



www.dingdarlingsociety.org

WINTER 2014

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 Education Center, internships, interpretive signage, research, student education, and informational literature.



Birgie goes to Washington: Our executive director traveled to the Capitol during the shutdown on behalf of the Refuge System.

BACK TO BUSINESS ON WILDLIFE DRIVE

There was good news. And then that other kind. Wildlife Drive repaving and improvements had finished on time for an October 1, 2013, grand re-opening. Bikers and motorists alike collected at the front gate, eager for their first glimpse since mid-May.

Unfortunately, earlier that morning the federal government lowered the boom: A government shutdown that meant Wildlife Drive and all of the Refuge would ultimately remain closed for 16 days. Happily, the Drive is once again accessible and rave reviews keep coming in. The project included water structure improvements and expanded parking at Calusa Shell Mound Trail.

Get in the Pink at Trailgate Party 2014

Register today to attend the second annual "Ding" Darling Trailgate Party on February 21, 2014, and get ready for another one-of-a-kind evening and the event of the season.

With a portion of event proceeds going to support continued mangrove cuckoo research and other education and research efforts at the Refuge, the theme this year is "In the Pink," in homage to "Ding's" iconic bird, the Roseate Spoonbill.

Last year's inaugural "Cuckoo for 'Ding'" Trailgate Party took its theme from the Mangrove Cuckoo research study being conducted at the Refuge the past couple of years.

"So the Roseate Spoonbill will be the second of our Big 5 birds," said Birgie Vertesch, Executive Director of the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, which hosts the event.

The Trailgate Party will take place at the Refuge and include live entertainment and silent and live auctions to provide Refuge support where government funding falls short.

"In Southwest Florida, we have a calendar chock full of community events, but the 'Ding' Trailgate Party continued on page 7



An original, newly framed "Ding" Darling political cartoon from 1937 goes on the silent auction table.




Island restaurants serve food out of the back of trucks at the annual Trailgate Party.

INSIDE: PHOTO CONTESTS • "DING" DAYS • LECTURE SERIES

Tram Parking

Because of parking squeezes during the busy winter and spring seasons, the Refuge and Tarpon Bay Explorers have devised a new strategy for visitors who are taking the tram tour of Wildlife Drive during the January-April time frame. Starting January 7, 2014, they will be testing a system whereby tram tourists will still buy their tickets at the Visitor & Education Center parking lot booth, but then will drive south a half-mile to the Refuge Special Events Parking Lot to board the 90-minute tram tour.

As the transition begins, tram tickets will also be for sale at the new parking lot site. For more information, please call Tarpon Bay Explorers at 239-472-8900. 



Volunteers laid pavers for handicap parking at the new parking site.



One panel from our online slide show created by Doris Hardy and Claudia Burns.

Monofilament Collection Data

Our monofilament team, Operation Scissors, has compiled a chart and slide show to illustrate its work and how you can help. The chart tallies collections since the team began their Friday kayaking excursions to free the mangroves of monofilament and other fishing-related, wildlife-harmful trash. Each year the team pulls in a five-gallon bucket full of fishing line. Thanks to the team for its devotion and hard work!

2009-2010 Totals

247 Lead Weights
97 Lures
52 Bobbers
37 TKO Shrimp, Assassins, Jig Heads, etc.

2010-2011 Totals

255 Lead Weights
97 Lures
77 Bobbers
78 TKO Shrimp, Assassins, Jig Heads, etc.

2011-2012 Totals

265 Lead Weights
103 Lures
96 Bobbers
107 TKO Shrimp, Assassins, Jig Heads, etc.
9 Non-lead Weights


2012-2013 Totals

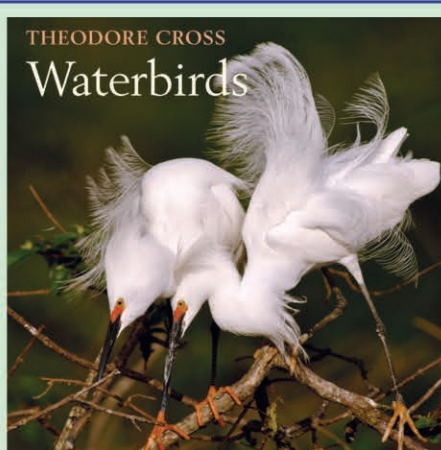
506 Fishing Hooks
291 Lead Weights
111 Lures
101 Bobbers
129 TKO Shrimp, Assassins, Jig Heads, etc.
39 Non-lead Weights

High School Photo Contest

The inaugural "Ding" Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest is underway, with a deadline of March 14, 2014. Invite all your talented high school friends in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, and Hendry counties to enter for cool prizes.

Named for the late, great bird photographer, Theodore Cross, whose family lives on Sanibel Island, the contest encourages budding photographers to get out in nature and capture the wonder through their lenses.

For guidelines and other contest information, please visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org/photo-contests or call 239-472-1100 ext. 249. 



Theodore Cross' book of stunning bird portraits.

To view our "Clear Your Gear" slide show, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/DingMonofilament>. 

Photo Contest Winners

DDWS announced the winners of its 26th annual "Ding" Darling Days Amateur Nature Photography Contest on October 26, 2013, at a special Conservation Art Day presentation during "Ding" Darling Days.

Judges had selected 13 winners out of 74 entries from 19 states and four countries. All photographs entered were shot at the Refuge.

First place went to Michael Dougherty of Clarkston, Michigan, for his Green Heron at Sunrise image. "I was torn between it and the Yellow-Crowned Night Heron [that took third place]," said judge Laura Ball, a local professional artist. "I loved the contrasts in color in this one—how the leaves brought out the orange color in the bird's neck."

Craig Goettsch from Colorado Springs, Colo., took second place with a photo of a Reddish Egret doing its fishing "dance."

"The color balance is beautiful and the composition exceptionally good," said David Lee, a visiting photographer from England, who stepped in to judge for a Refuge

staff member due to government shutdown furloughs.

In third place was Massimo Montanari from Italy. His shot portrays a Yellow-Crowned Night Heron preparing for liftoff. "I like the composition," said local professional photographer John Swank, the third contest judge. "It's technically sharp and well done and representative of the Refuge—one of my favorite birds."

"We always choose three judges for the contest," said Terry Baldwin, contest chair. "A Refuge staff member, a professional photographer, and a member of the Sanibel community."

The three winners received cash awards from DDWS at the presentation. The winning photographs and 10 honorable mention award entries will be on display in the Refuge Education Center throughout the year.

To view the other top-ranking entries, visit www.ding-darlingsociety.org/photo-contests. Stay tuned for news about blank note cards featuring all 13 winning images, which will be available for purchase in the Refuge Nature Store this season.

HONORABLE MENTIONS (in alphabetical order):

Gary Aber from Wilmington, Delaware — Green Heron
 Sherman Bedford from Prospect, Kentucky — Raccoons
 Thomas Brott from Cape Coral, Florida — Reddish Egret
 Bill Fischer from Hinsdale, Illinois — "Ding" Darling Banded Mangrove Cuckoo
 Kent Jager from Sanibel Island, Florida — Green Heron in Breeding Plumage
 Liz Noffsinger from Milford, Ohio — Snowy Egret
 Caroline Prendiville from Charlotte, North Carolina — Flying Juvenile Osprey with Sheepshead Fish
 Nancy Richardson from Bradford, Massachusetts — Roseate Spoonbills (Hallelujah Chorus)
 Frank Turechek from Shelton, Connecticut — Female Red Bellied Woodpecker & Bumble Bee
 Ellen Trevor from Sanibel Island, Florida — Egret with Mud Skipper



Conservation Art Day brought a new feature this year: plein-air artists along Wildlife Drive.

'Ding' Days Wrap-up

Despite the fact that we had to cancel Sunday Family Fun Day because of the government shutdown, "Ding" Darling Days drew big numbers to attend lectures, participate in free tours, and take advantage of tour and rental discounts at Tarpon Bay Explorers.

Mark your calendars now for next year's festival, **October 19-26, 2014**. We will be celebrating the event's **25th anniversary**, so expect a lot of fanfare. Additionally 2014 marks the **50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act of 1964**, which created a 2,619-acre wilderness parcel that is part of the Refuge.

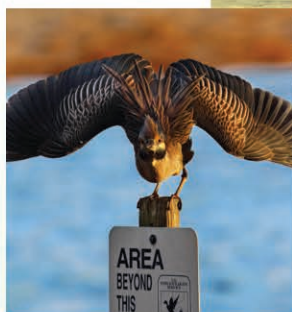
A tremendous thank you to our "Ding" Days sponsors for 2013.

ROSEATE SPOONBILL: Doc Ford's Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille. **GREAT BLUE HERON:** Arthur Printing, Bailey's General Store, Island Sun, Jerry's Foods, Kona Kai Motel & Cottages, Sanibel Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel Captiva Trust Company, Jim & Patty Sprinkle, West Wind Inn. **REDDISH EGRET:** Mike & Terry Baldwin, Big Red Q Quickprint, Caloosa Tent & Rental, Casa Ybel Resort, Cedar Chest Fine Jewelry, Rotary Club of Sanibel-Captiva, Sanibel-Captiva Kiwanis Club, Tween Waters Inn. **SNOWY EGRET:** Art & Susan Cassell, Barefoot Charley's Painting Co., Candlewood Suites Fort Myers-Sanibel Gateway, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP), Congress Jewelers, Dan Hahn Custom Builders, Florida Weekly, George & Wendy's Seafood Grille, Good Wheels, Grounds by Greenways, Island Events, Island Therapy Center, Mast Family Culligan, Nave Plumbing, Over Easy Café, Panther Printing, Sanibel Art & Frame, Wendy & George Schnapp, She Sells Sea Shells, Winston & Barbara Spurgeon, Suncatchers' Dream.

2nd: Craig Goettsch's Reddish Egret



3rd: Massimo Montanari's Yellow-Crowned Night Heron



Boardwalk Complete

Designers put the final touches on the Wildlife Education Boardwalk last month. Completion of Phase 2 included adding replicated tracks and wildlife scat panels along the walk. You can now follow the tracks or scat of an Alligator, Bobcat, Raccoon, River Otter, Great Blue Heron, Marsh Rabbit, Anhinga, Black Racer, Green Tree Frog, Coyote, Yellow-Crowned Night Heron, and Gopher Tortoise.



Replicated alligator tracks and bobcat scat along the boardwalk.



Still Kicking the Bottle

One year later, we have so successfully kicked the bottle that we bought a permanent filtered water fountain/fill station at the Visitor & Education Center. Ranger Becky Wolff demonstrates how visitors can take advantage of free cold water at the Refuge to help save the environment from toxic plastic bottles.



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.



\$10K Grant for 'Ding'

Jess Shelton, DDWS Associate Director of Community Outreach and Development, and Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland recently accepted a check for \$10,000 from Carolyn Gora, a representative of the Southwest Florida Community Foundation Arts and Marketing Committee. DDWS will use the funds to support the Refuge's 2014 free summer educational programs.



In past years, the Refuge has been growing a summer program that began in 2008 with three activities. Last summer, it offered families such programs as "Oh Scat & Animal Tracks," "Natural Wonders," and "Reading at the Refuge."

"Our federal government budget covers very little of the expenses involved in staffing and providing supplies for these programs," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "We have relied on our wonderful Friends group in years past, and are so grateful to get this boost from the Community Foundation."

"We're looking into bringing in a special traveling exhibit this summer with some of the grant funds to enhance the visitor's experience as well as to educate and inspire wildlife protection," said Birgie Vertesch, DDWS executive director. "It's partners such as this that make possible wonderful opportunities to inspire minds toward the conservation of Mother Earth. We can't thank them enough."

TARPON BAY EXPLORERS SCHEDULE

www.tarponbayexplorers.com; call ahead to 239-472-8900 to confirm schedule and make reservations.

Kayak Trail Tour: Daily at 8:30 and 10 a.m. or 11:30 a.m.; 1 or 2:30 p.m.

Sunset Rookery Paddle: Daily 2 hours before sunset

Standup Paddleboard Tour: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday at 9 a.m.

Breakfast Cruise: Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 8:30 a.m.

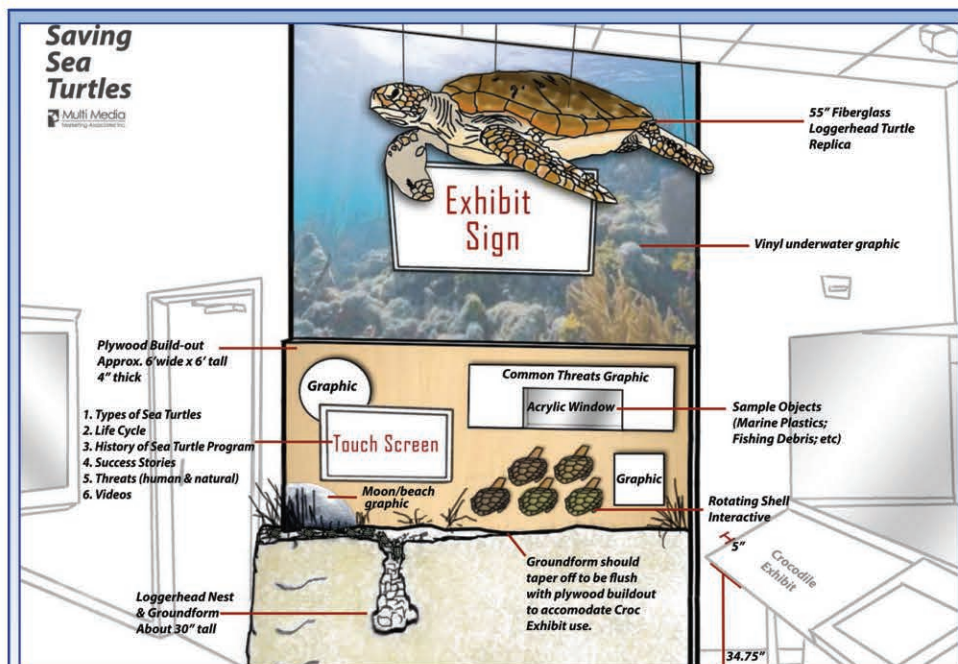
Nature and Sea Life Cruise: Daily at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Evening Cruise: Daily 2 hours before sunset

Aquarium & Touch Tank: Daily at 11 a.m. and 1:30 and 3 p.m.

Refuge Tram Tour: Daily (except Friday) hourly 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Rentals and fishing charters: Daily 8 a.m.-5 p.m., 8 a.m.-6 p.m. starting February 15



New Sea Turtle Exhibit Thanks to a grant from the West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND), work will soon get underway on a new Saving Sea Turtles exhibit in the free Visitor & Education Center. We expect the interactive exhibit to debut by early April 2014, so stay tuned for details.

STAFF NEWS

New Shared-Use Intern

As a result of a current federal hiring freeze at "Ding" Darling, DDWS has begun a program whereby it shares its interns with the Refuge. Gavin McGimpsey joined the staff in November 2013 as the fourth intern who will work for both the Friends group and the Refuge.



Gavin's job description entails assisting the Refuge with visitor services under the tutelage of Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. Welcome, Gavin!

made," said Shelton, who hails from Cincinnati, Ohio, and studied economics at Hanover College in southern Indiana.

"I've already seen how the events go and been through a 'Sanibel season.' This new job allows me to take all that experience and really step into more of the planning and leadership roles of events and programs."



Farewell, Willie

The Refuge bade a fond farewell last month to Willie Colon-Rios, the Refuge's heavy equipment operator for 14 years. He started at "Ding" in 1999 and worked on many memorable projects such as the Refuge System's Centennial Boardwalk at Pelican Island NWR, Hurricane Katrina clean-up, and many prescribed burns.

Store Assistant Moves On

Sharon Parody, our Refuge Nature Store Assistant of more than two years, has retired. Jess Shelton will be taking on some of her weekend duties at the store.



A "Ding" staff send-off for Willie Colon-Rios

2014 Lecture Series

Famed nature photographer Clyde Butcher, celebrity birding authors Don and Lillian Stokes, and John Englander — whose book *High Tide on Main Street* foretold disasters like Hurricane Sandy — headline the eagerly awaited 2014 “Ding” Darling Nature Store Friday Lecture Series at the Refuge.

The free series kicks off on Friday, January 17, 2014, in the “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center Auditorium with Bob H. Lee, author of *Backcountry Lawman: True Stories from a Florida Game Warden*.

The Sanibel Captiva Trust Company is sponsoring the 2014 lecture series with support from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. The free lectures will be held twice each Friday, at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

“The Sanibel Captiva Trust Company has a true commitment to conservation and the health of our wildlife, and we’re so grateful to have them team up with the Society on our lecture series,” said Birgie Vertesch, DDWS Executive Director.

Other lectures will examine John J. Audubon, frigatebirds, mangroves, Florida panthers, and more. The season’s complete schedule is listed here. Book signings follow all of the starred (*) lectures. Seating for the lectures is limited and available on a first-come basis.

As usual, **Wildlife Drive is closed on Friday**, but visitors are welcome to enjoy the free Visitor & Education Center and recreational opportunities at Tarpon Bay Explorers, the Refuge’s official concessionaire located at its Tarpon Bay Recreation Area.

For more information, call 472-1100 ext. 241 or log on to www.dingdarlingsociety.org/lectures. For the schedule for the **2014 Film Series**, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/dingfilms>.



Sanibel Captiva Trust Company presents a check to sponsor this year's series.

***January 17** Bob H. Lee, Author — *Backcountry Lawman: True Stories from a Florida Game Warden*

***January 24** Charles LeBuff & Deborah Gleason, Authors - *Sanibel & Captiva Islands: A Look Back in Time*

***January 31** John Englander, Author - *High Tide on Main Street: Rising Sea Level and the Coming Coastal Crisis*

***February 7** Don & Lillian Stokes, Authors - *3 Easy Steps to Bird ID*

February 14 Brian “Fox” Ellis - John J. Audubon Re-enactment

February 21 Kenneth Meyer, University of Florida - *Magnificent Frigatebird*

February 28 Volunteer Luncheon/No Lecture

March 7 Joy Hazell, Florida Sea Grant - *Learning and Loving Mangroves*

March 14 Mike Owen, Biologist - *Fakahatchee Strand*

March 21 Rick Bonney, Cornell Lab of Ornithology - *Citizen Science*

March 28 Erin Myers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - *Florida Panthers*

***April 4** Charles LeBuff & Chris Lechowicz, Authors - *Amphibians & Reptiles of Sanibel & Captiva Islands*

***April 11** Clyde Butcher, Nature Photographer - *Florida: Where Water, Earth & Heaven Meet*

Elevator Rising

The beginnings of a long-awaited elevator / lift into the Visitor & Education Center: Funded by our recent Preservation Capital Campaign, it is expected to be operational sometime in January 2014.



FREE WINTER PROGRAMS The Refuge’s calendar of free tours and programs is underway and continues through April 25, 2014. Highlights include weekly beach walks, Refuge birding tours, raptor talks, and guided Indigo Trail walks. For a full calendar and programs descriptions, please visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org/winter-programs.



A free two-hour guided tour of the Calusa Shell Mound Trail takes place every Tuesday at 1 p.m.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars and join us! Visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org for details.

Winter Refuge Programs - January 5-April 20, 2014

Bi-Weekly Wednesday Film Series - January 8-April 16, 2014

Weekly Friday Lecture Series - January 17-April 11, 2014
(sponsored by Sanibel Captiva Trust Company)

Second Annual Trailgate Party - February 21, 2014

Stokes Birding Tour - February 28, 2014

Volunteer Awards Luncheon - February 28, 2014

Earth Day at the Refuge & Plein Air Painting - April 19, 2014

Third Annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament - May 2 & 3, 2014

25th Annual “Ding” Darling Days - October 19-25, 2014

Farewell To a Guiding Friend

Christopher 'Kip' Koss, 1935-2013

With utmost sorrow, we bid farewell to one of the Refuge's dearest friends and supporters, the grandson of Jay Norwood Darling himself, Christopher "Kip" Koss. Kip, like his grandfather before him, had a long, affectionate relationship with these islands and their natural treasures.

He founded the "Ding" Darling Foundation to keep alive the memories of his highly accomplished grandfather. When it disbanded, he disbursed funds between the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society and Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) to be used for conservation education.

Kip Koss first visited Captiva and Sanibel in 1937 with his parents, Mary & Dick Koss, and his grandfather, Jay N. "Ding" Darling. As a youngster he grew up in the company of such legends as Andy & Dessa Rossi, Grace Price (the founder of Tween Waters Inn), Dottie Wakefield (Grace's daughter), Belton Johnson, Alice O'Brien, Max and Jeannie Hayford, and Old Man Futch of Buck Key.

In the early years, before Captiva and Sanibel roads



Kip Koss with Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik

MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS September 4 – December 7, 2013

Memorial gifts and gifts made in honor of special occasions are a wonderful way to pay tribute to family and friends who have been 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 supports the Refuge in this thoughtful and meaningful way. We recently received gifts in **MEMORY** of the following:

Rita K. Allen	Kip Koss
Dr. Christina Barkley	Edward Leighton
Marvin A. Black	Richard and Angela Longa
Bill Dunford	Burton James McGlynn
Donald T. Egensteiner	Joyce C. Mutz
John Fisher	Herbert Pincus
Wilfred Gardner	Beverlee S. Sauerwein
Jacquelyn Heatherston	Florence Savage
Mr. and Mrs. John Hotchkiss	Nora W. Wells
Pete Ingham	Eric Todd Woodham
Joan Reade Kelly	Anna Zimmerman
Joan Kelly	

We received gifts in **HONOR** of:

Terry Baldwin	Paula Reiss
Jeff Combs	Birgie Vertesch
Robert Meeker	Tina and Philip Weyman
Carol and Bill Redeker	

were paved, Kip, his parents and his grandparents all stayed at Tween Waters. There were no telephones on either island, the bridge across Blind Pass consisted of a rickety wooden bridge that was one-way for two reasons: There wasn't room for two cars to pass on the bridge, and the bridge's strength could only stand the weight of one vehicle at a time. A truck passing over the bridge was a breath-holding event.

Kip's children and grandchildren meet annually at Tween Waters, where dinner at the Old Captiva House is a nightly opportunity to recap the day's events. Kayakers compare their adventures with manatees and

crabs in the mangroves, while early beachcombers proudly display the morning's treasures, and photographers boast of the daily sightings. There's something for everyone, and Kip has had the pleasure of sharing his childhood experiences with two more generations who have learned the value of legacy from one of the island's legends.

Kip has worked closely with the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society and its board through the years to keep alive the memory and important work of his grandfather. He visited often from his home on Key Biscayne in Miami. We will miss him dearly.

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.**





Kids Fishing Derby 2013

Thirty kids ages 3 to 13 caught 72 fish from the causeway on November 9 during the Refuge's Second Annual Kids Fishing Derby. "The derby was a huge success," said event organizer, Becky Wolff. "Everyone was catching fishing, and the kids loved all the giveaways and prizes. BIG thanks to our sponsors, which include the 'Ding' Darling Wildlife Society, Lexington Fishing Club, Sanibel Island Fishing Club, Lee County Parks & Recreation, Tarpon Bay Explorers, Shallow Bait, and Dale Shirley."



Teacher Grants

DDWS Education Committee members and science and media teachers from across Lee County gathered recently on the Refuge's new Wildlife Education Boardwalk to distribute and receive \$5,000 in grant monies to fund conservation-related school projects for the 2013-2014 school year. To date, we have awarded

nearly \$40,000 in teacher grants.

Next year the grant program will expand to \$10,000 and a five-county area, including Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Hendry, and Glades counties.

The teacher grants are funded by DDWS monies received from the "Ding" Darling Foundation earmarked specifically for education. For information on the 2014-2015 Teacher Grants, please visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org/grants.

New Emeritus Board Member

At the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society Annual Meeting on December 4, members voted to elect Chip Lesch to its distinguished Emeritus Board.

Chip served on DDWS' Board of Directors for nine years. He was assistant treasurer for most of that time and also chaired a number of committees including Long Range Planning, Advocacy, Development, Stewardship, and Memorials/Endowments. Chip played a key role in the committee that found and hired our executive director and was instrumental in the success of the Preservation Campaign Committee that raised \$1.8 million for the purchase of the Woodring property and for the updating of the Visitor & Education Center.

"To be an Emeritus, a candidate has to have served on the board for at least six years and have made an outstanding contribution to DDWS," said Emeritus Board Committee Chair Susan Cassell. "Chip REALLY fits the bill!"



Emeritus Board Committee Chair Susan Cassell with new member Chip Lesch.

Student Photo Contest

Middle school students from The Sanibel School and Cypress Lake Middle School visited the Refuge in November to participate in our annual Student Photo Workshop & Contest. Special thanks to sponsors Bank of the Islands/Edison National Bank.



The Sanibel School winners in the Student Photo Contest with Principal Barbara VonHarten (second from left) and Bank of the Island sponsors.

Trailgate 2014

continued from page 1

is becoming the one not to miss," said Society Board President John McCabe. "Taking place under a tent and having truck tailgates as serving tables, it's a fun, laid-back, island-style party with good food, live music, and uniquely 'Ding' auction items."

Silent auction items already on the table include an original, framed "Ding" Darling cartoon from 1937 commenting on the stock market, a hand-painted roseate spoonbill plate, his and her artist-painted island-themed bicycles, handmade wildlife quilts, and free tickets to Disney World, SeaWorld Orlando, and Aquatic water park.

"Seating is limited and we once again anticipate a sold-out crowd," said event committee member and DDWS vice president Doris Hardy. "We encourage people to register early."

Event sponsorships are available; for more information, contact Birgie Vertesch at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

Attendance to the February 21 event is by reservation only; register at conta.cc/1e2Y5DE or call 239-472-1100 ext. 233. Tickets to In the Pink Trailgate Party are \$75 each. To view a list of auction items as they accumulate, visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org/auction.

BIG THANKS to this year's Trailgate sponsors:

Spoonbill Level: Mark and Gretchen Banks, The Wilbur Smith Law Firm; **Bear Level:** Bailey's General Store, Darlene and Bob Duvin, George & Wendy's Seafood Grille, Jacaranda Seafood House, Queenie's Real Homemade Ice Cream, Trader's Cafe & Store; **Gator Level:** Billy's Rentals, Cip's Place, Dan Hahn Custom Builders, Gulf Coast Palm & Tree, Island Events, Law Office of Janet M. Strickland, PA., Mabry Brothers Electric, Propane People, Ryan Schuetz, Suncatchers' Dream, Suncoast Portable Sanitation, Don & Ann-Marie Wildman.



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PHOTO CONTEST WINNER



Michael Dougherty's Green Heron at
Sunrise took first place in the 26th Annual
"Ding" Darling Days Amateur Nature
Photography Contest. See page 2 for more
winners and information.

