

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: An American goose portrait by Megan Zou of Miami took Florida's best of show.

Caption: Biology ranger Jeremy Conrad and "mother of the Junior Duck Stamp Program" Jaye Boswell were among the five Florida JDS contest judges on March 29.

### **'Ding' Darling to host 2016 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Judging April 22**

The public is invited to attend the judging of the Federal Junior Duck Stamp (JDS) Contest at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island in celebration of Earth Day on April 22, 2016, from 10 a.m. until noon. This is a first-ever event for the refuge, which annually hosts the contest judging at the state level.

"This is beyond exciting!" said Ranger Becky Larkins, the refuge education specialist who also runs the Florida JDS program. "It's only fitting that we get to host a judging, because the Junior Duck Stamp program actually started right here on Sanibel Island, and it was Jay 'Ding' Darling who started the Federal Duck Stamp Program that the junior program spun off from."

Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling initiated the Federal Duck Stamp Program in 1934 as head of the U.S. Biological Survey (precursor to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) to raise funds for purchasing refuge lands across the country. He also designed the first federal duck stamp.

The JDS is an extension of the Federal Duck Stamp program. Former Sanibel elementary art schoolteacher Jaye Boswell began the junior program with her students in 1989. The first national Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest sponsored by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service was held four years later in 1993.

Each state holds its own JDS contest for students from kindergarten to high school seniors. Larkins held this year's state JDS judging on March 29 at the refuge with 2,766 entries. Best of Show winner Megan Zou from Miami will have her art entered into the federal contest.

Best of Show winners from all the U.S. states, Washington, D.C., and several territories are also entered into the federal judging. For the past 20-plus years, that contest has taken place in the Washington, D.C., area.

“The winning artwork selected at ‘Ding’ Darling will grace the 2016-2017 Junior Duck Stamp,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland, who is organizing the event with the help of the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). “The five-dollar purchase price of the stamp goes directly to funding the environmental education opportunities and recognition for the children who participate in the program, as well as awards for the top winners.”

The judging will take place in the Refuge Visitor & Education Center on April 22. Admission is free but seating will be limited and on a first-come basis. The 2016-2017 Federal JDS winner will be announced at noon.

“We have yet to place a first-place winner from Florida,” said Larkins. “We’re hoping this is the 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 proceeds.

To support DDWS and the refuge with a tax-deductible gift, visit [www.dingdarlingsociety.org](http://www.dingdarlingsociety.org) or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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