



www.dingdarlingsociety.org

SPRING 2021

Society Pages

News from Friends of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, the non-profit Friends of the Refuge organization, supports the J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex through the generation of independent funds to undertake student education, internships, research projects, informational literature, advocacy, land acquisition and facility enhancements. Efforts may extend beyond the Complex's borders and involve partnerships with like-minded conservation organizations.

2021 TARPON TOURNAMENT



ANOTHER SELLOUT

Thanks to our 2019 Artist in Residence Ed Anderson for our ninth annual tournament logo design.

The ninth annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament takes place May 14, 2021, having been postponed from the 2020 date due to COVID-19. That increases prize purses to twice the original size, because all 55 teams allowed their 2020 fees to remain in the pot plus kicked in the 2021 entry fees.

Although the tournament is sold out, teams can add their names to the waiting list by contacting April Boehnen at [continued on page 2](#)

SEASON 2020-2021

Reinvented, but Still Robust

This is one season that will go down in history as a most unusual and memorable time. The COVID-19 pandemic coaxed out everybody's creativity for keeping our visitors and fans engaged in the Refuge and its mission. Despite the hurdles, tours, lecture and film series, and artist-in-
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One highlight of the season brought Fort Myers artist Rachel Pierce to the Refuge for pop-up art studios along Wildlife Drive, monthly Art Journal Walks, and other events. Her Artist-in-Residence Exhibition takes place October 1 through November 10, 2021.



A select gathering of staff and board members quietly celebrating the September 30, 2010, retirement of 12-year Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik (back center).

Below: A larger venue (The Community House on Sanibel), social distancing, and mask requirements kept our 2021 Lecture Series safely on the calendar. Here, "Ocean Doctor David Guggenheim kicked off the series on January 29.



Awaiting federal approval, free seasonal tours got a late start. Staff conduct about five a week through April 11, limited to 10 people per tour with reservations through Eventbrite.



The season's biggest news? The rollout of Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) introduced new friends to the Refuge, with reach from the Visitor & Education Center all the way to remote schools such as Tice and Lehigh Elementary schools.

Wild Daze Pilsner Label Unveiled

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society rolls out its exclusive Wild Daze Pilsner later this year to celebrate its 40th anniversary. Recently, it unveiled the colorful branding label for the beer cans, designed by Latina artist Emily Alvarez, who grew up in Miami near the Florida Everglades. “The beer label was directly inspired by my experiences with South Florida wetlands,” she said.

“We had hoped to toast the ‘Ding’ Darling 75th Anniversary with a privately labeled pilsner beer in partnership with Fort Myers Brewing Company,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “However, aluminum shortages due to COVID-19 pushed that brand unveiling to late 2021, in time to celebrate our 40th. Profits from sales of Wild Daze Pilsner will benefit wildlife research, education, and conservation at the Refuge.”

JJ Taylor Companies will distribute Wild Daze Pilsner throughout Southwest Florida to restaurants and bars, on tap and in cans. The DDWS team will be working hard to encourage all island restaurants to carry Wild Daze. The special brew will be available for a limited window of time — about six months.



“We have a lot to celebrate in 2021, and Wild Daze Pilsner promises to add sparkle to the celebration,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “We thank Fort Myers Brewing Company for this spirited collaboration. Our goal is to expand ‘Ding’s’ appeal to a wider, young, multi-cultural audience in a fresh,

new way,” said Birgie.

Anyone interested in serving on the Wild Daze Committee or looking for more information about distributing or purchasing the beer should contact DDWS Development Officer and project leader April Boehnen at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

TARPON TOURNAMENT

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april@dingdarlingsociety.org. Fee for a new team of four is \$1,000 this year.

In its seven years of existence, the tournament has raised more than half a million dollars to support education, wildlife research, and conservation efforts at the Refuge. Support comes entirely from generous sponsors, many of whom have been sponsoring since the first year, and the Captain’s Dinner silent auction and other donations. See newsletter insert for a list of this year’s sponsors.



Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille title-sponsors the tournament for the ninth year running.

Refuge, School District Collaboration

In February, the Refuge and DDWS learned that a collaboration with the Lee County School District for field trips to the Refuge was approved and finalized. The school district will designate an environmental teacher to work with the Refuge Education Team to schedule class field trips to “Ding” Darling during the school year. DDWS will contribute to the teacher’s salary, and the collaboration will supplant a past busing program wholly financed by the DDWS. The busing firm we worked with went out of business in 2019, and the “Ding” Darling team has been working with the school district since then to come up with a creative solution.

“Lee County now gets a great teacher for its programs for half of what it would cost without our investment,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “These field trips will come from Lee County schools that are within easy driving distance of the Refuge. Our new Wildlife on Wheels mobile urban classroom focuses on those schools that could never make it for a field trip due to the time and distance involved.”

“We are so excited that all of our negotiations and planning panned out for this wonderful partnership,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, who led the efforts. “It’s a win-win, especially for the kids, and a prime example of how the ‘Ding’ Darling Wildlife Society leverages support to make good things happen. A special thanks to Susie Hassett, the district’s Environmental Education Resource Teacher, for her important



Students learn first-hand about nature on Refuge field trips.

role in making this happen.”

Stay tuned for more news about this exciting new program. To support the partnership, please contact Lynnae Messina at mess@dingdarlingsociety.org or 239-472-1100 ext. 233.

STAFF NEWS

Kevin Godsea Takes Refuge Reins

Having filled the role of Acting Refuge Manager since April 2019, Kevin Godsea now steps up to the position of permanent project leader managing the new Southwest Florida National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex. The complex also includes Florida Panther, Ten Thousand Islands, Pine Island, Matlacha Pass, Island Bay, and Caloosahatchee NWRs. Kevin has been serving as refuge manager for Florida Panther and Ten Thousand Islands NWRs for the past 10 years.

A 22-year veteran of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Kevin began his relationship with “Ding” Darling in 2000 as an education specialist and then supervisory refuge ranger. Following that, he served as refuge manager at Cape Romain NWR in South Carolina for two years before moving back to Southwest Florida and taking on the western Everglades-area refuges. During his time there, Kevin earned the coveted National Refuge Manager of the Year (Paul Kroegel) Award and graduated from USFWS’ Advanced Leadership Development Program.

“Management positions at places like ‘Ding’ Darling only become available every so often. So, when I left Sanibel in 2008, I never really thought I would have the opportunity to come back and become the refuge manager,” said Kevin. “I couldn’t be more excited to lead our team here at ‘Ding’ Darling and continue our landscape conservation efforts at the refuges in Collier County. The diversity of wildlife, habitats, and conservation issues are plentiful in Southwest Florida, and I look forward to continue to work with our partners and forge new relationships to further the conservation mission of the USFWS.”

“Given his deep familiarity with ‘Ding’ and his strong leadership abilities, Kevin is a most welcome and obviously qualified person to lead our local refuges through the upcoming challenges of budget cuts and water quality issues,” said Sarah Ashton, President of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society.

“This has been and remains to be a long transition period for both Florida Panther and ‘Ding’ Darling as

both refuges have had major staff reductions and changes in supervisors over the past couple of years,” said Kevin. “Florida Panther is now operating at 35 percent and ‘Ding’ Darling at 48 percent of what the regional workforce plan prescribed three years ago. Thus, our efforts in the short term will be to rebuild the staffs at both stations. However, I find reason for optimism that we will have the opportunity to build a dynamic team with new personnel that will bring in new energy, skills, and passions, which will inevitably refuel our own energy and passions for the work we do.”



Katy Moves Up

Katy Hosokawa, who joined the Refuge team as a visitor services intern in June 2020, began her first day as a full-time refuge ranger on January 17 to assist Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland in an official capacity for a term of 180 days. She takes a position vacated by Ranger Monica Scroggin in January 2020.

“I’m so happy that we were able to get Katy on the roster as a staff employee,” said Toni. “With Refuge employees decreasing by more than half over the past decade, we badly need more staff support, and Katy has proven herself to be invaluable since she came aboard as an intern.”

A native Texan from the small town of Azle, Katy graduated from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in 2015 with a bachelor’s degree in geography. She then went on to earn a master’s degree from the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, where she studied environmental geoscience. Before starting at the Refuge in June, she held a naturalist position at the Fort



Worth Nature Center and Refuge in Texas.

“I love coastal ecology and birds, so Sanibel and the Refuge are a perfect fit,” said Hosokawa, who also held a position as a naturalist on Little St. Simons Island on Georgia’s coast from 2018 to 2019.

Welcome New Intern

Intern Julie D’Agostino recently arrived from Ohio to help the Refuge with staff shortages in the coming season, thanks to funding from DDWS. Julie received her bachelor’s degree in environmental geography from Ohio University in 2015. Her most recent job was Corporate Partnerships with the National Basketball Association, working with the Cleveland Cavaliers and Canton Charge teams, until she was laid off due to the pandemic.



“I’m stoked to have this opportunity to work in my field of study with skills I have experience in,” said the Broadview Heights, Ohio, native. “It gives me satisfaction knowing that I’m in a position where I can engage the community and teach people the importance of the environment. I look forward to growing my skills in graphic design and social media while learning more about the wildlife here.”

DDWS provides living stipends and other benefits for more than a dozen interns each year. The Refuge supports interns with free housing.

“Our interns bring youthful energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to the Refuge team,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “At the same time, the program gives college students and recent graduates an opportunity to learn hands-on about the environment and Refuge and non-profit operations. The interns fill in the gaps to support the Refuge where government budgets fall woefully short.”

For more information about the Refuge’s internship programs, contact Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland at 239-472-1100 ext. 237. To make a donation in support of the program, contact Lynnae Messina at 239-472-1100 ext. 233.

REINVENTED

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residence programs went on — just in a slightly altered format. Thanks to all of our partners, sponsors, and friends who made the 2020-2021 season “one for the books.”

Stay tuned to our “Ding” on the Wing email bulletins and our Summer Society Pages for news about our Go Wild for Jeopard-Ding fundraiser on March 31.

Clyde and Niki Butcher were a big hit in our lecture series. Niki will be displaying her hand-painted nature photographs at the Refuge starting mid-November. Thanks to exhibit sponsors Wayne and Linda Boyd.



DID YOU KNOW?

Mosquitoes are incidental pollinators. Both male and female mosquitoes feed on nectar for their primary source of energy.



Refuge staff partnered with the Lee County Mosquito Control District to create an interpretive sign educating visitors about the role mosquitos played in building Wildlife Drive and continue to play in the ecological system.

WoW Wows Students and Teachers

Our new Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) urban mobile classroom has been making a big, positive impression at the schools it is visiting. Some comments from teacher letters we received after our first two visits.

“When I heard from our administrators that the Wildlife on Wheels Mobile Classroom was coming to our school for two weeks, I wasn’t sure what to expect, but hoped it would be a good experience for our



Students at Tice Elementary were “over the moon” about WoW.

students. WoW is not only an appropriate acronym for the mobile classroom, but it is also the perfect description of what I thought of the overall experience. Thank You!” Karyna Sandin, Lehigh Elementary School

“Due to the distance and low socio-economic status of our families, most of our students have never had the opportunity to visit Ding Darling or Sanibel, or even the closest beach. The WoW Mobile Classroom brings those ecosystems to our students and, more importantly, creates a hands-on experience miles away from the actual ecosystem.” Anji McStravic, Science Coach, Lehigh Elementary School

“I have seen many organizations do wonderful work in conservation outreach. But the WoW takes the prize! The kind of outreach and education the WoW will accomplish in reaching the students in these hard-to-reach communities and schools will inspire them to want to learn more, study hard, and be our next conservation stewards!” Katie Riemenschneider, Assistant Principal, Tice Elementary School.



Solar Power at the Refuge

The Refuge recently installed an interpretive sign about its solar power initiative in the parking lot of the Visitor & Education Center. It tells how the Refuge has lightened its carbon footprint (and power costs) by switching to solar power and tells how you can do the same. Thanks to Fred and Alice Stanback for making it possible for DDWS to fund the installation of solar panels on the Visitor & Education Center.

Solar power negates climate change: In the year 2020, the Visitor & Education Center’s solar system produced 86.3 MWh of power. That equates to running a 100-watt light bulb for 99 years or a refrigerator for 53 years. It is the carbon offset equivalent of saving 1,562 trees.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

A Busy Florida Legislative Session

by Jim Metzler,
DDWS Advocacy Committee Co-Chair

Several issues are up for discussion at the current Florida legislative session that will impact “Ding” Darling. One of the most important is the budget, which is under unusually heavy pressure due to revenue shortfalls caused by the pandemic. As things stand, the Refuge will benefit from Gov. DeSantis, including in his proposed budget of \$714 million for environmental projects.

Also in the proposed budget, \$100 million would help defray the cost of converting septic systems to sewers. This could significantly benefit the Refuge because one of the factors that negatively impacts the water that surrounds the Refuge is failing septic systems.

However, the proposed budget also contains pitfalls for the Refuge. One pitfall is the proposed budget significantly cuts funding for the acquisition of conservation land. Another is that Florida Senate President Wilton Simpson wants to stop funding the EAA reservoir. When combined with other projects, the EAA reservoir will cut the volume of water discharged from Lake Okeechobee by more than 50%.

The current Florida legislative session is likely to have a major impact on the Refuge. We will keep you apprised of what happens.

The Nature Store

3 ways to shop and support

We know most of you have been to our flagship store at the Refuge or shopped online at ShopDingDarling.com, but have you been to our new location on Periwinkle?



Come see  what all the buzzzz is about.

Open 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Tuesday - Saturday

Located on the north side of Periwinkle Way between Dunlop Rd. and Palm Ridge Rd.

2250 Periwinkle Way

Our locations feature works from artists such as Clyde Butcher, Dale Chihuly, and Rachel Pierce.

(239) 472-1100 ext. 241 • ShopDingDarling.com

High School Contest Winners

Following a contest judging on February 25, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society announced winners and finalists in the eighth annual “Ding” Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest. Due to COVID, DDWS will not be holding an award ceremony this year.

Sponsored by the Theodore Cross Family Charitable Foundation, the competition annually invites high school students from Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties to compete for prizes that included a Canon digital SLR camera package, chartered class trips to the Refuge, Tarpon Bay Explorers excursions, and copies of *Waterbirds: Portraits and Anecdotes from Birding Adventures* by contest namesake, the late Theodore Cross.

Cross, who lived part-time on Sanibel Island, marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; advised the Johnson and Nixon administrations on anti-poverty programs; wrote the influential book *Black Capitalism*, among others; and created Birders United, a birding Web site that ranked legislators according to their record of bird protection support. Late in life, Cross decided to indulge his love for birds and photography and traveled the world to collect stunning portraits and stories to chronicle his adventures.

Refuge staff employee Katy Hosokawa, photographer David Jeffrey, and Cross family friend and Refuge volunteer Jennifer Littman judged the contest. They reviewed 179 images taken by students from 19 different schools.

First place went to an image titled “Flowers” by Rheannon Hill from Lehigh Senior High (see back page). “This photo is stunningly beautiful,” said judge David Jeffrey. “It’s subtle, the depth of field is great, and the composition is really well done. The lighting is also very



The Lifespan of Green Fungus” by Melinda Garvey took second place.

subtle, yet the colors are beautiful. It makes me want to know what type of flower this is.”

In second place, Melinda Garvey from Lehigh Senior High portrayed “The Lifespan of Green Fungus.”

“I chose this photo because it has such vibrant colors — it feels so alive,” said Jennifer Littman. “I like how the sun is coming through all the ferns in the background, and it really shows the fungus on the tree in all its glory.”

Third place winner “Wings of Sun” was submitted by Virginia Bayne of Fort Myers High. “I love this photo because of how the artist captured a beautiful moment in nature,” said Ranger Katy. “I love the light glowing through the wings, and the Anhinga looks so welcoming.”

Honorable mention winners are listed below.

“Theodore Cross’ family made this contest possible, and it has become a solid success story,” said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director. “We couldn’t be more

thrilled that the family wants its donations used in this way — to reach an age group that often falls through the cracks of conservation education. Kudos to Development Officer Sierra Hoisington, volunteer Terry Baldwin, and our staff for a fabulous job of running the contest.”

“We are so happy to be supporting a contest in my father’s name, a contest that will get our youth involved with nature by looking at it — as my father so loved doing — through a camera lens,” said Amanda Cross.

Winning and honorable mention images are on display at the free “Ding” Darling Education & Visitor Center. To see them online and for information on the 2022 photo contest, stay tuned to dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/photo-contests.

Honorable Mentions (in alphabetical order)

- Aspen Combs, Cape Coral High
- Abby Corcoran, Cypress Lake High
- Anna Gibson, Cape Coral High
- Kendra Hernandez, Lehigh Senior High
- Amber Irwin, North Fort Myers High
- Natalee Jones, Cape Coral High
- Juan Matos, Cape Coral High
- Julia Miller, Lehigh Senior High
- Karla Pichardo, Lehigh Senior High
- Chase Qurollo, Cape Coral High
- Kailyn Giselle Uria, Island Coast High

DID YOU KNOW?

After a swim, Anhingas perch on branches or logs to dry out, holding their wings out and spreading their tails.

In third place was Virginia Bayne’s “Wings of Sun.”



SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOW US!

To “like” us on **Facebook** (along with more than 15,000 others), search for “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. (You can also “like” the Refuge by searching for its “Official” page.) You can follow us on **Instagram**, where we have 13,500-plus followers, at [@dingdarlingwildlifesociety](https://www.instagram.com/dingdarlingwildlifesociety). On **Twitter**, search @DingDarlingWS. Also visit our **YouTube** channel by searching “ding darling wildlife society.”



MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

December 1, 2020 – February 28, 2021

Memorial gifts and gifts made in honor of special occasions are a wonderful way to pay tribute to family and friends who are important to us. Throughout the year, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society has received gifts in memory and in honor of loved ones. Thank you to everyone who supported the Refuge in this thoughtful and meaningful way.

We recently received gifts in MEMORY of the following:

John & Kathy Allen	Jane L. Knox
Linda Almira	Helen I. Kronmueller
Harriet E. Babineaux	Ted Kucera
Richard Bailey	Richard “Rytek” Kutas
Adrian N. Baker II	Jeanette Leff
Anthony M. Baldino	Mary Lou Linnen
Vernon & Clara Baltus	Roger A. Lipster
Dr. Christina Barkley	Viola Demarice McCary
David J. Baues	John A McCloud
Bernice L. Bay	Helen White McLeish
Manny Berlin	Gordon & Cecil McLelland
Frank & Jane Bopp	Mary Merrill
Larry Brophy	Hermie Miller
Lawrence A Brophy	Sara Swan Miller
Darcy Bresnahan	June Norton
Jeff Butler	Larry Oberhill
Raymond Carlson	Shepard Palmer & Shirley Found
Jeffrey Case	Carole Park
Sydney Chayes, Jr.	Robert W. Pully, Jr.
Rosalie Courter	Bill Pettibone
Debbie Cutchin & Paulette Pitrak	Jeannette & Joseph Restifo
Rhoda Dorsey	Bill Rankin
Dr. Howard Randall Deming	Carol Rothman
Dr. David Drachman	Harry Sabiers
Ellie & David Drachman	Mary Lou Schadt
Suzanne Dubuc	Lisa Schill
Betty Eertmoed	Donald Schoenewolf
John Fisher	Dee Serage
Howard Freedman	Tom & Bobbie Sharp
Elizabeth Gardner	Charles & Rosemary Shipley
Wilfred Gardner	Ed Stanek
Jenni & Kyle Geurkink	Gene Steele
Christine Glancy	Ronald Sutphin
Arthur & Constance Goodman	Polly Snyder Talbott
Kathleen Greenwald	Polly Talbott
Stuart Grinnell	George F. Thies
Jean Haffenreffer	Alice Tichnor
Donald Herman	Tiki & Decker
H. Frank Hicks	Barbara Turner
Blair T. Hill	Mary Turner
Mike Howard	Gail M. Weiss
Aunt Janet & Aunt Dolly	Jane & Clem Werner
James S. Jackson	Lee Williams, Jr.
Arthur & Louise Johnson	Pat & Harvey Wilmeth
Kathryn Kern	Sandra K. Wilson
Win & Marilyn Kloosterman	Anna Zimmerman

We recently received gifts in HONOR of the following:

Carrie Alexander & Leah Gray
 Jennifer Andrews
 Linda Baie
 Matthew & Sarah Blume
 Tom Bredahl
 Chuck & Barbara Bryden
 Andrew T. Burns Family
 Kristie Lynn Burns
 Mary Ellen Catron
 Ralph & Audra Clarkson
 Barbara Cline
 Jeffrey & Rebecca Clemens
 Jeff Combs
 Scott Dermont
 Dahlia Greenspan
 Mary Guillette
 Betsey Hall
 Christina Hall
 Zachary Hanson
 Doris D. Hardy
 Jane Kennedy
 James E. Kenney
 Ben & Mary Klaus
 Maggie Knapke
 Kraus Family
 Sue & Greg Kressly
 Carol & Alan Landholt
 Mary Lannoye & Kathy Kacynski
 Beth Martinez
 Paul McKenney
 Peter Meekin
 Birgie Miller
 Kim Milling & Joyce Barney
 Joan Martyn
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 Henry & Annie Nachtsheim
 Mark Newhall
 Sarah Pullins & Matthew Blume
 Jane & Rick Ranieri
 The Reed Family
 Wayne & Margi Reiman
 Roseate Spoonbills
 Matthew Ryckman
 Susan & David Schroeder
 Melinda Seader
 Hank & Linda Spire
 Joe Stack
 Annie Vanderbilt
 Sherrye Walker
 Dr. Albert Weyman
 Ann Darling Williams
 John & Martha Wolf



The Refuge and DDWS honor Dr. Perry with an interpretive exhibit at Gulfside City Park.

Two Special Contributions

On March 8, International Women’s Day, DDWS announced the establishment of a permanent endowed fund honoring the life of Dr. Louise Merrimon Perry, the first woman to donate land to the Refuge, thereby protecting the coastal Perry Tract on Sanibel Island. The Dr. Louise Merrimon Perry Conservation Fund for Girls, known familiarly as the LMP Fund for Girls, honors the late ophthalmologist and malacologist, who retired to Sanibel Island.

Dr. Perry valued and appreciated the island’s wildlife and understood the importance of protecting its habitat from future development. Upon her passing in 1962, she donated her 4-plus acre beachfront property to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to maintain as a safe haven for wildlife.

The Perry Tract lies adjacent to Gulfside City Park, where DDWS and the Refuge installed an interpretive kiosk for beach visitors to learn more about Dr. Perry, the shells and wildlife they may find, and the importance of helping to protect and preserve the land.

Dr. Perry’s family is establishing the endowed conservation fund to support women in the field of conservation and those who — as teachers, program leaders, or in other such roles — are impacting the lives of girls by inspiring them to become future conservation stewards.

“Throughout history, women have made and continue to make a significant impact in conservation, but their contributions often go unrecognized,” said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. “The LMP Fund for Girls will allow the Refuge and DDWS to recognize and support women making those small and large differences in conservation. It is a fitting honor to recognize Dr. Perry in this way.”

Anyone interested in supporting the LMP Fund for Girls can visit dingdarlingsociety.org to make a gift online or call Birgie at 239-292-0566.

Donors are able also to establish named, permanently endowed internship and education funds for \$10,000 or more. Income from the endowments fund small projects or needs for the purpose of the endowment. Visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/endowed-funds for more information.

Jim and Liz Birmingham of Sanibel Island and Colorado recently made a donation in support of an annual internship for the Refuge. The Birminghams have been coming to Sanibel for many years and believe in the importance of supporting the communities they live in. The 2021-2022 Birmingham Internship will support one of the three conservation education interns coming to work at the Refuge.



The Birminghams, who are *continued on next page* Jim and Liz Birmingham

CONTRIBUTIONS

continued from previous page

regular visitors to “Ding Darling, were influenced to make their contribution after reading about the Annual Suzanne M. Dubuc Education Internship, which underwrote the cost of a bilingual education intern this season to facilitate the rollout and continuing educational efforts of the Refuge’s Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) mobile urban classroom.

“After meeting some of the interns and WoW team, they were so impressed by how an intern made such a huge difference in the educational outreach to students and hard-to-reach communities,” said Birgje Miller, Executive Director of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the

Refuge (DDWS), which supports WoW, interns, land acquisition, and other Refuge efforts through philanthropic fundraising. “They contacted us about how they could make a similar impact on the Refuge’s mission and underwrite the cost of a year for an internship.”

DDWS provides living stipends and other benefits for about a dozen interns each year. The Refuge supports interns with free housing. For more information about the Refuge’s internship programs and supporting them, contact Lynnae Messina, DDWS Associate Director, at 239-472-1100 ext. 233. DDWS is now accepting donations for future named internships at \$12,500 a year, which is the cost for supporting one intern including living stipends, travel, tolls, Sanibel Rec Center membership, and other expenses.

Spring & Summer Happenings

The uncertainty of the pandemic has us taking event-planning one week at a time. **Earth Day**, however, is on our calendar for Thursday, April 22. We will be leading five free guided tours that day, limited, as have been all our seasonal tours, to 10 participants each, plus two painting sessions with Artist-in-Residence Rachel Pierce and other on-your-own activities. See the schedule below and visit dingdarling.eventbrite.com to register free-of-charge.



Paint with Artist in Residence Rachel Pierce as part of Earth Day activities.

Free summer tours and Artist-in-Residence programs will run along the same lines, and also will be scheduled on our Eventbrite page. Watch “Ding” on the Wing email bulletins for more information.

Earth Day 2021 Schedule

Visit dingdarling.eventbrite.com to learn more and sign up. All tours are limited to 10 visitors.

- 8:30 a.m. - Birding the Refuge
- 9:30 a.m. - Biking the Refuge
- 2 p.m. - Paint a Roseate Spoonbill with Artist in Residence Rachel Pierce
- 11 a.m. - Mindfulness Walk at the Bailey Tract
- 1 p.m. - Junior Ranger Walk
- 2 p.m. - Paint a Roseate Spoonbill with Artist in Residence Rachel Pierce
- 2 p.m. - Bailey Tract Walk
- Ongoing outdoors - Junior Ranger Booklet Debut: Complete it that day and receive a gift.
- Ongoing outdoors - Pick up a compostable bag to fill with trash and return for a commemorative postcard.

WILDLIFE SPOTLIGHT

The Refuge welcomed this repeat visitor in February: The Peregrine Falcon hung out at the first water structure on Wildlife Drive several times, usually between 8 and 10 a.m. Thanks to volunteer Jim Bennight for sharing.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Peregrine Falcon is an extremely fast flier, averaging 25-34 mph while traveling and reaching speeds of up to 69 mph when in direct pursuit of prey. During its spectacular hunting swoop from heights of more than 1 km (0.62 mi), the peregrine may reach speeds of 200 mph as it drops toward its prey.



Summer Wildlife Drive Fees

Admission fees for Wildlife Drive remain the same after season's end. The \$10 vehicle fee, however, holds good for three days of admission starting May 1 annually and running through September. Keep your receipt to show at the entrance fee booth. Daily fees for cyclists and pedestrians are still \$1 each for all visitors ages 16 and older.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Artist-in-Residence Plein-Air Demo — April 1, 6, 15, and 20
- Earth Day at the Refuge — April 22, 2021
- Make a Mother's Day Card with Rachel — May 6, 2021
- Painting on the Patio with Rachel — Summer Thursdays, dates TBA
- Paint on Shells at Perry Tract with Rachel — Summer Thursdays, dates TBA
- Make a Father's Day Card with Rachel — June 17, 2021
- SOLD OUT! Ninth Annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament - May 14, 2021
- Artist-in-Residence Exhibition — October 1-November 10, 2021
- Niki Butcher Photographic Exhibition — November 15-December 31, 2021

TARPON BAY EXPLORERS SCHEDULE

(tarponbayexplorers.com; call ahead to 239-472-8900 to confirm schedule and make reservations)

- Tram Tours of Wildlife Drive:** Mon- Thurs 10am, 11am, 12:30pm, 1:30pm, and 3pm; Sat-Sun 10am, 12:30pm, and 3pm
- Kayak Trail Tour:** April Mon-Thurs 8:30am, 10am, 11:30am, 1pm, and 2:30pm; Sat-Sun 10am, 1pm; May and June Daily 8:30am or 10am plus 1pm
- Sunset Rookery Paddle:** April Daily; May and June Mon, Wed, Fri and Sat or Sun. All 2 hours prior to sunset
- Standup Paddleboard Tour:** April Mon-Sat 9am; May and June Tues, Thurs, Sat 9am
- Nature and Sea Life Cruise:** Daily 11am and 2pm
- Evening Cruise:** Daily. All 2 hours prior to sunset.
- Rentals and fishing charters:** Daily 8am-6pm



One Wildlife Drive
P.O. Box 565
Sanibel, FL 33957

Forwarding Service Requested

239-472-1100, ext. 233
dingdarlingsociety.org

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HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO CONTEST 2021



Rheannon Hill from Lehigh Senior High took first place in the eighth annual "Ding" Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest this spring with her "Flowers" entry. Nearly 180 students from nine different schools in the five-county area participated. See page 5 for more.