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"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption Beach Bean: A beach bean flower captured at the refuge's Perry Tract adjacent to Gulfside City Park, credit: Patrick Carney

Caption Shiny-leaved: Shiny-leaved wild coffee on Wildlife Drive, credit: Patrick Carney

'Ding' Darling to debut virtual plant trail for National Wildlife Refuge Week

Sunday, Oct. 11, marks the start of National Wildlife Refuge Week across the more than 560 federal refuges nationwide. To honor the occasion, J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island debuts its new Plant ID on the Go virtual vegetation trail and opens Wildlife Drive free of charge to all visitors that day.

The refuge education team, led by intern Patrick Carney, created virtual plant identification trails on Wildlife Drive, Indigo Trail, Bailey Tract trails, and Perry Tract. Accessed by a QR code on a sign at each of the four sites, a PowerPoint presentation will identify native plants found there with photos and informative descriptions that include preferred environment and how wildlife benefits from them.

Visitors simply need to scan the code on each sign at the beginning of the trail. Most new iPhone and Android phones have automatic QR code scanners. Older phones may require a download of the free NeoReader app. Once the virtual guide pops up on visitors' phones, they can use the photos to identify what they are seeing.

The QR codes or links to the guides will also be available from the web page dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/ding-at-home after Oct. 11.

“Thanks to the great work of our visitor services team, we are able to offer plant-lovers and curious minds a paper-free, touch-free method of brushing up on their vegetation skills,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “It’s a great way to hit the trail independently or in your own social distancing group. Get out to celebrate your national wildlife refuge, get some fresh air, and learn a few things!”

National Wildlife Refuge Week, which runs Oct. 11-17, presents opportunities for the public to experience and celebrate the network of lands and waters that conserves and protects Americans’ precious wildlife heritage.

The National Refuge System, which is managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, covers 95 million acres of land in the U.S. and its territories. In carrying out the system’s wildlife conservation mission, under the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, wildlife refuges pump \$3.2 billion per year into regional economies and support more than 41,000 jobs. For more information, visit fws.gov/refuges/events/National-Wildlife-Refuge-Week.html.

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge supports the refuge internship program for interns like Carney, whom the refuge encourages to take on projects of interest to benefit its nearly one million visitors each year.

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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