

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release  
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Caption: Intern Jessica Barry will assist with refuge visitor services.

### **‘Ding’ welcomes visitor services intern**

Jessica Barry recently joined the team at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge as a visitor services intern working fulltime with supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. A Fort Myers native, Barry has been visiting the refuge since an early age.

“I remember visiting the Visitor & Education Center and Wildlife Drive as a child and falling in love with Sanibel’s natural beauty every time,” she said.

Barry graduated from Florida State University in Tallahassee in December 2018 with a major in psychology and a minor in children’s developmental disabilities. She worked for four years as a teacher at FSU’s Childcare Center and more recently as an academic and physical coach for children with disabilities, primarily those on the autism spectrum, at Brain Balance Achievement Center in Naples.

“So far, my favorite thing about the refuge is the staff,” Barry said. “Everyone is so high-energy and passionate about the positive impact they’re making – quite a motivating atmosphere! I cannot wait to dive into this position.”

She adds that she is looking forward to helping with “Ding” Darling Day, which takes place at the refuge on Dec. 1 as part of its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

The “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) provides living stipends and other benefits for about a dozen interns each year. The refuge supports interns with free housing.

“We welcome our new interns’ energy and enthusiasm,” said Westland. “We thank our friends group for making their internships possible. With our shrinking staff, due to federal budget cuts, this sort of partnership is crucial to keep the refuge running.”

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 [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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