

News Release



J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge
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J.N. “Ding” Darling NWR to change Wildlife Drive entrance fees Oct. 1, 2020

Effective Oct. 1, 2020, admission fees to Wildlife Drive at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, Fla., will change. The new fees are a result of positive feedback from two public comment meetings held at the refuge in April 2019 and approval by the U.S. Department of Interior, which last approved a fee change for “Ding” Darling more than 30 years ago. The refuge fielded a 60-day public comment period upon the announcement of proposed new fees.

As reflected in the included infographic, daily vehicular admission fees will increase on Oct. 1 from \$5 to \$10 and annual passes from \$12 to \$25. Entry fees for pedestrians and cyclists will remain at \$1 each for persons ages 15 and older. Admission to the “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center and Bailey Tract trails is still free. The cost of the Senior Pass, Access Pass, and other federal passes all remain the same, all available for purchase at the Refuge Nature Store.

One-hundred percent of fees collected at the booth on 4-mile Wildlife Drive, one of the most famous birding routes in the nation, go directly to the refuge to enhance visitor-related services.

“The fees help maintain structures, roads, and landscaping across our 6,400 acres,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland, who oversees visitor services. “We also have become increasingly reliant on the entrance fees for staff salaries, especially where public safety and security are concerned.”

The fee income also is used to increase accessibility at the refuge and for other visitor accommodations. For more information about fee changes call Westland at 239-472-1100 ext. 237.

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