



SPRING/SUMMER 2023

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.

THE ROOST BACK UNDERWAY

Shortly before Ian swiped and flooded Sanibel Island, Refuge and DDWS representatives had broken ground on the latest Refuge educational facility. The Roost, a \$1 million-plus project, will welcome visitors to outdoor flex space for a broad spectrum of educational purposes hopefully by late fall 2023. Construction on the accessible, inclusive, safe pavilion will soon be again underway adjacent to the entrance ramp to the Visitor & Education Center.

Erased from the Refuge's ground-level campus area adjacent to the parking lot, The Roost required a restart in April, when fencing went back up and the project began moving forward.

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An artist rendering of The Roost

Journey to RECOVERY

From "ravaged" to "Refuge" in six months: After long, laborious, mucky, and sweaty days in the mangroves and waters, Refuge staff proudly celebrated the reopening of Wildlife Drive, some of its trails, and the Visitor & Education Center on Tuesday, April 4. The Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce, city officials, Refuge volunteers, and "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society were there to cheer enthusiastically as Complex Project Leader Kevin Godsea cut the ribbon.

Despair Turns to Hope

It was a proud and, for some, an emotional moment. Staffers, cleanup volunteers, and donors who supported Refuge recovery could look back in the rearview mirror at the worst of the disaster that greeted them after Hur-

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A crowd including U.S. Fish & Wildlife officials cheered the Refuge reopening on April 4.

RECOVERY

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ricane Ian's vicious strike on September 28. It seemed hopeless at first look at the downed vegetation, mucked trails, crushed boardwalks, washed-out Wildlife Drive, and broken welcome archway outside the Visitor & Education Center, a Refuge icon.

As staff saw signs of life — a Gopher Tortoise who miraculously survived, Bobcats, the migration of White Pelicans — hope returned.

"The 'Ding' team, with help from refuge crews around the U.S., has been working nonstop to get parts of the Refuge open so the public can once again view the wildlife, which has made a remarkable comeback since Hurricane Ian, especially the birds," said Kevin Godsea.

Cleanup & Conservation Missions

In addition to their tireless cleanup efforts, rangers and DDWS staff kept the Refuge conservation education mission alive against all odds. The WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) mobile outreach classroom was back on the road within a couple of weeks. The team injected new life and purpose into the Refuge Nature Wellness Program (dingwellness.com), bringing healing opportunities to islanders and workers mentally and physically stressed by the disaster and its aftermath. "Ding" Darling is the first in the 567-refuge system to create a Mindfulness Trail, which reopened at Bailey Tract on April 4.

DDWS forged ahead with its main Go Wild annual fundraiser on March 6 (see page 7), reshaped with sensitivity toward local financial and rebuilding challenges. It also partnered with Two Lane Lager and Bell Tower shopping center for a special Sounds of the Sand event in Fort Myers on March 25 to support Refuge recovery. These events provide opportunities for community members and participants to escape to something



Volunteers came from as far as the UK to help clean up.

feeling a bit more normal — a break from the hard work of recovery. As it continues planning its May 19 "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament traditionally held in now-destroyed Fort Myers Beach, it hired one of the tournament's loyal fishing teams to clean up tons of trash from Tarpon Bay.

Social media and email bulletins kept followers informed and the Refuge front-of-mind for supporters who yearned for news and opportunities to help. Poignant moments and lots of hugs kept us all motivated toward the goal of bringing the public back through Refuge gates.

Steps Toward Reopening

Tarpon Bay Explorers, which lost most of its rental inventory, reopened limited facilities, rentals, and tours on February 1. It will extend services as recovery moves forward. In the meantime, some Wildlife Drive trail miles remain closed as the "Ding" team continues to move valiantly forward.



A crew pulled tons of debris from Refuge waters.



Sounds of the Sand raised funds for Refuge hurricane recovery and ongoing conservation.

"We could not have mitigated the severe damage we suffered without the incredible support of our wonderful friends group, the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, and all the help we received with cleanup from civic groups, condo associations, students, and just so many other volunteers," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "Thanks to everyone who brought us to this point. Cleanup will be ongoing for quite a while, so it's tremendously gratifying to see and feel the love from friends and fans all over the U.S."

"The quick turnaround to reopen is a testament to the great leadership at the Refuge Complex and to the generous giving and caring of 'Ding' donors, volunteers, and friends across the country," said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "The job is not finished yet, and we all must keep our sights on bringing back 'Ding' to its former glory. But in the meantime, we all deserve sound pats on the back. Congratulations one and all!"



Photo Contest Winners 2022

In February, DDWS held an official judging for its 30th annual "Ding" Darling Amateur Nature Photography Contest. The 2022 winners were to be announced in October at the Refuge's inaugural Art in the Wild festival, but Hurricane Ian in September canceled the event and judging.

Judges selected three winners and 10 honorable mentions out of 140 entries from 22 states and three countries. All photograph entries were taken at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge complex.

"Despite the disruption from Hurricane Ian, the contest generated much excitement and nostalgia among photographers and our judges," said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director. "Our Refuge may not look the same as it did when these photos were created, but the wildlife is still here, and nature's resilience promises to return to its former beauty as captured in these works."

First place went to Frank Brinker from Oberageri, Switzerland, for his portrait of a Least Tern hatchling titled "Speedy." (See photo on back page.) Contest judge Ranger Jessica Barry commented: "I love the movement portrayed in this photo. During a dark time of Sanibel, to me this photo signifies hope and a new beginning."

In second place was Scott Becque from Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, with a photograph of an Anhinga titled "Azure Eye Ring." "The gleam in his striped feathers caught my eye first," said judge and DDWS Executive Development & Outreach Assistant Carrie Harmon. "I could see the rainbow in the small feathers atop his head. This photo spoke to me of the nuances of nature and what you can find when you look a little closer."

Scott Davidow from Bayside, New York, took third place with "The Whimsical River Otter." Judge and DDWS Business Office Manager Joy Robertson commented: "The otter is posing for the picture and does not seem afraid or wary of the photographer. I believe




Scott Becque won second place with "Azure Eye Ring."

our animal friends will allow us into their environment if we show respect and patience."

The three winners received cash awards from DDWS — \$300 for first place, \$225 for second, and \$175 for third. Each honorable mention winner, listed below, re-

ceived a \$25 award, which reflects a refund of the contest entry fee. The winning photographs and honorable mention award entries will be on display in the Visitor & Education Center throughout the year.

To view all top-ranking entries, visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/photo-contests. The page also contains information for entering the photo contest in 2023. The deadline for submissions will be September 15, 2023. 

HONORABLE MENTIONS

(in alphabetical order)

Calum Bruce, Glasgow, Scotland: "Mellow Yellow"

Conrad Peloquin, Walnut Creek, CA: "Tip Dip"

Constance Bauer, Sanibel Island, FL: "Sunshine on a Cloudy Day"

Fred Ryckman, Sanibel Island, FL: "Sipping in the Afternoon Sunshine"

Heidi Dirkse, Wolverine, MI: "The Strike"

Jeanne Tunnell Swope, Berwyn, PA: "Struttin' My Stuff"

Linda Normoyle, Fort Myers, FL: "Silky"

Paul Harmon, Sanibel Island, FL: "Restful Pondering"

Rebecca Clemens, Sanibel Island, FL: "Spotted!"

Tamara Barry-Peebles, Vancouver, WA: "Turtle Trio"



Third-place winner was Scott Davidow's "The Whimsical River Otter."

Your 2022-23 Board of Directors

At its remote Annual Meeting in December, the DDWS Board of Directors welcomed Sanibel Island resident Mark Heiman for a three-year term and Past President Mike Baldwin as a member of the Emeritus Board. DDWS also reelected board members Phyllis Gresham, Bill Harkey, Robin Kirk, and Bill Valerian. The board later elected officers for 2023: President Wendy Kindig, Vice President Bill Harkey, Secretary Mark Heiman, and Treasurer Bill Valerian.

Mark Heiman moved three years ago to Sanibel Island from Ohio with his wife Richie. He retired from a career in textiles and clothing that has taken him around the world. In Ohio, he served on a number of boards representing the Jewish community and education. He began actively volunteering in the Refuge Nature Store this past year.


"I was raised with the philosophy of leaving the world a better place and to do my part in repairing the world," says Mark, who studied forest management at Oregon State University and once worked for the Oregon State Department of Forestry. "The Refuge and sanctuary status of Sanibel is a big part of what attracted us to live here, and I frequently walk and bike the 'Ding' Darling properties. Since moving here, I have become an avid photographer of the Refuge and all of the flora and fauna of the island. My background in forestry has given me a



Mark Heiman

heightened interest and curiosity of everything here."

Mike Baldwin has served on the DDWS Board of Directors for more than nine years, heavily involved with land acquisition, the National Wildlife Refuge Federation, and advocacy. He served as Board President from 2018 through 2020.

"We welcome Mark into the fold, confident he will bring his passion for nature and energy for volunteering to help move the board into a new year of challenges and support for the Refuge," said Wendy Kindig. "We are so pleased to keep Mike with us in the capacity of emeritus to take advantage of his gentle but firm wisdom." 

STAFF NEWS

Like everything on the island, "Ding" Darling staffing took a hit from Hurricane Ian. The complete destruction of intern housing meant the loss of helping hands in the fields of education, visitor services, and philanthropy. DDWS was able to find temporary housing and bring back bilingual WoW intern Diana Iglesias and DDWS Harkey Development & Communications Intern Ali Reece.

Just before the storm, the Refuge named Bob Gerwig as Refuge Manager for "Ding" Darling and promoted two former interns, Jessica Barry and Tucker Phillips, to help with visitor services throughout the greater "Ding" complex. Late April, Yvette Carrasco started as the new Urban Ranger.




Refuge Manager Bob Gerwig

DDWS bid a sad adieu to Associate Executive Director Sierra Hoisington, who had been displaced to North Carolina by the hurricane, and welcomed former Development Impact Officer Ann-Marie Wildman to the position. Late April, DDWS hired D'Ann Miller to fill Ann-Marie's vacated post.

Chris Galloway has stepped up into the position of Nature Store Manager, and Carrie Harmon filled the Development & Outreach Assistant spot vacated by Jessica's promotion. Both served previously as Nature Store Assistant Managers. In May, Gretchen Engelbrecht takes the position of Community & Outreach Marketing Manager position, which has been unfilled since early 2022.

"Ian also brought our volunteer numbers down, but with a little creative shuffling and strategic hiring, a slimmed-down staff is covering the work details among refuges from Sanibel to the Everglades as part of the Southwest Florida Refuge Complex," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland.

"We extend big hugs to donors who understand our staffing predicament and have contributed specifically to help lighten everyone's heavy work load during cleanup and recovery," said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "Their donations allowed us to rehire interns and provide temporary housing. Affordable housing was an issue even before the hurricane, and became extremely scarce after it." 

THE ROOST

Continued from page 1

"Ever since COVID hit, open-air space for Refuge programming has become a top priority," said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "We had raised most of the funds to get started on the project, but we are still looking for at least another \$100,000 to recoup hurricane losses and bring The Roost up to the highest standards of green construction and operation and to support its programming."

The 2,590-square-foot pavilion, designed by Sanibel Island architect Amy Nowacki, will be constructed of innovative earth-friendly materials with solar panels that will provide electricity for its lighting, paddle fans, and other program needs. Incorporating design elements from nature, it will serve as an outdoor classroom for visiting school and other groups. DDWS also foresees creative new uses that reflect the Refuge's arts legacy and experiential mission, including music and artist events, puppet shows, lectures, mindfulness classes, and culture-driven programs.

The larger of the two covered, open-sided spaces will measure 1,200 square feet with removable seating. Three separate, 80-square-foot areas will accommodate small-group gatherings and places for visitors to gather and rest on their own while they explore the Refuge. The structure also includes an 1,150-square-foot uncovered deck.

"Its name, The Roost, alludes to the pavilion's welcoming appeal," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, who led the design and programmatic plans along with DDWS staff. "Like the Refuge's rookery islands, it invites individuals of all types to a safe, easily accessible place to rest, soak up nature, and relax in the intrinsic beauty of the setting. It makes a perfect transition from the parking lot to the indoor Visitor & Education Center."

As part of the project, the entryway kiosk will undergo a refresh, and DDWS is exploring opportunities for electric-vehicle (EV) solar recharge stations, anticipated at a cost of \$50,000. Interpretation will educate visitors about the importance of solar energy and other alternative energy sources.

"Our Visitor & Education Center is a fabulous resource, but The Roost allows visitors to extend their time in the open, fresh air while taking advantage of free programming," said Birgie. "Anyone interested in supporting the eco-friendly facility and its future educational mission can contact me directly at 239-292-0566."

A TIME FOR GIVING

We send sincere, heartfelt thanks to the swell of support that came in the wake of Hurricane Ian. The Refuge could not have recovered so quickly without each and every donor and volunteer.

Family Funds 'Ding' Internships in Father's Name

Stephen B. Oresman grew up in New York City, haunting Central Park and the American Museum of Natural History. By age 15, he was elected a member of the Linnaean Ornithological Society of New York City. He was well on his way down a lifetime conservation path that culminated this year when, for his 90th birthday, Oresman's family gifted him with a named fund at the Refuge, an internship fund that will inspire future generations of naturalists such as himself.

The permanently endowed Stephen B. Oresman Intern Project Fund will support the Refuge's internship program through DDWS. Mr. Oresman himself, as a high school student, served in a role similar to an internship for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which oversees the Refuge System.

"I worked in an unpaid position at Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland and later at Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge in California," Mr. Oresman said. "I was a research associate — what they would call an intern these days."

His lifelong interest in birds and nature led his family to honor Mr. Oresman with the Refuge internship endowment fund. He and his wife, Enid, have been visiting "Ding" Darling since a 1954 vacation. Through the decades, he started bringing his children and grandchildren along. By 1974, he and his wife had purchased a home on Captiva Island, and he stayed involved with "Ding Darling, donating funds to help build the Visitor & Education Center in 1999.

In later years, the avid birdwatcher was taking his great-grandchildren through the Refuge. His appreciation of the power of internship programs led his daughter



The family gathered recently to honor Stephen Oresman's 90th.

Pam to establish an endowed fund in her father's name to keep alive his legacy and passion for birds, their habitat, and conservation.

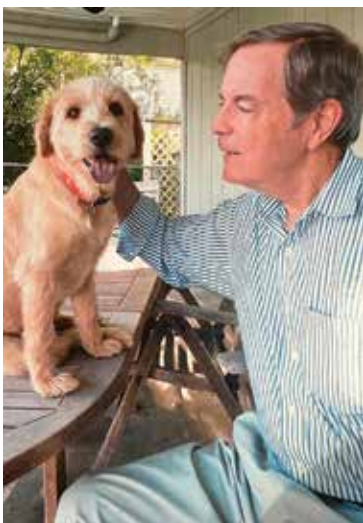
"You need to know where the next generation of conservationists is coming from," said Mr. Oresman. "You have to continue to create more generations, and the only way you can do that is to create opportunity, create actual field work that exposes them to the complicated world of conservation. Internships effectively achieve that."

"With their gift, the Oresman family honors their father's commitment to the environment while supporting the Refuge in a crucial way," said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "Our interns fill in gaps created by federal budgeting shortfalls. They become those stewards of conservation, and many have moved on to impressive roles with private and government conservation organizations."

Endowed Fund Supports Volunteer Program

Second only to his wife and children, Sanibel Island resident Tom Edgar loved the "family" of volunteers he joined at the Refuge back in 2003, shortly after moving to the island. In appreciation for the happiness the Refuge and his work there brought Tom, his family has established the Tom Edgar Volunteer Fund.

"While he was attending Rollins College, he visited Sanibel Island and the Refuge and knew this would be a place he would one day live," said his wife, Connie Edgar. "We eventually made that dream a reality when we moved to the island. He volunteered for several organizations after we moved here.



Tom Edgar

However, it was his unique connection to 'Ding' Darling, its staff and volunteers that was closest to his heart."

During his nearly 20 years at the Refuge, Tom volunteered at the Front Desk of the Visitor & Education Center and served on the DDWS Board of Directors for three of the years. Before his death in 2021, he earned his 2,500-hour volunteer award in 2020.

"Tom understood the value of volunteerism to the Refuge and the good work being done by the volunteers, but he also saw the true value of what volunteerism means to individual volunteers," said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director. "Volunteers often gain a sense of purpose, a sense of family, a connection with the community, and a chance to meet others with similar interests."

Knowing the importance of the Refuge to Tom, Connie and their three daughters chose to establish a permanent fund to help with the expenses for running the volunteer program, knowing that he would have been supportive of anything to do with volunteers and the Refuge.

NEW ENDOWED FUNDS

Refuge donors can establish named endowed funds for \$10,000 or more and work with DDWS staff to designate them for their areas of interest or leave them as unrestricted. The endowments can fund individual projects or ongoing education, intern, programming, research, or other specific needs. To establish an endowed fund, contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566. Visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/endowed-funds for more information.

MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

June 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

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:

C. Paul Ake	Ed Blanchard	D'Altrui	Gazda-Smith	Anne Lett	Bettye J Reller
Paula Albert	Lewis Bochner	Brian Davies	Ruth & Charlie Gerecke	Daniel J. Lidisky	Joseph & Jeannette
Linda Almira	Frank & Jane Bopp	Sue Denk	Bob & Edna Gilbert	Barry & Francine	Restifo
Frances W Anderson	Alice Bowden	John Dickens	Stanley Goldmann	Litofsky	Fred Rieger
Paul D. Andrews	Mickey Bowers	Dr. Rhoda Dorsey	Arthur & Constance Goodman	Jason Lohr	Rev. Richard D. Rintala
Donald E Ankenman	Thom Brown	Suzanne Dubuc	Bonnie Gross	Greta & Pierson Long	Hamilton Maclean
Carl Kenneth Aylward	Finn Burns	Boomer Duvin	Tami Hammond	F. Jon Martin	Robichaud
Anthony Bahas	Mary Joyce Burks	Kendra Eager	Marilyn M. Hare	Marjorie Marcum	Orville Rogers
Richard Bailey	Abelino & Loretta	Bob Eastman	Madonna Hawkins	John Mathwig	Johnathan Rose
Adrian N. Baker II	Campos	Betty Eertmoed	Glenn Edward Heath	Melvin Mayfield	Dr. & Mrs. Richard S.
Trae Ballou	David Campbell	Milly & Russ Ellis	George E. Hervey	John A McCloud	Ross
Charles & Susan Banks	Donna Myatt Campbell	Jean C. Ely	Billie & Larry Holbrook	Miley McClaine	John Russell
Dr. Christina Barkley	Barbara Ann Carter	Eileen Ferguson	Carole Horst	William E McCartney, Jr	Phyllis Jean Russell
Andrew Barton	Jeffrey Case	Chris Fossitt	Mike Howard	Carol A. McEntee	George Rutledge
Robert & Lorraine Basso	Brian Cate	Mrs. Shirley Found	Shelley Hudson	Gordon & Cecil McLelland	Harry Sabiers
Hope & Sterling Bassett	Alexander Christ	Sunny & Tom Frank	Mark & Patricia	Dr. Robert G Meeker	Bill & Jane Saunders
David J. Baues	Susan Coile	Kathleen Froggatt	Huguenin	Peter T. Meekin	Florence & Harold
Erhart Becker	Jane Reed Cole	Dorothy Frost	Harold Hunsinger	Gloria & Richard Meyer	Savage
Mary Behar	Pat Corl	Kenneth G Furness	Glenna Irwin	Russell Millholland	Jean & Joseph Sawtelle
Lynda Beiter	Rosalie Courter	Wilfred & Elizabeth	Mom & Aunt Janet	Margaret "Peg"	Mary Lou Schadt
Robert Berryman	Suzanne Crawford	Gardner	Dave Jensen	Moldaver	Peter K. Schauer
Charles E. Birdsall	Minnie & Thomas	Dr. Elizabeth (Betty)	Brent Jerome	Fred Monick	Linda Scherer
			John	Robert Morrill	Lisa Schill
			Howard & Betty Johnson	Sheilah Morley	Patrick R. Scoles
			Wren Jones	Anne Marie Moss	Jack Shannon
			Judy	Leeanna Mottern	Tom & Bobbie Sharp
			SamSabrina Kaplan	William Muetze	Diane Shults
			Richard Kearns	Brenda Murphy	Betty & Phil Shute
			Barbara Kennedy	Judith Natale	Brenda Smith
			Kay Kiefer	John Naumann	James Patrick Smith
			Paul Kittredge	William & Jeanne	Peter Haldor Sneve
			Marilyn Kloosterman	Neideck	Tiki & Decker Stafne
			Win & Marilyn Kloosterman	Thomas P. Nelson	Dale Stahl
			Ruth & Joseph Kloss	Sylvia Elaine Nichols	Ruth Stanley
			Margie & Joe Knoblauch	Diane & Jenny Norfay	Michael Staub
			Steve Koestenblatt	Marjorie Nordstrom	Gene Steele
			Larry & Charlotte	Norm Normandeau	Aaron Stevens
			Kowitch	Jack & Anna O'connor	John & Ellen Stevens
			Alice Krebs	William O'Hara	Veronica Stone
			Charles Albert Kriegbaum	Mr. & Mrs. S. B. Palmer	Grandpa Bruce Swenson
			Nancy Krusell	Jeanne Panzarino	Polly & Doug Talbott
			Ted Kucera	Tom Paunovich	Robert (Bob) Taylor
			Bonnie Kuhrt	Julie Peck	Robert J Tracy
			Dorothy Kwicklis	Frank Perpich	Margot Turano
			Richard Albert Ladner	Dr. Sol "Grandpa Salt"	Mary Turner
			Arnold Langbo	Pickard	Dod Wainwright
			Sandra Langeland	Deborah Bushe Plonski	Margaret & Albert White
			Jan Lee	Linda Powers	Ann Darling Williams
				Jeanne & Bill Rankin	H. Douglas Windler, MD
				Nancy E. Raphael	Marshall E. Woodruff
				Janet Reenstra	Norman S. Zenisek

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Ensuring wildlife has a place to thrive in the future is as easy as naming "Ding" Darling in your will, or designating it as a beneficiary to your retirement plan, IRA, or other financial account.

Photo credit: Frank Brinker



AN EASY WAY TO GIVE...

- There is no minimum amount for the gift.
- You can change your plans at any time.
- Help protect "Ding" Darling and its wildlife and inspire future generations to do the same.

HOW TO WORD IT:

I give, devise, and bequeath to The "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, Inc., a Florida non-profit corporation located on Sanibel Island, Florida [written amount or percentage of the estate or description of property] for [designate the purpose, if desired, or leave blank for gifts to be used to address the greatest need].



WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU

239-292-0566



dingdarlingsociety.org
/articles/include-ding-in-your-will

GO BULLY FOR "DING" SOARED THIS YEAR!



This year over **\$300,000** was raised to support hurricane recovery and conservation education efforts at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Thank you to everyone who flocked together to make this event a success!

Special Thanks to Our TR-iffic Sponsors.

Call of the Wild

Gretchen
Banks

Jim & Liz
Birmingham

The
Bluedorn
Family

Jim & Patty
Sprankle



Champion Level

Wayne & Linda
Boyd

In Memory of
Boomer Duvin

Bill & Laurie
Harkey

In Memory of
Ron E. Smith



Guardian Level

Doug & Sherry
Gentry

William & Barbara
Millar

Bill & Heather
O'Keefe

Sue & Bob
Thoresen

Protector Level

Mike & Terry
Baldwin

Tiffani Kaliko
&
John Silvia

John & Kay
Morse

Defender Level

A Friend of the Refuge
The Gresham Family
HighTower Advisors
Chip & Nancy Roach
Laura & Shawn Shaffer
Hank & Linda Spire
Bob & Kathy Wiesemann
Sanibel-Captiva *Islander*
Congress Jewelers
Gilah Pomeranz

MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

June 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

(continued from page 6)

We recently received gifts in HONOR of the following:

Susan Melhorn Ackler	Tom Busby & Ann Corso	The Heideman Family	Sally McRoberts	Richard & Barbara Russell	John Thompson
Rodney W. Alexander	CK & Carolyn Davis	Chris & Hays Hill	Cathy Michael	Kathleen & Jim Saari	Lynn Thompson
Cheryl Andrews-Stott	Deb & Charlie Davis	The Reehorst Horning	Kim Milling & Joyce	Louise Sandmeyer	Sam & Gini Thorpe
Clarissa Atkinson	Ann Deming	Family	Barney	Sanibel Citizens &	Ruth Thurston
Crissy Atkinson	Jim Derby	Vicki Horning	William Moonan	Workers	Cathy Trainor
Shelby Bachnik	Jane Desforges	James H Howe	Gregory Mortus	Jessica & Sarah	Sheila Turner
William Badgley	Judy Deshaney	Dale Huff	James & Stephanie	Donna Savage	Vandenorth/Knight
Mike & Becky Bagby	Tom & Joyce Difrancio	Island Beach Club	Mouton & Family	Bob & Elaine Schaeffer	Volunteers Of the Hur-
David & Phyllis Bales	Nancy & Robert Drake's	Rebuilding Team	Jane B. Nelson	Phil & Carol Scheiber	ricane Ian Clean Up &
Jonathan Bales	75th Birthdays	Anne Johnson	Evelyn B Newell	Michiale Schneider	Rebuild Of Ding Darling
Mark & Janice Bales	Barbara Eler	David Jones	Andre Nieuwenhuizen	Susan & David Schroeder	Ryan Walsh
Noel Barbee	Richard & Elizabird	Mary & Lou Kahn	Mick & Kathleen O'Beirne	Joellyn & Dean Schultz	Tom & Judy Ware
Patricia Barrett	Douglas	Kastner/Tamashiro	Karen Olmstead	Science	Pam Weiner & Jim Wit-
Lawrence & Patricia	Raymond Fisco	Barbara Kavanagh	Naida Ortiz & Family	Missy & Tony Scoville	tenberg
Barton	Bob Ford	James E. Kenney	Dan & Elaine Pace	Judy Shackelford	The Wentlings
Ray Baziere	Leah Fossitt	Billy & Salli Kirkland	Karen Pati	Eleanor Shakin	Ranger Toni Westland
Diane S Behar	Phoenix Fossitt	Ben & Mary Klaus	Jacob & Madison Pomroy	Cristina Shaul	Jim & Mary Lee Wetzel
Mari Mennel Bell	Karen & Richard Frazer	Cathy & Paul Knoop	Tom & Cyndy Poole	Ken Shitten	Meredith Whitehead
The Benedict-Reichwein	Tim & Teresa Freeman	Marleen Kurschner	Dawn Puglia	Karen Bartlett & Randy	Susie Wilson
Family	Ileana Sora de La Fuente	Richard Ladner	Margaret Pully	Simmons	Jean M. Wolf
Jim & Judy Blackwell	Paloma Athena de La	Mr. & Mrs. Alan & Carol	Sarah Pullins & Matthew	Lindsay & Eileen Smith	John & Martha Wolf
Matthew & Sarah Blume	Fuente	Landholt	Blume	Snyder Kids	William & Michele
Martha & James Boland	Methel & Walter Gale	Laura	Irene Raber	Susan M. Sorensen	Woodruff
The Bronstein Family	Stephen H. Garnett	John Lettmann	Staff & Volunteers of the	Hank & Linda Spire	Mr. Roger I. Wykes III
Paula Brumback	Alan Gast	Susan Lloyd	Refuge	Jim Sprinkle	Alan & Kathy Wyman
Chuck & Barbara Bryden	Jay & Angela Gerken	Julie & Dan Long	Paula Reiss	Birgie & DDWS Staff	Honorable Charles S.
Kristie Lynn Burns	Sandra Gordon	Lucille Long	Patty Reynolds	Jeremy & Olivia Stauffer	Wynne & Mrs. Dancy
Bill Cameron	Felicia Grant	The Long Family	Stacy & John Richards	Greg & Erika Steiner	Wynne
Joe & Sally Caruso	Fred Greenwood	Les & Susan Loomans	The Rinellas	Lior Anne Straka	Piper Periwinkle
Birgie Miller & David	Jane Grummel	Judy & Bill Lutz	Joy Robertson	Joe Stack & Jenna	Wynocker-Beckwith
Gresham Wedding	Mary Lee Gupta	Jim & Gale Lynch	Rick "Come To Richie	Sullivan	Donna & Steve Yetsko
Celebration	James A. Hamilton	Ann L. Marino	Bird" Rockman	Anne & Don Suss	Michelle Young
Virginia Cicoria	Lucy & Edward Hand	Diane J. McMillen	Scott Rogers	Richard Swails	John D Zimmerman
Barbara Clemens	Doris D. Hardy	Jean & Dan McPheeters	Kai & Jade Rundle	Tammy Thibault	Janet Zylstra

FOLLOW US!

To "like" us on **Facebook** (along with more than 19,000 others), search for "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society. (You can also "like" the Refuge by searching for its "Official" page.) Follow us on **Instagram**, where we have 20,700-plus followers, at @dingdarlingwildlifesociety. Also visit our **YouTube** channel by searching "ding darling wildlife society."



Are You Receiving "Ding" on the Wing?

If you're not one of more than 27,000 subscribers to our "Ding" on the Wing e-mail bulletin, you're missing what's going on at the Refuge week-by-week. It's easy to get in the loop. Simply log on to dingdarlingsociety.org and sign up.



WoW! What a School Year

Despite the destruction Hurricane Ian wreaked on “Ding” Darling in September, our WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) mobile classroom was able to come back strong within weeks to fill in the conservation-education holes left in its wake.

While Refuge facilities were closed to school field trips and all visitors for more than six months, WoW was the “mobile nature experience that could.” Having been stored safely off-campus, it COULD get back on the road to keep Refuge conservation education alive. It COULD visit nearly a dozen Title-1 schools following the hurricane through April. It COULD make appearances at four community events, including “Ding” Darling Day Conservation Carnival on April 22. It WILL continue reaching underserved communities with a summer camp program themed Micro Mania, partially funded by DDWS’

Dr. David A. Drachman Education Fund.

In all, school visits this year reached 7,150 students. That is nearly 100 more than in the previous school year — in spite of the time-out Ian dealt and the loss of staffing because of intern housing destruction.

“WoW continues to continue on, surpassing all our expectations when we first started envisioning it more than three years ago,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “We hear high praise from everyone — from students to parents to teachers and school administration. The WoW team truly makes differences in the lives of the students, their families, and their communities.”

“Philanthropy made the WoW possible and continues to have an impact on the work of the WoW and its team inspiring our future conservation stewards,” said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director.

2022-23 Artist in Residence

The Refuge began its Artist-in-Residence program in 2019 as part of a 75th Anniversary Celebration, with plans to continue in years to follow. For its 2023-2024 season, the Refuge, with support from DDWS and a Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs Grant, holds over award-winning Miami artist Jacqueline (Jacqui) Roch due to Hurricane Ian’s interruption of her 2022-23 term.

“I am so thrilled to be able to call myself artist in residence at this wonderful, natural oasis,” Jacqui said.

“It’s like getting the backstage pass to meet your favorite band. You really get to immerse yourself in a space that may sometimes be off limits to most and, even better, you meet the people who live and work so hard to maintain the space and help the Refuge recover post-hurricane.”

Roch’s fine art pastels capture Florida’s natural beauty — from River of Grass panoramas to detailed portraits of birds and seashells. She considers pastels her passion, and works primarily in that medium to create collectible, one-of-a-kind works. The artist recently won two awards



at the prestigious Coconut Grove Arts festival in Miami — second place in 2022 and bronze in 2023.

She enthusiastically stepped into her role as “Ding” artist in residence starting in April 2022 at the “Ding” Darling Day celebration at Lakes Park in Fort Myers. Throughout the following months, she held programs at the Refuge and in the community. Shortly before Ian struck on September 28, she mounted an exhibition of her Refuge-inspired work in the Visitor & Education Center. Luckily, all her paintings were safely relocated and protected when the hurricane blew through. Some of those pieces and newer works returned to the Center with the Refuge reopening on April 4 for a limited time. Watch for a more extensive exhibition later during her tenure.

“Our Refuge was created by conservation artist Jay Norwood ‘Ding’ Darling in 1945, so our Artist-in-Residence program honors that history and tradition,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “Darling created the Federal Duck Stamp program and designed the first duck stamp and the refuge system’s Blue Goose logo. He won the Pulitzer Prize twice for his political cartoons, which were syndicated across the country throughout the 1920s and five decades.”

For more information about the “Ding” Darling artist-in-residence program, visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/artist-in-residence.



Community Outreach Highlights

The fall and winter season, with its challenges of closed Refuge facilities, brought out our best outreach efforts, in tune with the latest Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership initiatives set forth by the National Wildlife Refuge System. Many of them were funded through philanthropic support. Some highlights:

- On Earth Day, April 22, we celebrated the second year of “Ding” Darling Day Conservation Carnival at Lakes Park. We brought the Refuge to the community through WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) activities, nature tours, live music, art, and fun and games.
- Refuge staff partnered with the City of Sanibel Recreation Department to offer the community wellness programs as it healed from the trauma of hurricane destruction. Meditation and mindfulness walks were available free-of-charge on a weekly basis.
- “Ding” Darling continued to reach out to the economically challenged Tice community in Fort Myers with programs that were relatable and sustainable for students and their families. They included a Soc-



Winning Florida Junior Duck Stamp by Jenny Liu from Port Orange.

cer for Success academic rewards program and a partnership with the University of Florida Institute of Agricultural and Sciences (IFAS) to teach good nutrition through gardening.

- DDWS and the Refuge expanded its Pocket Refuge grants program to bring nature to Title-1 schools in the form of pollinator gardens students helped

to plant and maintain. They provide a safe space for teachers to hold “mini field trips” outdoors with their students.

- Refuge educators visited three local schools as part of the Florida Junior Duck Stamp program “Ding” Darling oversees. On March 29, they held the state contest judging at the Refuge with more than 1,200 entries.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Reasons for Optimism and Pessimism About Our Water Resources

by Jim Metzler, DDWS Advocacy Committee Co-Chair

An analysis of the water-related issues impacting the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Refuge yields reasons for both optimism and pessimism.

One reason for optimism is Governor DeSantis recently signed an executive order that proposed a \$3.5 billion investment for Everglades restoration and protection of Florida’s water resources. Another is several projects to improve our water resources have either completed or reached major milestones. For example, the project to restore more than 40 square miles of the Kissimmee River’s historic floodplain was completed. Also, the Army Corps of Engineers has started the construction of the EAA reservoir. When completed this reservoir is expected to reduce algae-causing discharges from Lake Okeechobee by 55%.

DDWS is working in collaboration with WildLandscapes International, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the National Wildlife Refuge Association, the Nature Conservancy, and the USFWS to establish the Southwest Florida Conservation Area. If successful, this important work will conserve lands and waters within

the watersheds that impact the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge and its surrounding estuaries.

One reason for pessimism: In 2021 a group sued the Army Corps of Engineers, demanding it stop the construction of the EAA reservoir. Another, the Florida legislature is currently considering bills that preempt

county and municipality rules related to critical water-related issues. Also, a large outbreak of blue-green algae is expected this summer on Lake Okeechobee in part due to nutrient pollution from Hurricane Ian.

We will continue to monitor the threats to the Refuge and seek to engage you as appropriate.



Southwest Florida Conservation Area. Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wellness Week

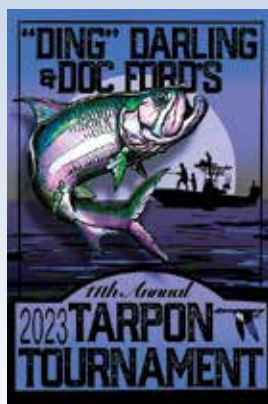
Preceding National Mental Health Awareness Week, the Refuge's second annual Wellness Week runs May 3-9 at Refuge and community outreach locations including Lakes Park and Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers. Visit dingwellness.com for a schedule of activities that range from remote nature-healing lectures from nationally noted speakers to Boot Camp and mindful walks at Bailey Tract and a Food Forest Wellness Fest at FGCU. Guest lecturers include Dr. Geraldine Oades-Sese, child resilience psychologist, and Dr. Joe Blanda, healing-through-nature advocate.



Photo by David McCleaff/Visit Fort Myers

Tarpon Tourney

Because of the severe damage Hurricane Ian inflicted upon Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille on Fort Myers Beach, this year's 11th annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tourney (dingdarlingtarpontourney.com) tentatively will hold its captains meeting and awards ceremony on May 18 and 19 at the Doc Ford's on Sanibel Island. Organizers expect up to 60 teams to compete in the catch-and-release tourney. Competition starts in the bay waters off Sanibel Island, where the landmark, hurricane-surviving Sanibel Lighthouse continues to beam after its historic relighting on February 28.



Artist-in-Residence Jacqui Roch Exhibition – Through TBA

Wellness Week - May 3-9, 2023

"Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament – May 19, 2023

Free Summer Programs – June 11 - August 5, 2023

"Ding" Darling Amateur Nature Photo Contest Deadline – September 15, 2023

Art in the Wild (dingartinthewild.com) – October 21, 2023

Go Wild for "Ding" – February TBA, 2024

WILDLIFE SPOTLIGHT



Gopher Tortoises cannot swim, but they do float. Refuge staff captured this hardy tortoise, who survived Hurricane Ian, shortly after the storm. It miraculously made it out of its flooded burrow at the Refuge and gladdened the hearts of all as a glimmer of hope.

Wild Spaces

"Wild Spaces" has come to "Ding".

This one-of-a-kind custom art work captures the majesty of the Refuge.

Each piece sold directly supports the Refuge.

Explore the collection online or in-store.

Find it on shirts, magnets, stickers, and matted prints.



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PHOTO CONTEST 2022



On February 6, DDWS announced the winners of its 30th annual "Ding" Darling Amateur Nature Photography Contest. The 2022 winners were to be announced in October at the Refuge's inaugural Art in the Wild festival, but Hurricane Ian in September canceled the event and judging. First place went to Frank Brinker of Oberägeri, Switzerland, for his endearing photo of a Least Tern hatchling, titled "Speedy." See page 3 for more information on the contest and its winners.

LOOK FOR US IN OCTOBER

To meet current needs and restrictions as a result of Hurricane Ian in September, "Society Pages" currently publishes twice annually. SNEAK PEEK: Our next issue in October will feature results from the 2023 "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament on May 19 and photos from our "Ding" Darling Day Conservation Carnival on April 22. Also look for upcoming happenings for the 2023-2024 season at the Refuge.