

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Rheannon Hill from Lehigh Senior High won first place in the 2020-2021 contest with “Flowers.”

‘Ding’ Darling hosts ninth annual photo contest for high schoolers

The ninth annual “Ding” Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest has kicked off with a deadline of Feb. 15, 2022. It invites high school students in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties to compete for prizes that include a Canon digital SLR camera package, special photography opportunities to be announced, 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; played a prominent role in President Obama’s election; 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. He shot often at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, and a number of the images in his book reflect his love for the refuge. Cross published *Waterbirds* in 2009 at age 85; he passed away shortly after that in February 2010, just two weeks after he made a presentation at “Ding” Darling as part of its annual lecture series.

NPR’s *All Things Considered* called Cross’ collection of 179 images and countless anecdotes “spectacular.” The *New York Times* described it as “part visual encyclopedia, part memoir.”

“The Theodore Cross Family Charitable Foundation has made possible this contest with a generous grant to the ‘Ding’ Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS),” said Birgie Miller, DDWS executive director. “We couldn’t be more thrilled that they wanted their donation used in this way for a eighth year.”

“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 daughter Amanda Cross.

Digital image entries can be shot from any outdoor venue in the state of Florida. A writing component to the contest requires entrants grades 9 through 12 to submit a 100-word description of the “moment” captured and how it reflects what nature and wildlife mean to the photographer.

Entry rules and guidelines are listed below. Guidelines and prize information are also posted at www.dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/photo-contests. Call DDWS at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 for more information.

All entries and personal information must be submitted in digital format to the email address ddhsphotocontest@gmail.com. Submit your full name, high school, grade, and an original photograph that you took of nature and/or wildlife in the open outdoors. Include a title for the photograph and a written description (minimum 100 words) of the “moment” captured and how it reflects what nature and wildlife mean to you. You and your entry must comply with the following requirements:

- High School students attending schools in Lee, Collier, Hendry, Glades, and Charlotte (Florida) counties in grades 9 through 12 may enter the contest.
- Only digital images are accepted and may be taken with any camera, including smartphones.
- Images must be submitted in JPEG format and must have a size of at least 2000 x 1500 pixels or resolution of 2 megabytes.
- The photograph must be taken of nature and/or wildlife in the open outdoors in the state of Florida, which may include parks, refuges, backyards, and other open spaces.
- Panoramic photos are NOT allowed.
- Filters, cropping, enhancements and boarders are permitted. However, adding any elements not existing in the original scene will not be allowed. Judges, at their discretion, will disqualify any photos that appear to be manipulated beyond these guidelines.
- Each participant may enter up to two (2) photos but is eligible to win only one award.
- Judging will be anonymous. Please do not put your name or anything that will identify you on your photograph.
- There are three judges: A refuge staff person, a professional photographer, and a resident of the five-county region.
- Judging criteria:
 - Technical excellence (sharpness, lighting, composition, exposure)
 - Creativity
 - Explanation of photograph (minimum of 100 words)
- All photos will become the property of the society. Photos may be used by the society in any way with appropriate credit.

After the images have been submitted electronically, they will be printed out for judging. The winners of the contest will have their images matted and displayed in the “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center.

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

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