

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

[ChelleKWalton@gmail.com](mailto:ChelleKWalton@gmail.com)

*Caption:* Bike, hike, or tram the refuge on Friday, Oct. 21, and have Wildlife Drive virtually to yourself.

### **Refuge offers 3 Wildlife Drive free-access days during ‘Ding’ Days’**

To celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week, J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island will open admission to Wildlife Drive for free to all traffic for two days during October’s “Ding” Darling Days, and to only biking and hiking traffic on Friday, Oct. 22, 2016. (The drive normally closes to all traffic on Fridays.)

On Sunday, Oct. 16, the drive is open for free to all visitors during “Ding” Days’ kick-off Family Fun Day. In addition, Tarpon Bay Explorers (TBE), the refuge’s recreation concession, will be offering free narrated 60-minute tram tours of the drive on a first-come basis to those who sign up that day. Note: This is the only day free general tram tours will be offered.

If you’ve ever dreamed of exploring Wildlife Drive without the usual people and traffic that its birds and other sights attract, mark Friday, Oct. 21, on your calendar.

Besides hikers and bikers, special discounted tram tours are allowed in that day – the only Friday of the year public trams travel the drive.

Pedestrians and cyclists are admitted free of charge that day. Tram passengers receive a 25 percent discount Friday and during the week Oct. 17-22: \$9.75 for adults, \$6 for children for the 90-minute narrated tour. Reservations are recommended at 239-472-8900 for Monday through Saturday of “Ding” Days.

Admission to Wildlife Drive is free for vehicular as well as bike and foot traffic the following day, Saturday, Oct. 22 – Conservation Art Day, when plein-air artists will be

painting along the drive. Arrive early to sign up for the free two-hour Photography Tram Tour that departs at 3 p.m.

In addition to these free access days, the refuge conducts Birds & Wildlife Tour Caravans with free Wildlife Drive admission Monday through Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Wildlife Drive is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. during “Ding” Darling Days. Friday, it is closed to all private motorized traffic.

For Tarpon Bay Tram Tour schedules throughout the week, please call 239-472-8900 or visit [www.tarponbayexplorers.com](http://www.tarponbayexplorers.com). For a full “Ding” Darling Days schedule, visit [www.dingdarlingdays.com](http://www.dingdarlingdays.com), or call 239-472-1100.

“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.

The following businesses and individuals support this year’s “Ding” Darling Days. **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 Sprankle; **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](http://www.dingdarlingsociety.org) or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566, 239-472-1100 ext. 4, or [dingdarlingsociety@gmail.com](mailto:dingdarlingsociety@gmail.com).

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