

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: At the Go Wild event, DDWS president Doris Hardy invited guests to “walk with me,” an offer to tour interested donors and friends around the Wulfert tract.

### **‘Ding’ Darling announces campaign to purchase Wulfert Road parcel**

At the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge’s (DDWS) annual fundraiser, Go Wild for “Ding” on Feb. 23, board president Doris Hardy announced a campaign to acquire 8.51 acres on Sanibel Island’s Wulfert Road as a crucial wildlife corridor for the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

DDWS must raise \$2 million in private funds to purchase the parcel, which lies between the refuge’s Bowen Bayou tract and its main campus along Sanibel-Captiva Road, she said. Donors have already committed \$500,000 of needed funds, so the goal is to raise the remaining \$1.5 million by February 2017.

If not preserved by the refuge, the land could be developed with as many as five dwellings and one major boat dock with direct access into Pine Island Sound, as already approved by the City of Sanibel. Construction of new homes and the increase in boat traffic would have significant impact on the habitat of 80 different land and marine species that live or feed on or near this property.

Species that would be seriously threatened by development of the uplands, mangrove, and estuarine habitat include the gopher tortoise, American oystercatcher, black skimmer, little blue heron, reddish egret, mangrove cuckoo, Florida manatee, smalltooth sawfish, and green and loggerhead sea turtle.

In 2013 the Society successfully completed a \$1.4 million land acquisition campaign for the historical Woodring Homestead, which protected the water entrance to the Refuge on Tarpon Bay. In late 2015 it accepted a land donation of 9.1 acres near Clam Bayou. Refuge administration has earmarked the Wulfert Road parcel as a top habitat priority.

“The board feels it’s important to help the refuge preserve as much of the dwindling island habitat as it can, since federal budget cuts preclude the refuge from government acquisitions in this area,” said Hardy. “We will be extremely grateful to donors who will help us meet these goals.”

“Based on recent sales of waterfront property in the neighborhood, we have determined that \$2 million is a very fair market price for the Wulfert Road parcel,” said DDWS board member and real estate agent Jim Hall.

“With a time-sensitive fundraising deadline of February 2017 to purchase the Wulfert Road property, we will need major gift commitments to this campaign in order to be successful,” said immediate past president John McCabe. “We look to our supportive community to help us save another environmentally crucial piece of Sanibel Island – one of the last remaining undeveloped parcels.”

For more information, contact DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566, [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

#### 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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