



Society Pages

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

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, a nonprofit Friends of the Refuge organization, supports environmental education and services at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. It depends on membership support and private contributions and is grateful to those who help fund projects such as the Visitor & Education Center, internships, interpretive signage, research, student education, and informational literature.



SEA MONSTERS EXHIBIT

Sea Monsters invaded the "Ding" Darling Visitor & Education Center in early June for a summer engagement, direct from Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, Florida. The mobile exhibit engages visitors daily with interactive elements that explore some of the quirkier characteristics of sea creatures.

Made possible by DDWS and grants from the Southwest Florida Community Foundation and a private family foundation, it will remain open free to the public through August 18, 2014. Part of the grant funds will provide transportation to bring to the Refuge disadvantaged children who wouldn't otherwise be able to experience the exhibit.

Our inaugural Upcycle! Art Fest at the Refuge on April 16 and the Third Annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament brought this year's season to a close with a double bang.

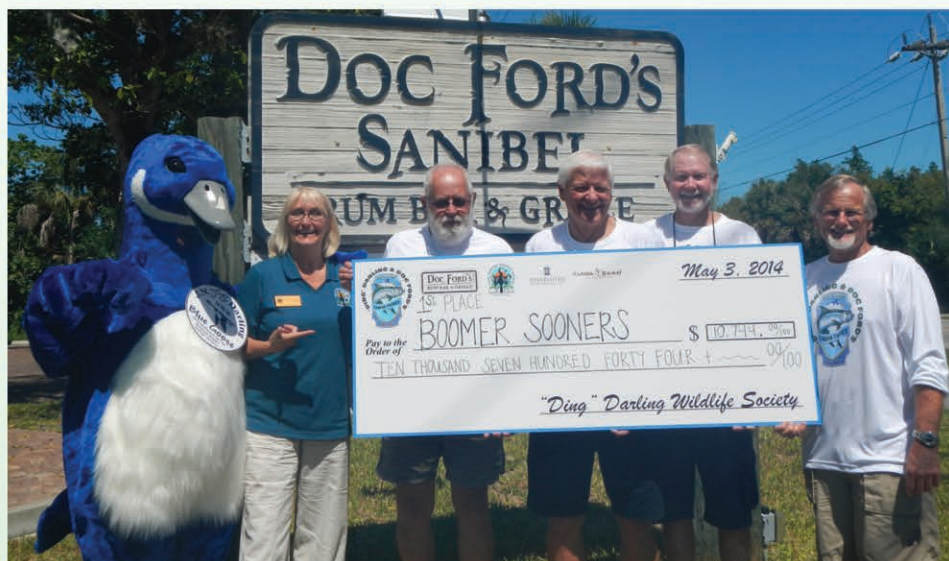
More than 20 artists displayed their re-imagined works of art in the "Ding" Darling Visitor & Education Center for Upcycle! Proceeds from their sales netted the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society \$6,000 to support Refuge programming.

"The event was so successful, we have decided to extend it to two days
continued on next page



The "Osprey Sculpture," created by Andrew Corke out of recycled bike tires, fetched \$4,000 in silent auction.

Upcycle! + Tarpon Tourney = 2 Successful Events



Tarpon tournament winning team Boomer Sooners with the Blue Goose and Executive Director Birgie Miller.



Team Fintastic Charters took second place.



The Fisbin' Divas came in at third place.

Upcycle! and Tarpon

continued from page 1

during the week before Easter next year," said Barb Rogers, committee chair.

On the heels of that success, the May 3 tarpon tournament bested proceeds in previous years with a whopping \$41,000 from tournament sponsorships, donations, and silent auction earnings. Forty-six teams competed, outwaiting morning thunderstorms, for \$23,875 in prizes.

"One hundred percent of the anglers' registration fees goes to the awards purse," said tournament organizer, Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director. "That's why Doc Ford's and our other sponsorship partners are so dear to us. They pay the costs for putting on the tourney and contribute to the charity proceeds."

See below for a list of tournament sponsors.



Tourney chair Don Wildman makes a special presentation at the Captain's Dinner to wounded vet Jon Carnes (second from left), hosted in the tournament by Operation Open Arms and Jensen's Marina. Jon, a former Naples student, caught the first tarpon of the day. His team came in fourth.

THANKS TO OUR TARPON TOURNEY SPONSORS

Please thank and support our generous Tarpon Tournament sponsors:

Title Sponsor: Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille

Presenting Sponsor: Diversified Yacht Services of Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel Bean

Platinum Sponsor: Florida Weekly, Lamar Advertising, Suncoast Beverage

Gold Sponsors: Anisa Jewelry, Bella Signs & Designs, Congress Jewelers, Fort Myers Marine, Happy Foods of SW FLA, Holiday Inn Sanibel Island Beach Resort, Island Sun/River Weekly, Media Source, Raisers Edge, Sanibel Captiva Community Bank, Sealife By Congress, Whitney's Bait & Tackle, Team Nimrod, Whitney's Bait & Tackle, Wilbur Smith Law Firm

Silver Sponsors: Gulf Star Marina; Dan Hahn Custom Builders; Janet Strickland Law Office; John Grey Painting; Key West Express; Must Do Visitor Guides; Myers, Bretholtz & Company, PA; Point Ybel Brewing Co.; Sanibel Island Fishing Club; Semmer Electric/Bonita Bill's; Shoreline Lumber; The Shutter Guy; Vasanta Senerat, CPA, P.A.

SAVE THE DATES FOR NEXT YEAR'S SPRING EVENTS

April 1-2, 2015: Second Annual Upcycle! Art Fest

May 9, 2015: Fourth Annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament



Fort Myers artist Jonas Stirner won first place in the Upcycle! competition.

'Ding' Days Celebrates 25



Doc Ford's Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille once again stepped forward as a Roseate Spoonbill sponsor. For information on becoming a "Ding" Days sponsor, please contact Wendy Schnapp at 239-470-1877 or EcoErler@aol.com.

There must be 25 ways to celebrate "Ding" Darling Days, happening at the Refuge October 19-25 this year. 2014 celebrates 25 years for the annual eco-festival, which started in 1989 as a one-day Family Fun Day and has grown week-long with free and discounted tours, free nature presentations, and yes, still that so-popular Family Fun Day kick-off.

We don't have room to tell you all of the 25 ways to celebrate, so we will start with just 10. Look for more in the next newsletter, "Ding" on the Wing bulletins, and at www.dingdarlingdays.com/ddd-events:

1. 25 "Ding" Things Passport: A weeklong scavenger hunt with 25 fun prizes.
2. The debut of the Discover "Ding" GPS-based game app — the first of its kind in the Refuge System with 25-minute clinics during "Ding" Days.
3. Free Silver Anniversary reusable bags filled with books and other goodies for the first 250 arrivals to Sunday Family Fun Day, October 19.
4. Free 25-minute archery demonstrations and clinics on Family Fun Day.
5. Special 25th anniversary presentations by Heather Hensen's Ibex Puppetry troupe.
6. 25% off all Tarpon Bay Explorers tours — including tram, paddling, and nature cruise excursions.
7. 25 stunning images of mating great blue herons at a special photographic presentation by Sallie Rich on Tuesday.
8. Free 25-minute stand-up paddleboard clinics on Tuesday and Thursday.
9. Free wilderness paddles into the Refuge's Lady Finger Lakes to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.
10. 25-cent Silly Photo Booth pictures on Saturday's Conservation Art Day.



The new Discover "Ding" app will combine gaming, GPS capabilities, photography, and trivia for a totally new way to explore the Refuge.

Hats Off To Our GCP Partners

As we celebrate another successful season of fundraising we want to heartily thank our steady donors in the Guest Contribution Program. These businesses are committed to supporting the Refuge by giving their guests and customers the option to donate \$1 to DDWS for each transaction or night's accommodations.

Please support our wonderful partners. For information on becoming a GCP partner, please contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

Jensen's on the Gulf and Marina & Cottages, Captiva Island; Kona Kai Motel & Cottages, Sanibel Island; Mitchell's Sand Castles and Forty/Fifteen Resort, Sanibel Island; Parrot Nest, Sanibel Island; Sanibel Moorings, Sanibel Island; South Seas Island Resort, Captiva Island; Tarpon Bay Explorers, Sanibel Island; Tarpon Tale Inn, Sanibel Island



Spring Highlights Album



As part of the DDWS education mission, our staff and interns take the Refuge to the public. In May, we visited the Family Fun Expo at Germain Arena, where our photo wall was a big hit.



Eight delegates from Kenya received a VIP Refuge tour in April as part of the Kenyans' mission to form a sister partnership with Southwest Florida and learn environmental strategies to take home with them.



Plein-air artists joined Earth Day at the Refuge festivities for the first time this year.



Ranger Becky Wolff hosted the annual Florida Junior Duck Stamp Contest at the Refuge, next door to where the now nationwide program began in 1988 at The Sanibel School.



Hobie hosted outdoor writers to try out the company's new pedal fishing kayaks in Refuge waters.



The Sanibel Bike Club celebrated the repaving and reopening of Wildlife Drive.

Nature-art photographer Clyde Butcher closed our Friday Lecture Series with a stunning presentation, afterwards signing copies of his beautiful books.



President Roosevelt repressor Joe Wiegand visited to celebrate the 111th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System and check out our new Wildlife Education Boardwalk.

Welcome Summer Support Staff

With the federal budget currently freezing refuge hiring, the Refuge is happy to welcome temporary summer staffers through funding from the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society and other programs.

DDWS is funding one new shared intern, Davis Horton, and returning summer STAR (Summer Teachers Assisting Refuges) teacher, Jillian Meek. Davis arrived on May 17, 2014, as a shared intern who will assist both the Refuge and DDWS in the areas of visitor services, education, biology, and outreach.

A third-year student in environmental science at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, Davis will spend the summer at the Refuge through Aug. 24.

"I have been to the Refuge many times," he said. "Even when I was a kid, my family would take me through Wildlife Drive to see all of the different animals. I'm looking forward to learning the diverse aspects of Refuge operations during my term."

Davis' background research includes testing duck vision by examining preferences for black versus UV decoys, and studying the effects of water flow on the anatomy of fish living in streams versus fish living in ponds and lakes.

"Every day is different here at the Refuge, and it's the variability in my work that I have grown to love the most," he said. "One day I may be working with kids in the education center; the next I may be working with biologists doing bird surveys. I never know what to expect. Having so many opportunities has greatly diversified my working experience."

STAFF NEWS



Arthur Williams (left) and Davis Horton pose at an outreach program they staffed recently.

Jillian, a helping/field trip teacher in the environmental education department for the Lee County School District, will be assisting with summer programs, teaching classes, and participating with the *Sea Monsters* exhibit that is stationed for the summer in the free Visitor & Education Center. The STAR position at "Ding" Darling is funded by grants awarded to DDWS from the LAT Foundation and a private family foundation.

Another summer Refuge staffer comes from the Greening Youth Foundation program. Arthur (Ah-too-wah) Williams joined the Refuge staff on May 19 as part of the foundation's non-profit program, which, in partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), provides underserved youth and young adults opportunities to nurture environmental stewardship.

"I got involved with the program because I wanted to


grow my professional connections in environmental education and help in relating environmental problems and education to the public," said Arthur, a soon-to-be biology graduate of Presbyterian College in South Carolina.

"As a biologist with research background, I saw a need to relate scientific information to the community and explain the importance of nature conservation. I love nature and feel that working for the USFWS is a great way to perfect my teaching skills in this area."

Arthur was one of 15 selected to conduct marine research in the Chesapeake Bay. Most recently, he studied at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. He will work on environmental education, visitor services, and special projects during his summer stay at the Refuge through mid-August.

Three federally funded Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) students began their full-time summer jobs for the Refuge the week of June 16. Justin Love will work in visitor services, Jessica Mathisen in biology, and Mallory Veltman in administration.

"Our temporary summer staff is so valuable to us — not only in providing needed manpower, but also because it brings youthful energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to the Refuge team," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "At the same time, it gives these students and educators an opportunity to learn about the environment and Refuge operations."

For more information about the Refuge's internship programs, contact Toni at 239-472-1100 ext. 237. 

MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

March 7, 2014 – June 7, 2014

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 and Paul	Howard J Lee
William F Bergmann	Margaret McLaughlin
Dr. H Randal Deming	James L. Nichols
William H Bill Dunford	Joseph H. Patersen
Tim Gardner	Bobette Pfeifer
Gwynne Goldberg	Dorothy Darling Powel
Walter L. and Barbara Gross	Marcy Schreiber
Jay Jex	Dr. R. Denison Stewart
Deacon Jones	Winnie Vreath
Molly Krival	

We received gifts in **HONOR** of:

Sarah Ashton	Robert and Linda Osburn
Dulce Doss	Packman Family
The Judy Family	Ann Smith
Marilyn Kloosterman	Jim Sprinkle
Joan Leffel	John and Martha Wolf
Ron Lipman	

Congressional Outreach

Your help is needed to ensure that "Ding" Darling and all refuges nationwide receive adequate federal funding. Protect the future health and well-being of our Refuge; ask your elected representatives in Congress to provide adequate funding.

Let your voice be heard! On our Web site, you will find details at www.dingdarlingsociety.org/federal-budget and a sample letter at www.dingdarlingsociety.org/sample-letter for corresponding with your congressmen. 

FOLLOW AND LIKE US

DDWS is currently active on three social media platforms. Please "LIKE" us on **Facebook** by searching "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society. (You can also "LIKE" the Refuge by searching for its "Official" page.)

Instagram users can find us at @dingdarlingwildlifesociety. To follow us on **Pinterest**, search for Ding Darling and then click "Pinners" at the top left.



Leave a Legacy and Support 'Ding' Darling in Your Estate Plans

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society (DDWS) is proud to be mentioned in many of our departed benefactors' Last Wills and Testaments and as beneficiaries of retirement and other estate plans. It's quite simple to do.

You may name DDWS in your will as follows: "I, [name], of [city, state, ZIP] 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]."

The IRS has granted DDWS tax-exempt status and any gift to our organization is tax-deductible and will help offset inheritance taxes your family or friends might otherwise be obligated to pay. For more information, visit our Web site at www.dingdarlingsociety.org/bequest.



Butterfly and Moth Collection

by Intern Libby Errickson

"Ding" Darling is home to many types of wildlife: birds, mammals, and reptiles. These are the species that most visitors notice. However, not every visitor notices some of the smaller members of our ecological community. Insects play a vital role in the function of an ecosystem. For my biology internship project, I decided to focus on one specific order of insects, *Lepidoptera*, better known as butterflies and moths.

Walking through the "Ding" Darling Visitor & Education Center, one might notice that information about these pretty bugs is missing from its colorful and informative exhibits. A beautiful butterfly display of specimens found in South Florida was donated to the Refuge years ago, but without proper pest deterrents, it was destroyed over time. This left a void in the extensive wildlife information that the Center offers, a void I decided to fill.



Libby at work on her collection.

In college, I took an intensive entomology course and learned how to put together an insect collection of more than 100 specimens, how to carefully pin and display insects such as butterflies, moths, beetles, dragonflies, grasshoppers, bees, and wasps. I was able to use the knowledge to make the new butterfly and moth collection for the Education Center.

The project was more challenging than I anticipated. As one might imagine, butterflies are quick fliers.

BIOLOGY REPORTS

I learned that some butterfly species are much better at evading predators than others. Species such as the Zebra Longwing and Gulf Fritillary, speedy fliers to begin with because of their elongated wing shape, are also intelligent enough to fly high and out of the way as soon as something takes a swipe at them and misses.

Even though both species are commonly found on the island, they were the most challenging ones for me to acquire because of their evasion skills. Other species, such as the Great Southern Whites, didn't seem to notice or care when my net whizzed by them, making them easy catches. Moths were also rather difficult since most of them are active only at night and blend in to their roosting spots during the day.

My primary area of expertise has always been bird identification and ecology, but I am glad that I took the opportunity to use this intern project as a way to learn more about another wildlife group. My butterfly and moth identification skills have expanded dramatically during the past five months, and it has been fun to look more closely at the ins and outs of these tiny lives.

I see a large educational value in being able to see real butterflies and moths up close instead of just in pictures, and I hope that visitors to the Refuge feel the same way. I am also designing an interpretive sign about butterflies, moths, and their roles in the ecosystem that will be placed in Bailey Tract, one of the most butterfly-rich spots in the Refuge.

Sanibel Rice Rat Surveys, Spring 2014

by Intern Hanna Joergens

Sanibel Island is home to a sub-species of rice rat found nowhere else in the world, the Sanibel Rice Rat (*Oryzomys palustris sanibeli*). Native to the island, the rodent plays an important role in the food chain — from eating seeds and snails to providing food for predators such as hawks and bobcats.

Because of habitat loss and fragmentation, predation by feral house cats, and competition from the nonnative Black



Sanibel Rice Rat #193.

Rat (*Rattus rattus*), the state of Florida has designated the Sanibel Rice Rat (SIRR) as a state threatened species.

The Refuge has been monitoring the threatened population of rice rats through small mammal surveys conducted each spring and fall by biology staff and interns. We use live traps, general body size metrics, and tagging methods to obtain data on the SIRR population location, population size, and habitat requirements.

These techniques have allowed us to collect helpful information on many types of rats found on the island, including the SIRR, and to tag and release the animals unharmed.

Because of the elusive nature and small population of SIRRs, we do not capture large numbers of individuals; however, every individual caught provides us priceless information about the species.

This spring, biology intern Libby Errickson and I captured two SIRR individuals at the Legion Curve site on Refuge property. Rat #193, a male captured March 11, weighed 80 grams and measured 11.5 cm from nose to tail tip. These are good average measurements for the SIRR, which is a smaller sized subspecies of the rice rat family.

Rat #187, another male captured April 17, was much larger with a weight of 150 grams and a length of 14 cm. Both males had the distinct coloration of a Sanibel Rice Rat with tan back and white undersides, and the tails featured the unique half-brown, half-white skin coloration.

We safely released the rats after taking measurements and attaching small numbered tags to their ears to alert biologists in the case of a re-capture. Trapping will continue after breeding season commences and cooler air temperatures arrive with the fall season.

Summer Spruce-Up

Off-season means time to improve facilities and services at the Refuge. These projects have been completed recently or are underway this summer.

1. As part of our 2012-2013 Refuge Preservation Campaign, we raised funds for improvements to the free "Ding" Darling Visitor & Education Center. Our first project was to provide an elevator-lift to assist physically disabled visitors with their ascent to the Center.
2. The Refuge has added a shade cloth structure to the remote Tram Parking lot. Tram Parking returns to the main Visitor & Education Center parking lot during the off-season (May through December), but the lot will be put to use during "Ding" Darling Days in October.

3. Improvements to the Visitor & Education Center's air-conditioning system are underway. Watch for news of possible short closures of the Center during the summer's work.

Marilyn Kloosterman, center, made the first Preservation Campaign donation earmarked for the new lift. With DDWS Board Member Don Wildman and Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik, she helped unveil the addition in May.



Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars, and join us! Visit www.dingdarling-society.org for details.

Summer Family Programs — Through August 2, 2014
Sea Monsters Exhibit — Through August 18, 2014
Sea Turtle Exhibit Unveiling - July TBA
25th Annual "Ding" Darling Days - October 19-25, 2014
Friday Lecture Series - January-March TBA
Wednesday Bi-Weekly Film Series - January-March TBA
Second Annual Upcycle! Art Fest - April 1-2, 2015
Fourth Annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament - May 9, 2015



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YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHERS

The inaugural "Ding" Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest engaged more than 250 high school students from a five-county area in capturing nature —wherever they found it — through the camera lens. Named for a late Sanibel Island resident who gained fame as a nature photographer, the contest was funded by the Theodore Cross Family Charitable Foundation and awarded prizes, honorable mentions, and finalist awards to more than 30 students. The awards ceremony brought an auditorium full of students and families, many of them first-time visitors to the Refuge. They received free Wildlife Drive admission following the ceremony.



Maxx Pollack of Canterbury High School took first place with his snowy egret portrait. He won a Canon camera package, a photography field trip to the Refuge for his class, and other prizes.

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