

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Captions: Acting refuge manager Bill Miller (left) and deputy refuge manager Nate Caswell (right) congratulate 20-year volunteers.

### **Refuge, DDWS honor volunteers**

“Ding” Darling Refuge and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) celebrated their annual Volunteer Awards Luncheon on March 26, 2019, at The Community House on Sanibel Island.

“This really is the best day on the Refuge,” said Bill Miller, acting refuge manager while Paul Tritaik is on detail at regional headquarters in Atlanta. “We get to celebrate you [volunteers]. Our staff gets to serve you and thank you for all that you do for us.”

Refuge staff reports that in fiscal year 2018, 292 volunteers worked 42,109.5 hours at the refuge, representing a labor and benefits savings of more than a million dollars, equivalent to 20 full-time employees.

“That million-dollar figure exceeds the budget allocation we receive yearly,” Miller remarked.

DDWS executive director Birgie Miller stated the increasing need for volunteers in another way: “I just find it amazing that when [supervisory refuge ranger] Toni Westland started here about 15 years ago, there were about 600,000 visitors each year and less land to manage with 22 staff members. Today we have 11 staff members to handle a million visitors and more land.”

DDWS formed in 1982 specifically to support a volunteer corps after the opening of the refuge’s first visitor center that year. More than 11,000 people visited in the first month after the center opened, overwhelming a staff unaccustomed to dealing with the inquisitive public.

“Volunteers stepped in then to fill in the gaps left by inadequate federal funding, and they continue to do so even more today as funding further declines,” said Miller.

Below is a list of volunteers who won awards for reaching hour and year achievement levels.

## **YEARS AWARDS**

**20 years:** Sally Barsley, Barbara Baumecker, Malcolm Harpham, Susan Harpham, Joanne Heroy-Giller, Harold Johnstone, Joyce Krivenko, Martin Pokedoff

**10 years:** Jane Gieryic, Mike Gieryic

## **HOURS AWARDS**

**8,500 hours:** Doris Hardy

**6,000 hours:** Ed Combs, Judy Davis

**5,500 hours:** Is Cloak

**5,000 hours:** Jack Wettstein, Patty Wettstein

**4,500 hours:** Latham Morris

**4,000 hours:** Miriam Hursey, John McCabe

**3,500 hours:** Betsy Doonan , John McCabe, Alan Parker, Linda Parker

**3,000 hours:** Susan Harpham

**2,500 hours:** Joanne Heroy-Giller

**2,000 hours:** Allan Marcus, Greg Scherer, Shirley Schiffman, Anne Scott

**1,500 hours:** Mike Baldwin, Jim Bennight, Bob Gonser, Joan Gonser, Jan Lucree, Walt McNairy, Arland Oleson

**1,000 hours:** Pat Appino, Robert Blacklow, Barbara Broadhurst, Bob Gonser, Joan Gonser, Millicent Heeney, Mary Horney, Ronald Horney, Tom Mehalic, Roger Tosch

**500 hours:** Judy Barbieri, Sue Danford, Kenneth Gum, Lou Ann Gum, Thomas Hoopes, Zdenko Krizan, Michael Rice, Cathy Swerdlick, Ray Vasquez

**250 hours:** Teresa Anzalone, Mark Banks, Muriel Blaisdell, Katharine Britton, Bob Brooks, Henry DeRonck, Sandy Gage, Kenneth Gum, Lou Ann Gum, Patricia Healey, James Lewin, Jen McSorley, Peter Meekin, Dan Moeder, Maureen Napier, Linda Naylor, Leeann Otoole, Diane Wien, Ann-Marie Wildman

**150 hour:** Genia Alperin, Teresa Anzalone, Donald Breiter, Katharine Britton, John Brothwell, Kenneth Gum, Lou Ann Gum, Patricia Healey, Sonya Keene, Ken King, James Lewin, Janet McLaughlin, Kimberly Powers, Ross Spencer, Nancy Stillwell, Ann-Marie Wildman, Kathleen Wilson

#### 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 [dingdarlingsociety.org](http://dingdarlingsociety.org) or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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