

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption for 1 Kaylee Robinson: Kaylee Robinson from Riverdale High took first place in the fourth annual “Ding” Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest with this perspective of an animal in nature.

Caption for 2 Yenori Alvarez: Yenori Alvarez from Lehigh Senior High placed second with an anhinga portrait.

Caption for 3 Sharleen Julot: Sharleen Julot from Cape Coral High took third place with her macro shot of a flower.

### **‘Ding’ Darling announces high school photo contest winners**

At a special ceremony on Feb. 18, 2017, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) announced winners and finalists in the fourth annual “Ding” Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island.

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.

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; wrote the influential book *Black Capitalism*, among others; and created Birders United, a birding Web site that ranked legislators according to their record of bird protection support.

Late in life, Cross 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. Cross published *Waterbirds* in 2009 at age 85; he passed away shortly after that in February 2010.

NPR’s *All Things Considered* called Cross’ collection of 179 images and countless anecdotes “spectacular.” The *New York Times* described it as “part visual encyclopedia, part memoir.”

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 close-up of an animal's eye titled "Through Her Eyes" by Kaylee Robinson, a ninth-grader at Riverdale High School.

"I love the extraordinary mystery of the photo," said Svenson. "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 from Lehigh Senior High captured an aninga. "I love the mysterious predator and prey feeling of this photo," said Szymanczyk. "The natural fiber of the grasses, the skeleton-looking tree roots, and the foggy background work together to create a mystery."

Sharleen Julot, an 11<sup>th</sup>-grader from Cape Coral High, took third place with her macro portrait of a flower, titled "Bold." "I love the color and detail of this shot," said Caswell. "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 cracks of conservation education. Kudos to our philanthropic coordinator Carrie Alexander and our interns for a fabulous job of running the contest."

"We were surprised and delighted that we had more than 297 amazing photo entries from 13 different schools," said Alexander. "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 daughter 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 will be available to view by Facebook album on DDWS’ page [www.facebook.com/dingdarling](http://www.facebook.com/dingdarling).

### **Winners**

1st Place: Kaylee Robinson, Riverdale High  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Yenori Alvarez, Lehigh Senior High  
3<sup>rd</sup> 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)

Kalab 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

### **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 [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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