

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Caption:

‘Wildest woman in America’ topic of ‘Ding’ lecture

Carol Ruckdeschel may be the wildest woman in America. She wrestles alligators, eats roadkill, rides horses bareback, and lives in a ramshackle cabin that she built by hand in an island wilderness. A self-taught scientist, Ruckdeschel has become a tireless defender of sea turtles on Cumberland Island, a national park off the coast of Georgia, just across the Florida line.

On Friday, Feb. 24, Will Harlan, author of *Untamed: The Biography of Carol Ruckdeschel*, will be presenting two free programs about her work and life at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., part of the 2017 “Ding” Darling Lecture Series at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island.

Ruckdeschel has been termed “the Jane Goodall of Sea Turtles,” having spent 45 years collecting data on sea turtles. Living off the grid and off the land, she saved Cumberland Island, formerly held by wealthy landowners such as the Carnegies and Rockefellers, from development.

Harlan’s biography *Untamed* was a *New York Times* Best Seller and a Barnes & Noble Discover Award finalist. It was named one of *The Daily Beast’s* Top Ten Books of 2014 and one of Amazon’s Top 100 Books of 2014. It also won the Society of Environmental Journalist’s Rachel Carson Book Award and the Langum Charitable Trust’s Malott Prize.

Harlan will sign copies of the book, available in the Refuge Nature Store, following his lectures. Proceeds from Nature Store sales directly benefit refuge wildlife, education, and research.

HighTower/Thomas & Swartz Wealth Management sponsors the free 12-lecture series with support from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). The season’s complete schedule is listed below. Book signings follow all except the one starred (*) lecture.

Seating for the lectures in the “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center Auditorium is limited and available on a first-come basis. Arrive one hour early to assure a place to sit. Early arrivals can save one seat each and then may explore the Visitor & Education Center or Indigo Trail before the lecture starts. Saved seats must be filled 15 minutes before lecture time.

As usual, Wildlife Drive closes on Friday, but visitors are welcome to enjoy the center, Indigo Trail, and recreational opportunities at Tarpon Bay Explorers, the refuge’s official recreation concession located at its Tarpon Bay Recreation Area.

Note: Opinions expressed in guest lectures do not necessarily reflect the views of refuge and DDWS management, staff, and board of directors.

For more information, call 239-472-1100 ext. 241 or log on to dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/lecture-and-film-series.

Feb. 24 – Author Will Harlan, *Untamed: The Biography of Carol Ruckdeschel*

March 3 – Author Dr. Laurel Neme, *Animal Investigators: How the World’s First Forensic Lab Is Solving Crimes & Saving Endangered Species*

*March 10 – Researchers Dr. Jennifer McCabe & Dr. Brian Olsen, “Migratory Birds in a Climate Changing World”

March 17 – Author-artist Julie Zickefoose, *Baby Birds: An Artist Looks into the Nest*

March 24 – Author Denege Patterson, *A Tour of the Islands of Pine Island Sound: A Geological, Archaeological, and Historical Perspective*

March 31 – Author Will Stolzenburg, *Heart of a Lion: A Lone Cat’s Walk Across America*

April 7 – Photographer-sound recordist Gerrit Vyn, *The Living Bird: 100 Years of Listening to Nature*

April 14 – Author Charles Sobczak, *Alligators, Sharks, & Panthers: Deadly Encounters with Florida's Top Predator — Man*

* indicates no book-signing to follow the lecture

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, 239-472-1100 ext. 4, or dingdarlingsociety@gmail.com.

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