

PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:30 P.M. JANUARY 9

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NOTE TO MEDIA: Photo opportunity with Lee Anne Tauck and the new naming sign will take place at 11:30 a.m. at the corner of Wulfert Road and Sanibel-Captiva Road. Media is invited to attend, or let me know if you would like for us to send you images following the sign's unveiling.

'Ding' Darling names tract at Wulfert Bayous in honor of donor

The Lee Anne Tauck Conservation Tract officially became part of the "Ding" Darling vocabulary on Jan. 9, when the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) unveiled a new sign dedicated to island philanthropist Lee Anne Tauck at the recently acquired 68-acre Wulfert Bayous property on Sanibel Island.

"Lee gave the whole project lift-off with her generous donation," said DDWS campaign leader John McCabe. "With permission from the Lee County commissioners, which also made the acquisition possible through its \$6.5 million Conservation 20/20 contribution, we dedicate the Lee Anne Tauck Conservation Tract in her honor."

Tauck has long been a friend of the refuge and other island organizations through her volunteering and philanthropy, particularly where conservation education is concerned.

"We endearingly refer to her as 'The Bus Lady,' because for so many years she has been underwriting the cost of more than 5,000 students annually getting bused to the refuge for field trips, after the school district cut funding for them," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "Her belief in the education of our younger generation to inspire future conservation stewards has been steadfast, and she sees the impact this has on the kids in Lee County and the teachers who bring them on these visits."

"Lee's family tour business has taken her around the world, where she has seen the effects of disappearing natural lands," said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "As a result, conservation and protection of land is one of her top philanthropic areas of support. The naming of this tract recognizes the impact of philanthropy in protecting land on Sanibel Island."

Tauck's influence on land preservation and conservation education spans islands-wide on Sanibel and Captiva and beyond. Her quiet and generous philanthropy has supported additional conservation organizations such as CROW, the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum, and the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, as well as other charities including F.I.S.H., the Community House, Community Housing Resources, and BIG ARTS.

Tauck's "Ding" Darling contribution kicked off a remarkable campaign led by DDWS, which managed last year to raise \$3 million within months to stem the development of 28 homes in the Wulfert Bayous area adjacent to the refuge and other conservation lands. The property is a vital link that will enhance water habitat and quality.

In August 2019, the Lee County Commissioners' vote in favor of supporting the acquisition cinched the deal. DDWS closed on the land in December, and the property will be managed and maintained by the refuge as part of the historic partnership. DDWS and the refuge have plans to restore Wulfert Bayous as a mangrove rookery for colonial wading birds over the next several years and preserve the land in perpetuity as a native habitat for all island wildlife.

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 or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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