

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Caption: Justin Gole looks forward to assisting with this year's Florida Junior Duck Stamp Contest, which takes place at "Ding" Darling.

Refuge welcomes new education intern

Education intern Justin Gole recently arrived to help J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge with staffing shortages this season, thanks to funding from the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

Gole graduated from Grand Valley State University in 2015 with a degree in accounting. He worked briefly at "Ding" Darling last December as a visitor survey intern with American Conservation Experience. Between March 2018 and January 2019, the program had him working at 15 different wildlife refuges.

"And I'm lucky enough to come back and work at my favorite refuge," said the Grand Rapids, Mich., native. "It's hard to pick just one thing I love about Sanibel and the refuge. I would narrow it down to the sunlight, the seashells, and the birding.

Gole will be assisting conservation educator Sara Hallas through the end of May. In June he heads out for an environmental education position with the Peace Corps in Guyana.

DDWS provides living stipends and other benefits for about a dozen interns each year. The refuge supports interns and resident volunteers with free housing.

"Our interns bring youthful energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to the refuge team," said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. "At the same time, the program gives students and recent graduates an opportunity to learn hands-on about the environment and refuge operations."

For more information about the refuge's internship programs, contact Westland at 239-472-1100 ext. 237. To learn about supporting the refuge intern program, contact Birgie Miller, DDWS executive director, at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

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 profits.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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