

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Caption for WINNERS:

‘Ding’ tarpon tournament victors win big

The sixth annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament on May 19, 2017, paid out a record \$37,650 in prizes this year to the five winning teams. Because last year’s tournament only awarded two teams, the balance of that prize money rolled into a one hundred percent payout of anglers’ registration fees from this year.

“The huge purse this year meant the field of 50 boats filled quickly,” said DDWS executive director Birgie Miller. “To celebrate our sixth anniversary, we opened the tourney to six additional boats, which further fattened the purse.”

First place prize of \$16,942.50 went to Team YAM members Mark and Richard Sparrow, who caught three of the 16 fish pulled in by anglers on tournament day. Team Doc Ford’s caught two fish for a second-place award of \$9,412.50. Team Bait Box pulled in the first fish of the day 17 minutes after the tournament opened, winning third place and \$5,647.50. Fourth place winner Team San Carlos Marine took home \$3,765; fifth place winner Team Mabry Brothers, \$1,882.50.

The tournament also awarded awards for female angler to Dep Powers from Team Fishin’ Divas, senior angler to Cliff Young from Team Shock & Awe, and amateur team to Team Shock & Awe.

DDWS organizes the annual tournament with Doc Ford’s Rum Bar & Grille of Sanibel Island, Fort Myers Beach, and Captiva Island as the title sponsor to benefit wildlife, education, and research – including water quality research – at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island. DDWS will announce the total sum raised next week.

Because all fees collected return to the anglers, funds raised by the tournament come entirely through sponsorships and silent auction at the captain’s meeting the evening prior to the

tournament.

For more information on the tournament, visit www.dingdarlingtarpontourney.org.

Tournament sponsors for 2017 included: **Title Sponsor:** Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille; **Premier Sponsors:** Diversified Yacht Services, Nimrod, Raiser's Edge; **Presenting Sponsors:** Mark & Gretchen Banks; **Platinum Sponsors:** Bella Signs & Designs, Congress Jewelers, Florida Weekly, Mabry Brothers, Inc., Suncoast Beverage Sales; **Gold Sponsors:** Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto, Captiva Diva, Discovery Senior Living, Fort Myers Marine, The Historic Bait Box, Island Inn, Island Sun, Jensen's Marina, John Grey Painting, Law Office of Janet M. Strickland P.A., Lee County Sports Development, Media Source, Nautical Mile Magazine, On Island, Organized Chaos, Trophy Case of Fort Myers, VIP Realtors, Whitney's Bait & Tackle, Don & Ann-Marie Wildman; **Silver Sponsors:** Anisa Jewelry Designs, Bailey's General Store, Dex Imaging, Inc., Fort Myers Brewing Company, Gresham Family, Gulf Star Marina, Island Sand Paper, Lighthouse Recovery Institute, Misty Wells' "Let's Take It Outside," Must Do Visitor Guides & MustDo.com, Pair-a-Dice Produce, Sanibel-Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel Island Fishing Club, Semmer Electric/Bonita Bill's Waterfront Café, Wilbur Smith Attorneys at Law.

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 or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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