

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Caption: The 2016 “Ding” Darling Days kicks off with Sunday Family Fun Day on Oct. 16 and culminates with Conservation Art Day, Oct. 22.

‘Ding’ Darling Days themes spotlight migratory birds, art, Darling’s birthday

Family, birds, art, trails, Jay Norwood Darling, and beach and water: This year’s “Ding” Darling Days, Oct. 16-22, 2016, devotes one day each to topics relevant to the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island. The event honors National Wildlife Refuge Week and the Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial plus celebrates the 140th birthday of the refuge’s namesake, father of the Duck Stamp, on Friday, Oct. 21.

Family Fun Day kicks off the weeklong birding and eco-festival with all-free activities including narrated refuge tram tours, live bird presentations, kids’ bird games and crafts, a touch tank, a butterfly house, Latino and bluegrass music, and archery lessons. The estimated value of all the free activities is more than \$75 for a family of four.

New this year, as a bow to migratory birds, there will be a historical reenactment about saving the birds in the Everglades by Big Cypress National Preserve staff and, concurrently for kids, storytelling with a take-home craft relating to the book *She’s Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head*.

The Duck Stamp Artist presentation headlines Saturday’s Conservation Art Day on Oct. 22, which also includes cartooning, a photography tram tour, nature painting, and free art supplies. Five-time Federal Duck Stamp winner Joe Hautman will be speaking and signing his 2016-2017 stamps.

Throughout the week, festivalgoers can join free biking and birding tours; take advantage of discounted tram, kayaking, and nature boat excursions; and sit in on free talks at the refuge and Tarpon Bay Explorers (TBE), the refuge’s official recreation concession (www.tarponbayexplorers.com). A special exhibit of this year’s Federal Duck Stamps will display in the Education Center auditorium throughout the week and guests can participate in the Bird Dress-Up Photo Station.

Below is a schedule of highlights for the week.

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) sponsors “Ding” Darling Days with support from TBE, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and other private and business partners. To become a friend of the refuge, visit dingdarlingsociety.org.

For a full “Ding” Darling Days schedule, visit www.dingdarlingdays.com, or call 239-472-1100.

‘DING’ DARLING DAYS HIGHLIGHTS

Sunday, Oct. 16 FAMILY FUN DAY 10:45am- 4pm

All FREE events at “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center

FREE Giveaways

FREE Live Bird Presentations

FREE Bird Games

Continuous and FREE throughout the day

- Refuge Tram Tours
- Introduction to Archery Clinics
- Jim Sprankle Bird-Carving Demos
- Butterfly House
- Touch Tank
- Hands-On Bird Crafts
- Hot Dogs

Monday, Oct. 17-Saturday, Oct. 22

Free and discounted birding, tram, biking, hiking, kayaking, and nature boat excursions. Free Bird Dress-Up Photo Station in the Visitor & Education Center
10% of select bird gifts in the Refuge Nature Store

Monday, Oct. 17 MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

FREE Feather Wars: The Plume Trade historic presentation

FREE Refuge Reddish Egret Study presentation

Tuesday, Oct. 18 BEACH & WATER DAY

FREE Ongoing Stand-Up Paddleboard Clinics

FREE Birding Beach Walk at Perry Tract

FREE Save Our Seabirds presentation

Wednesday, Oct. 19 WALK THE TRAILS DAY

FREE Ongoing Animal Olympics at Bailey Tract

FREE Bunche Beach Birding Tram

FREE From the Nest photo presentation

Thursday, Oct. 20 INTERNATIONAL BIRDERS FILM FESTIVAL

FREE Ongoing Stand-Up Paddleboard Clinics

FREE Showings of five films featuring birds from different continents

Friday, Oct. 21 “DING” DARLING’S 140TH BIRTHDAY

FREE All-Day Wildlife Drive admission for bikers & hikers only

FREE Wildlife Drive Ranger Biking Tour
FREE *America's Darling* film showing with birthday cake
FREE Guided Scat & Tracks Walk

Saturday, Oct. 25 CONSERVATION ART DAY 9am-5pm

All FREE events at "Ding" Darling Education Center

FREE Admission to Wildlife Drive & plein-air artists
FREE Art Kits to the first 200 kids
FREE Duck Stamp Winners presentations
FREE Make & Take Painting Workshop
FREE Nature Photography Tram Tour
FREE Wildlife Painting Demo & Ask the Artist

Thanks to the generous sponsors that make "Ding" Darling Days possible: **ROSEATE SPOONBILL SPONSORS:** Doc's Ford Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille; **GREAT EGRET SPONSORS:** George & Wendy's Seafood Grille; **GREAT BLUE HERON SPONSORS:** 97.7 Latino & Juan Radio, Andrew Thompson Company, Bailey's General Store, Mike & Terry Baldwin, Bank of the Islands, Wayne & Linda Boyd, Cedar Chest Fine Jewelry, Island Sun, Jerry's Foods of Sanibel, John & Beth Newland, Sanibel-Captiva Beach Resorts, Sanibel Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel Captiva Rotary Club, Sanibel Moorings, Santiva Chronicle, Spotlight Graphics, Jim & Patty Sprinkle; **REDDISH EGRET SPONSORS:** Sarah Ashton & Jim Metzler, Karen Bell, Big Red Q Quickprint, Casa Ybel Resort, Jerry Edelman & Maryanne Daly, Sally & Rich Ennis, Florida Weekly, Phyllis Gresham, Island Inn, Jensen's on the Gulf and Marina & Cottages, Mitchell's Sand Castles & Forty/Fifteen Resorts, Painting With a Twist, Ed & Lynn Ridlehoover, Sanibel-Captiva Kiwanis Club, Stewart and Sons Insurance, Inc., Suncatchers' Dream, West Wind Inn, Don & Ann-Marie Wildman; **SNOWY EGRET SPONSORS:** Barefoot Charley's Painting Co., John Brennan, The Butterfly Estates, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP), Colony Inn, Grounds by Green Ways, Intech Printing, Island Cinema, Island Management, Island Therapy Center, Marina Customer Service Training, Over Easy Café, Panther Printing, Sanibel Art & Frame, George & Wendy Schnapp, Select Vacation Properties, Winston & Barbara Spurgeon, Tents and Events.

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 or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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