding' Days photo contest winners

On Oct. 22, 2016, "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) announced the winners of its 29th annual "Ding" Darling Days Amateur Nature Photography Contest at a special Conservation Art Day presentation in the Refuge Visitor & Education Center, part of the weeklong "Ding" Darling Days celebration on Sanibel Island.

Earlier, on Oct. 12, judges had selected three winners and 12 honorable mentions out of 122 entries from 17 states and five countries – nearly twice as many entries as in 2015. All photographs judged were shot at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge complex on Sanibel Island.

First place went to Tom Korbutt of Bluffton, S.C., for his river otter portrait titled "My Sandy Look." Judge Chuck Vilardi, The Sanibel School principal, commented: "I think it's awesome that he is at leisure. He's relaxing!"

Bill Fischer from Hindsdale, Ill., took second place with "The Great Chase," a photo of two double-crested cormorants battling for a needlefish. "Catching the cormorants in action so clear like that is really hard to do," judge Rick Zurbriggen, a local photographer, explained his choice.

In third place was Cathi Bodine. She called her Florida manatee shot “See You Later!.” “It’s very clear for an action shot and showing it [the manatee being] so playful,” said Ranger Jeff Combs, the third judge.

“We always choose three judges for the contest,” said Terry Baldwin, contest chair. “A refuge staff member, a professional photographer, and a member of the Sanibel community.”

The three winners received cash awards from DDWS at the presentation on Saturday -- \$100 for first place, \$75 for second, and \$50 for third. Each honorable mention winner received a \$25 award, which reflects a refund of the contest entry fee.

The winning photographs and honorable mention award entries will be on display in the Refuge Education Center throughout the year.

To view the other top-ranking entries, visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/photo-contests. Stay tuned for news about blank note cards featuring all the winning images, which will be available for purchase in the Refuge Nature Store this season.

HONORABLE MENTIONS (in alphabetical order):

Scott Becque, Lewes, Del. – yellow-crowned night heron
Robert Gallucci, Gillette, N.J. – green heron
Beverly Henson, Sanibel, Fla.- snowy egret
Douglas Jaeckel, Fort Myers, Fla. – honey bee
Kent Jager, Sanibel, Fla.- snowy and reddish egrets
Ellen Maas Pratt, White Bear Lake, Minn. – great white pelican
David Mintz, Lehigh Acres, Fla.- roseate spoonbill
Liz Noffsinger, Sanibel, Fla. – reddish egret
Stewart Rubin, Columbia, Md. – ring-billed gull
Allen Sparks, Cordova, Tenn. – reddish egret
Ben Vanos, Interlochen, Mich. – snowy egret
Mike Zarella, Spring, Tex. – Florida manatee

“Ding” Darling Days 2016 sponsors included **ROSEATE SPOONBILL SPONSORS:** Doc’s Ford Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille; **GREAT EGRET SPONSORS:** George & Wendy’s Seafood Grille; **GREAT BLUE HERON SPONSORS:** 97.7 Latino & Juan Radio, Andrew Thompson Company, Bailey’s General Store, Mike & Terry Baldwin, Bank of the Islands, Wayne & Linda Boyd, Cedar Chest Fine Jewelry, Island Sun, Jerry’s Foods of Sanibel, John & Beth Newland, Sanibel-Captiva Beach Resorts, Sanibel Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel Captiva Rotary Club, Sanibel Moorings, Santiva Chronicle, Spotlight Graphics, Jim & Patty Sprankle; **REDDISH**

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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, 239-472-1100 ext. 4, or dingdarlingsociety@gmail.com.

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