

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Caption docfords: DDWS associate director Sarah Lathrop (far left) with Doc Ford co-owners Marty and Brenda Harrity (to Lathrop's right), and Mark Marinello (behind Brenda Harrity); and Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, the Blue Goose refuge mascot, and the Doc Ford's crew.

Doc Ford's top "Ding" Days sponsors for 2017

Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille, for the 10th consecutive year, has donated \$5,000 to "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) to become the top-level Roseate Spoonbill sponsor, for its 29th annual "Ding" Darling Days. The birding and eco-festival will draw more than 6,000 visitors to J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge the week of Oct. 15-21, 2017. New this year, Blue Giraffe Island Dining has become a Great Egret sponsor at the second highest level.

"Ding' Darling is an economic driver for our island as well as a special place to educate people about the importance of conservation," said Mark Marinello, co-owner of Doc Ford's. "It is an honor and privilege to support the refuge and its active friends group for this event."

"Ding' Darling Days is a free event we present to educate the public about the refuge and the importance of wildlife conservation," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, event co-chair. "We could not do it without the generous support of Doc Ford's and all our wonderful sponsors."

The following sponsors have already showed their support for "Ding" Darling Days 2017: **ROSEATE SPOONBILL SPONSORS:** Doc's Ford Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille; **GREAT EGRET SPONSORS:** Blue Giraffe Island Dining, Wayne & Linda Boyd; **GREAT BLUE HERON SPONSORS:** 97.7 Latino & Juan Radio, Andrew Thompson Company, Mike & Terry Baldwin, Island Sun, Sanibel-Captiva Beach Resorts, Sanibel Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel-Captiva Beach Resorts, Sanibel Moorings, Jim & Patty Sprankle, TopBirdingTours.com; **REDDISH EGRET SPONSORS:** Sarah Ashton & Jim Metzler, Art & Susan Cassell, Sally & Rich Ennis, Island Inn, Jensen's on the Gulf and Marina & Cottages,

Mitchell's Sand Castles, Stewart and Sons Insurance, Inc.; **SNOWY EGRET SPONSORS:** Barefoot Charley's Painting Co., Grounds by Green Ways, Vasanta Senerat, Chelle Koster Walton.

“Ding” Days sponsorships start at \$200. For information on becoming a sponsor, visit www.dingdarlingdays.com or contact Sarah Lathrop at sarah@dingdarlingsociety.org or 239-472-1100 ext. 4 by July 30, 2017.

“Ding” Darling Days annually celebrates National Wildlife Refuge Week and the birthday of Jay “Ding” Darling, the refuge’s namesake and father of the Federal Duck Stamp Program. The event is co-presented by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, DDWS, and Tarpon Bay Explorers. Visit www.dingdarlingdays.com to learn more.

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, 239-472-1100 ext. 4, or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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