

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Caption: Beach Walks at the Refuge's Perry Tract teach families about marine wildlife and its habitat.

### **'Ding' free summer programs begin June 7**

Wildlife Wonders talks, weekly walks, and nature crafts highlight the free summer programming to be offered June 7 through Aug. 5, 2017, at J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island.

Summer programming is made possible by support from the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

"This summer we were forced, regrettably, to cancel our Nature Explorers Summer Day Camp because of staffing shortages," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "The federal hiring freeze leaves us without an education specialist to oversee the camp. But fortunately our friends group provides us with the interns and financial backing we need to continue our free weekly summer programs."

The schedule of weekly activities follows. No pre-registration is necessary.

- **Reading at the Refuge**, every Wednesday at 10 a.m.: Attendees of each 45-minute reading-and-crafts session learn about a refuge animal and make a take-home craft related to it. Meet in the Visitor & Education Center Classroom.
- **Indigo Trail Hike**, every Thursday at 10 a.m.: Join refuge naturalists as they lead a one-hour tour to the Wildlife Education Board to identify and discuss the ecosystem's plants, mammals, birds, and reptiles - fun for adults and children alike. Bring water, sunscreen, and bug spray. Meet at the flagpole in front of the Visitor & Education Center.
- **Family Beach Walk**, every Friday at 9 a.m.: The one-hour program convenes at Gulfside

Park to explore the refuge's gulf-front Perry Tract. City parking fees apply. Bring water, sunscreen, and bug spray.

- **Wildlife Wonders**, every Saturday at 11 a.m.: Refuge education staff lead this indoor program about the mysteries of manatees, alligators, crocodiles, and birds in the Visitor & Education Center auditorium.

For more information on the refuge summer programs, call 239-472-1100 ext.237 or visit [dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/free-refuge-programs](http://dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/free-refuge-programs).

#### 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 [dingdarlingsociety.org](http://dingdarlingsociety.org) or contact Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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