

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Mote Marine scientist talks coral at ‘Ding’ Darling lecture

Coral reefs are one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the world and worth more than \$6 billion to the state of Florida. Corals, however, are dying at an unprecedented rate because of global and local threats such as climate change, ocean acidification, and disease outbreaks. Mote Marine Laboratory scientist Dr. Erin M. Muller aims to understand how these threats are impacting reefs around the world and identify corals that are resilient to the stressors.

On Friday, April 6, she will be presenting two free programs titled “Coral Restoration” at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., part of the 2018 “Ding” Darling Lecture Series at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island.

Dr. Muller hopes to use her research on the distribution, prevalence, and mechanisms creating resilient corals to increase the success of coral restoration activities, while also promoting the retention of high genetic diversity within the reefs of the Florida Keys.

The staff scientist and program manager of the Coral Health and Disease Program at Mote Marine in Sarasota, Fla., earned her doctorate in biology from the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Fla., studying "Spatial and temporal dynamics of coral disease in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.”

Dr. Muller has written numerous published papers on coral bleaching and disease and has won several awards for her work, including the International Society for Reef Studies Young Scientist of the Year Award in 2015.

HighTower/Thomas & Swartz Wealth Management sponsors the refuge's 12-lecture series with support from the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). The season's remaining schedule is listed below.

Seating for the lectures is limited and available on a first-come basis. Early arrivals can save one seat each and then may explore the Visitor & Education Center or Indigo Trail before the lecture starts. Saved seats must be filled 15 minutes before lecture time.

As usual, Wildlife Drive closes on Friday, but visitors are welcome to enjoy the free Visitor & Education Center, Indigo Trail, and recreational opportunities at Tarpon Bay Explorers, the refuge's official recreation concession located at its Tarpon Bay Recreation Area.

Note: Opinions expressed in guest lectures do not necessarily reflect the views of refuge and DDWS management, staff, and board of directors.

For more information, call 239-472-1100 ext. 241 or log on to dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/lecture-and-film-series.

April 6 – Mote Marine Researcher Dr. Erinn Muller, "Coral Restoration"

April 13 – Avian researcher Dr. Kenneth Meyer, "Swallow-tailed Kites: 10,000 Miles to Survival"

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

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