

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Caption GOOSEHUG: The Blue Goose, a refuge system icon designed by “Ding” Darling himself, appears in the “flesh” at Family Fun Day.

Caption VCB – SHELL LOVE BUG: The Lee County VCB’s Shell Love Bug will be on display for photo ops.

Live wildlife presentations, demos, crafts highlights of free ‘Ding’ Family Fun Day 2017

Sunday Family Fun Day kicks off weeklong “Ding” Darling Days at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel Island, on Oct. 15, 2017. The refuge and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) have planned a free day packed with activities for all ages from 9:45 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Following the 9:45 a.m. flag-raising ceremony presented by local Boy Scouts, the refuge will debut its new #LearningLav exhibits with a “toilet paper-cutting ceremony,” followed by a reusable goodie bag giveaway for kids in the Refuge Visitor & Education Center, while supplies last.

All-new presentations this year will take place outside under the tent and inside the center. They include a live birds of prey program by CROW outdoors and a concurrent story and fish craft inside, a People & Panthers program by Florida Wildlife Commission, and another CROW live wildlife program titled Do’s and Don’t’s of Animal Rescue. While it runs outside, Ambu Yoga and supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland will lead a Kids Animal Yoga program inside.

Also new this year, WaterVentures Traveling Lab touring, photo ops with the Shell Love Bug, and fly fishing demos by Sanibel Fly Club will be available throughout the day. “Ding” Darling’s Monofilament Busters will also be exchanging environmentally friendly fishing weights for toxic lead weights that participants can bring that day.

Other Sunday highlights include all-free narrated Tarpon Bay Explorers (TBE) tram tours of Wildlife Drive (based on availability), archery skills clinics (for ages 10 and older), a butterfly house, face painting, hot dogs, and music by the Sanibel School Steel Drumming Band and the 97.7 Latino Hits Van.

"We estimate the value of this free event to be up to \$75 for a family of four," said "Ding" Days Committee co-chair, Ranger Toni Westland. "But the value of family- and nature-bonding? Priceless."

Continuous free shuttle service will run from the refuge’s Tram Parking Lot on Sanibel-Captiva Road (look for signs).

The entire day’s schedule is included below. For more information on other events during the upcoming “Ding” Darling Days week, Oct. 15-21, visit www.dingdarlingdays.com or call 239-472-1100, ext. 4.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, DDWS, and TBE co-present “Ding” Darling Days with generous support from the local community and businesses.

(EC= “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center)
(TBE= Tarpon Bay Explorers)

Sunday, Oct. 17, 2017
FREE FAMILY FUN DAY
J.N. “Ding” Darling NWR
A FREE day valued at \$75 per family of four

ALL DAY: 10% off select gifts in the Refuge Nature Store

9:45am **FREE Flag-raising ceremony**, EC entrance

10am **FREE #LearningLav Exhibit toilet paper-cutting**, outside EC, followed by giveaway of free reusable goody bags giveaway to the first 500 kids, EC Auditorium

10am-1pm 97.7 Latino Hits Van

11am **FREE Live Wildlife Presentation: Birds of Prey** by CROW, EC parking lot

12noon **FREE People & Panthers Program**, Florida Wildlife Commission, EC parking lot

12noon **FREE This Is the Sea That Feeds Us Story & Fish Craft**, EC Auditorium

1:30-3pm Live: The Sanibel School Steel Drumming Band

1pm **FREE Kids Animal Yoga Program**, by Ambu Yoga & Ranger Toni, EC Auditorium

1pm **FREE Live Wildlife Presentation: Do's & Don'ts of Animal Rescue** by CROW, EC parking lot

2pm **FREE Snakes Alive! Program**, Calusa Herpetological Society, EC parking lot

FREE & continuous throughout the day

- **FREE** naturalist-narrated 60-minute tram tours (check in at tram booth upon arrival)
- **FREE** Florida WaterVentures Traveling Lab
- **FREE** archery demos and clinics, adjacent to overflow parking lot
- **FREE** fly-fishing demos with Sanibel Fly Club
- **FREE** Shell Love Bug photo op, Lee County VCB
- **FREE** face painting, EC
- **FREE** hot dogs
- **FREE** Get the Lead Out fishing tackle exchange, Refuge Monofilament Busters
- **FREE** parking at Special Events Parking site (look for signs)
- **FREE** shuttle service
- **FREE** Butterfly House
- **FREE** Santiva Chronicle Photo Station, EC
- **FREE** hands-on nature crafts
- **FREE** environmental displays and informational booths with giveaways
- **FREE** Special 2016 Federal Duck Stamp Art Exhibit, EC Auditorium

The following sponsors make “Ding” Darling Days possible this year: **ROSEATE SPOONBILL SPONSORS:** Doc’s Ford Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille; **GREAT EGRET SPONSORS:** Blue Giraffe Island Dining, Wayne & Linda Boyd, Gardner Families, Jim & Patty Sprankle; **GREAT BLUE HERON SPONSORS:** 97.7 Latino & Juan Radio, Andrew Thompson Company, Bailey’s General Store, Mike & Terry Baldwin, Bank of the Islands, Cape Coral Kiwanis Club, Island Condo Maintenance, Island Sun, Panther Printing, Sanibel Captiva Beach Resorts, Sanibel Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel Captiva Rotary Club, Sanibel Moorings, Santiva Chronicle, Sunny Day Guide;

REDDISH EGRET SPONSORS: Sarah Ashton & Jim Metzler, In Memory of Roger Bell, Blu Site Solutions, Casa Ybel Resort, Art & Susan Cassell, Cedar Chest Fine Jewelry, Jerry Edelman & Maryanne Daly, Sally & Rich Ennis, Florida Weekly, Phyllis Gresham, Grounds by Green Ways, Intech Printing & Direct Mail, Island Inn, Jensen's on the Gulf and Marina & Cottages, Mitchell's Sand Castles, Muench Families & Periwinkle Park, Painting With a Twist, Sanibel-Captiva Kiwanis Club, Roberta and Realtor David Schuldenfrei, Stewart and Sons Insurance, Inc., TopBirdingTours.com;
SNOWY EGRET SPONSORS: Ambu Yoga, Barefoot Charley's Painting Co., Big Red Q Quickprint, John Brennan, The Butterfly Estates, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP), Colony Inn, Henderson Franklin Attorneys at Law, Island Therapy Center, Marina Customer Service Training, Sanibel Art & Frame, Sanibel School Steel Drumming Band, George & Wendy Schnapp, Jim & Anne Scott, Seashells.com, Vasanta Senerat, Winston & Barbara Spurgeon, Tents 'n' Events, Chelle Koster Walton.

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

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