



www.dingdarlingsociety.org

SUMMER 2017

Society Pages

News from Friends of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, the nonprofit Friends of the Refuge organization, supports environmental education, services, and conservation at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Education and conservation efforts may extend beyond the complex's borders. We partner in these efforts where possible with like-minded conservation organizations.

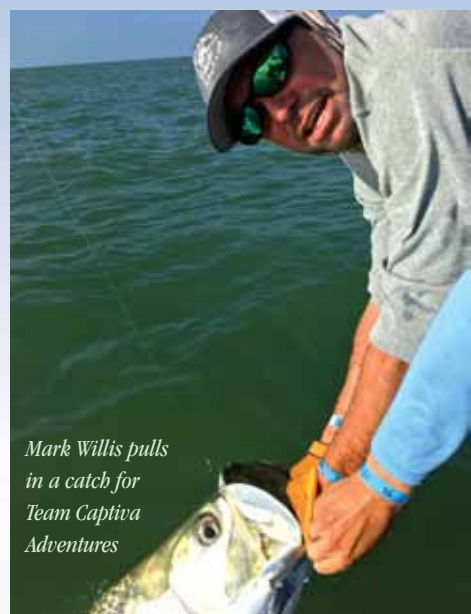
TARPON TOURNAMENT

The sixth annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament on May 19, 2017, topped previous years' fundraising efforts by netting \$80,000 from tournament sponsorships, donations, and silent auction proceeds to benefit the Refuge.

continued on page 2



DDWS Executive Director and tournament organizer Birgie Miller, Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, and Doc Ford's co-owner Marty Harity



Mark Willis pulls in a catch for Team Captiva Adventures



Don Wildman (right) with Marty Harity, co-owner of Doc Ford's, tournament title sponsor

Tourney Dedication

DDWS dedicated this year's tarpon tournament to the memory of Don Wildman, DDWS Emeritus Board Member, Tournament Committee Chair, and avid wildlife art collector. The longtime island resident passed away on April 11, 2017.

"Don was passionate about conservation and art," said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director. "He was also an avid fisherman – from salmon fishing
continued on page 2



First place winners Team YAM (members Richard and Mark Sparrow) took home \$16,942.50.

Thanks to Our Generous and Loyal Tarpon Tourney Sponsors

Title Sponsor: Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille

Premier Sponsors: Diversified Yacht Services, Nimrod, Raiser's Edge

Presenting Sponsors: Mark & Gretchen Banks

Platinum Sponsors: Bella Signs & Designs, Congress



DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller with Premier Sponsor Diversified Yacht Services CEO Ryan Levi

Jewelers, Florida Weekly, Mabry Brothers, Inc., Suncoast Beverage Sales

Gold Sponsors: Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto, Captiva Diva, Discovery Senior Living, Fort Myers Marine, The Historic Bait Box, Island Inn, Island Sand Paper, Island Sun, Jensen's Marina, John Grey Painting, Law Office of Janet M. Strickland P.A., Lee County Sports Development, Media Source, Nautical Mile Magazine, On Island, Organized Chaos, Trophy Case of Fort Myers, VIP Realtors, Whitney's Bait & Tackle, Don & Ann-Marie Wildman

Silver Sponsors: Anisa Jewelry Designs, Bailey's General Store, Dex Imaging, Inc., Fort Myers Brewing Company, Gresham Family, Gulf Star Marina, Lighthouse Recovery Institute, Misty Wells' "Let's Take It Outside," Must Do Visitor Guides & MustDo.com, Pair-a-Dice Produce, Sanibel-Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel Island Fishing Club, Semmer Electric/Bonita Bill's Waterfront Café, Wilbur Smith Attorneys at Law.



"Ding" Days sponsors get publicized through newspaper coverage, event signage, and extensive social media channels.

WANT TO BE 'DING' EVENT SPONSOR?

Your next opportunity to sponsor an event is "Ding" Darling Days, October 15-21. We are seeking sponsors now for the eco-festival that draws thousands of visitors and garners nationwide media attention. Find more information at www.DingDarlingDays.com or contact Sarah Lathrop at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or sarah@dingdarlingsociety.org. She can also discuss other events in the planning stages and sponsorship opportunities.

TARPON TOURNEY

continued from page 1

The tournament paid out a record \$37,650 in prizes this year to five winning teams. Because last year's tournament only awarded two teams, the balance of that prize money rolled into this year's purse.

"One hundred percent of the anglers' registration fees goes to the awards purse," said tournament organizer Birgie Miller, executive director of the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society. "That's why our sponsorship partners are so important to us. They pay the costs for putting on the tourney and contribute to the charity proceeds."



DDWS organizes the annual tournament with Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille of Sanibel Island, Fort

Myers Beach, and Captiva Island as the title sponsor. "To date, the tarpon tournament has raised nearly \$350,000 for Refuge water research projects, wildlife research, and education," said Miller. "We can't thank Doc Ford's enough for their incredible show of support these past six years. They've already committed for the 2018 tourney, which will take place May 11."



For more information on the tournament and this year's winners, visit www.dingdarlingtarpontourney.org.

DDWS organizes the annual tournament with Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille of Sanibel Island, Fort



DEDICATION

continued from page 1

in British Columbia to tarpon fishing in Belize. His role in our tarpon tourney was invaluable and always enthusiastic, and that is why we chose to honor him in this way."

"Don Wildman was a true friend of the 'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System," said Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik. "He combined his love for hunting, fishing, and the great outdoors with a passionate appreciation for wildlife art, not unlike 'Ding' Darling himself."



This year, DDWS presented Doc Ford's with a permanent trophy to keep in-house throughout the year. It commemorates the first tarpon tournament six years ago, which Team Doc Ford's won, and winners from all ensuing years. "We presented it to Doc Ford's on the anniversary of that first victory," said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "We wanted a way that we could thank them year-round for the tremendous contribution Doc Ford's has made over the years to benefit wildlife, education, research, and other conservation projects, including water quality issues, at 'Ding' Darling."



Scan this QR code to learn more about #LearningLav



Project #LearningLav



Artist Andrew Corke with his manatee "sculpture"

Phase I of a new visual restroom interpretation began on May 9 at "Ding" Darling – the first of its kind in the National Refuge System's 550+ refuges. The installation of a mother manatee, fashioned by local artist Andrew Corke entirely out of recycled bicycle tires, kicked off a project that is expected to be completed by late summer.

Funded by a grant from the West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND), Project #LearningLav will create educational messaging inside the lavatories at the "Ding" Darling Visitor & Education Center and on the outdoor wall leading to them. Simple teaser messages and visual artistic representations of mangroves, recycling, manatees, sea turtles, fish, and birds will entice visitors to go into the Visitor and Education Center to learn more.

"We have identified a major missed opportunity for

educating visitors," said Birgie Miller, Executive Director of the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, which is facilitating the grant and project. "Whereas we see nearly a million visitors to the Refuge each year, only about a quarter of those numbers enters the center. We were finding that many come to use the restrooms without ever stepping foot inside to see all of our wonderful educational exhibits."

Eventually the outdoor underwater 3-D mural will depict a number of Refuge water species. "Visit often to see what surprises will be happening throughout the summer with #LearningLav," said Birgie.

Colorful murals will give visitors an underwater view of the Refuge.



Student Scholarship Awards

At a special after-hours gathering at the Refuge on June 13, DDWS awarded \$15,500 in conservation education scholarships to 13 students from the surrounding five-county area. During its 11-year history, the DDWS Environmental Scholarship Program has awarded a total of \$97,000.

"The Society is committed to educating today's youth as conservation stewards of the future," said DDWS Education Chair Wendy Kindig. "We work with businesses and individuals to provide annual scholarships to award to outstanding students pursuing degrees related to conservation, wildlife biology, and the environment. A big thank you to our scholarship sponsors for helping us in our mission."

Thanks to the nine donors/families who sponsored the 13 scholarships this year:

- Two Richard Bailey Scholarships
- Mike and Terry Baldwin Scholarship
- Dr. Andrew and Laura Dahlem Scholarship
- Dr. H. Randall Deming Scholarship for Conservation & Environmental Studies (permanently endowed)
- Leslie & Hans Fleischer Scholarship
- Mary Elaine Jacobson Memorial Scholarship
- Francine Litofsky Scholarship
- Four Tarpon Bay Explorers Scholarships
- Jane Werner Environmental Scholarship (permanently endowed)

DDWS will again be awarding scholarships at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. High school seniors and college students living in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties and pursuing careers in biology and environmental studies are eligible.

For an application and to read full descriptions of 2017 scholarship winners and donors, visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/student-scholarships.

Individuals and businesses interested in establishing a named scholarship of \$1,000 or more for 2018 should contact Sarah Lathrop at 239-472-1100 ext. 4, sarah@dingdarlingsociety.org.

Free Summer Programs Underway

Wildlife Wonders talks, weekly walks, and nature crafts highlight the free summer programming being offered through August 5 at the Refuge "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 as well as pick up children at summer school to bring to the Refuge." For more information on free Refuge programs and a schedule of summer programs, please visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/free-refuge-programs.

Indigo Trail Walks take place every Thursday morning at 10.



STAFF NEWS

Kudos to Refuge Biologist

Lead Refuge Biologist Jeremy Conrad was part of a 25-person intra-agency LandCarbon Team that recently earned the Unit Award for Excellence of Service from the U.S. Department of the Interior. The team greatly expanded knowledge of biological carbon sequestration and successfully conducted the first-ever comprehensive national assessment of biological sequestration, as required by the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. The team's mandate was to quantify the amount of carbon stored in ecosystems, the capacity of ecosystems to sequester carbon, and the rate of greenhouse gas fluxes in and out of the ecosystems. Congratulations to Jeremy and his team!



Welcome to our STAR

Thanks to a generous grant awarded to the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, the Refuge has hired a Summer Teachers Assisting Refuges (STAR) teacher for two months to help with summer family programs and other environmental education activities.



This year's STAR, Sara Hallas, is an environmental science teacher for the Lee County School District, a position she took in fall 2016.

Prior to that she taught second grade at River Hall Elementary in Alva, Florida.

"My office is in the Lee County Public Education Center in Fort Myers," said Sara. "My other office is in the Southwest Florida estuaries. This is where the fun, hands-on, engaging learning takes place. I teach students from different schools around the district about estuaries and why their preservation is so vital."

Sara's teaching experience makes her an ideal candidate for assisting with the Refuge's hands-on summer family programs. "I love being outdoors and educating students about wildlife and their habitats, sharing the passion and love for all of the organisms that make that wonderful habitat so amazing and unique," Sara said. "I feel honored to have this opportunity to be a part of this community, learning and sharing that knowledge with all that visit."

"We are really grateful for this grant that will allow Sara to fill in one of the employment gaps left by recent government budget cuts and hiring freezes for the summer," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "We welcome her experience and enthusiasm to the 'Ding' team."



Faith Malfa's Gadwall duck portrait took Florida Best of Show.

Junior Duck Stamp Judging

As it does every year, the Refuge hosted the 2017 Florida Junior Duck Stamp Contest judging to select the Best of Show duck art to represent the state at the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest. Out of 2,882 entries this year, 15-year-old Faith Malfa from Pasco

Fine Arts Center in New Port Richey took Florida Best of Show. Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, who oversaw this year's state contest and many in the past, was the emcee for the federal judging in Charleston.



Photographer and Refuge volunteer Jim Bennight, Alliance for the Arts Director of Operations & Education Brandi H. Couse, nature artist Nancy Tome, federal duck stamp artist John Brennan, and Deputy Refuge Manager Nate Caswell with the five winning artworks

EARTH DAY AT THE REFUGE

Refuge staff educated families about the dangers of littering to the health of sea turtles during one program on Earth Day, April 22. Attendees also met Bagzilla, the plastic bag monster, participated in recycled crafts, and watched the film *Bag It!* during the day of free activities.



Random Acts of Philanthropy

We are so grateful and fortunate to be part of such a giving community, where donations arrive in the kindest spirit. Here are a few examples of recent acts of philanthropy.

In April, DDWS partnered on the auction of a Jim Sprankle sculpture titled “Ding’s Darlings – Two Tri-Colored Herons” at the San-Cap Cares annual fundraiser. Proceeds from the \$115,000 sale were split 50-50 between the two island nonprofits. Thanks to San-Cap Cares, donors Brenda and Dewey Tate, and “Feather Jim” for adding much-needed funds to the Refuge coffers.

This spring, friends and family of Irene Raber (below, center front, with child on her lap) gathered at the Refuge’s Wildlife Education Boardwalk for a ceremony dedicating a new bench in memory of her daughter, Susie Raber Satterfield, a nutritionist and marathon runner. Irene volunteers at the Refuge. Joining her, to her right, Mary “Sally” Reed, a former volunteer and longtime family friend, made the gift possible. Thanks to the family for a welcome addition to what has become one of the Refuge’s most visited and wildlife-active spots.

Tips to “barktenders” (and DDWS staffers) Sarah Lathrop and Carrie Alexander brought in more than \$500 to benefit the Refuge at Island Paws’ end-of-season Yappy Hour on April 21. We used the opportunity to educate dog-owners about the Refuge pet policy: The Refuge welcomes dogs with responsible owners who use a 6-foot leash and pick up after their pets. Thanks to Island Paws, Sarah, and Carrie for this contribution to Refuge efforts.

Two education grants from private donors have helped to fill in staffing gaps caused by the federal hiring freeze and budget cuts. One of the grants matched do-

nations dollar-for-dollar to fund a full-time, certified environmental educator. We needed to raise \$20,000 to receive a match for a total of \$40,000 to pay the educator’s salary. A ton of thanks to our generous donors for making this happen.

A second education grant, from a private family foundation, will provide funds to bus eight student groups from at-risk schools and organizations to visit the Refuge this summer. This grant was used in lieu of its original purpose to provide summer day camp for at-risk kids. Summer camp was canceled this year because of staffing issues, but thanks to the grant, we can continue to reach this important, oft-forgotten demographic.



Photo courtesy of Skipp Tutor]

“Ding’s Darlings – Two Tri-Colored Herons”



Education grants and donations help us keep the Refuge’s important programs going.



The Raber family and friends dedicated a new bench in memory of Susie Raber Satterfield.



Island Paws people and DDWS staff: Trasi Sharp, Carrie, Diane Weir (bottom), Liza Clouse, and Sarah



One of 12 new panels that will improve the Bailey Tract experience, this one welcomes visitors at the parking lot kiosk.

NEW at Bailey Tract

Ongoing habitat restoration and trail improvement projects have been giving the Refuge's satellite Bailey Tract campus a facelift. The crowning touch will be installed this summer: 12 new interpretive panels on site. Two panels will greet visitors at the parking area, three more at the entrance kiosk, and the remaining along the trails of the 100-acre freshwater tract, which is home to alligators, bobcats, river otters, and nesting birds such as the Black-necked Stilt.

MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

March 1 – May 31, 2017

Memorial gifts and gifts made in honor of special occasions are a wonderful way to pay tribute to family and friends who are 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 supported the Refuge in this thoughtful and meaningful way.

We recently received gifts in **MEMORY** of the following:

Jeffrey E. Armbrrecht	Dr. Wil Neil
Harold Berris	Diane and Jennifer Norfray
Margaret Carrol-Reeves	Howard Pachman
Kent Deffenbaugh	Susan Raber Satterfield
Dr. David Drachman	Joe B. and Rachel Stewart
Gerald Holman	Joe Walzer
Laurette Morin	Don Wildman

We received gifts in **HONOR** of the following:

Dr. Andrew and Laura Dahlem	Mary Packard
Joe and Aurelia DiCristo	John and Elizabeth Simler
Terry and Janet Gagner	Jim Sprankle
Beth Genter	Trish Sylvia
David and Kathy Hogan	Duane and Leonora Thurow
Robin Kirk	Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Webb
Ellen Lawrence	Karl Werner
James and Mandy McGovern	Aubrey White
Richard and Regina Mellman	

Solar Panels Installation at 'Ding'



In May, Phase I of solar panel installation began at the Refuge with the maintenance building. Phase II will convert the Visitor & Education Center to solar power. The project is part of the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society's San-Cap Solar Connect initiative started in 2015. The program saw three other island businesses and 24 residential homes converted. Since March 2016, when San-Cap Connect completed the program, the League of Women Voters stepped in to continue it Florida-wide. San-Cap Solar Connect was partially funded by Sanibel islanders Fred and Alice Stanback.



One panel from the new Perry Tract kiosk

COMING SOON to Perry Tract

The Refuge complex's only gulf beachside property, the 4-plus acre Perry Tract lies adjacent to Gulfside City Park on Sanibel Island. Ophthalmologist and malacologist Dr. Louise Perry, who passed away in 1962, donated her winter home property to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to maintain as a safe haven for wildlife.

This summer, the Refuge, in partnership with the City of

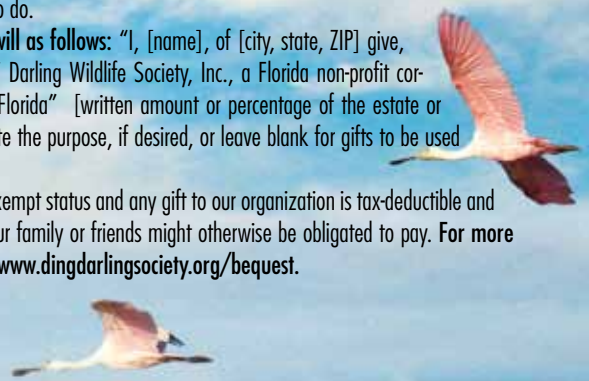
Sanibel, and with support from the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society and a grant from the Lee County Tourist Development Council, will erect an interpretive kiosk in Dr. Perry's honor. The signage, to be placed at the entrance to the beach boardwalk, identifies wildlife, shorebirds, and seashells found on the beach and around the property's pond. Shell castings and a replicated sea turtle nest will add a hands-on element.

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.



WILDLIFE SPOTLIGHT: WE'RE HAVING BABIES



Here we showcase the best of wildlife shots taken recently at the Refuge by photographers, volunteers, staff, and others. It's that time of year when we are welcoming new additions to our wildlife populations. Thanks to Libby Erickson for the nesting Green Heron shot and Jim Bennight for the baby gators pic. If you have a wildlife picture to share, please contact Sarah Lathrop at sarah@dingdarlingsociety.org.

IN THE REFUGE NATURE STORE

Store Highlights

Fun new items arrive every month in the Refuge Nature Store. Here's a quick snapshot of some of our latest and greatest.



2017 Luc Century Ornament

It's here! The 2017 Luc Century holiday ornament you've been waiting for. A

limited edition of 250 etched-glass ornaments portrays a Loggerhead Sea Turtle to make this year's holidays jolly and wildlife-friendly. Each year, nationally renowned glass artist Luc Century creates an exclusive wildlife ornament for the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society to benefit the Refuge. Cost is \$45.



Stop in and pick up your keepsake ornament today—they sell quickly! Or contact Store Manager Jeanne Walsh at 239-472-1100 ext. 241 or naturestore@dingdarling-society.org for more information about this and other featured products.

Remember, all proceeds from Nature Store sales go directly to Refuge education and wildlife research projects.

TARPON BAY EXPLORERS SCHEDULE

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

Tram Tours of Wildlife Drive: July 1-Aug 15: Mon-Thurs 10am, 11:30am, 1pm, 2:30pm, and 4pm; Sat-Sun 10am, 1pm, and 4pm; Aug 15-Aug 31: Sat-Thurs 10am, 1pm, and 4pm; Sept: Tues Thurs Sat 10am, 1pm, and 4pm.

Kayak Trail Tour: Daily 8:30am or 10am plus July 1-Aug 15: Mon-Fri 1pm.

Sunset Rookery Paddle: July 1- Aug 15 daily. Aug 15-Sept 30: Mon, Wed, Fri and Sat or Sun. All 2 hours prior to sunset.

Breakfast Cruise: July 1- Aug 15: Mon, Wed, Fri 8:30am; Aug 15-Sept 30 Wed 8:30am.

Standup Paddleboard Tour: Tues, Thurs, Sat. All 9am
Nature and Sea Life Cruise: July and Aug: Daily at 11am and 1:30pm; Sept: Mon Wed Fri Sun at 11am and 1:30pm.

Evening Cruise: July and Aug: Daily; Sept: Mon Wed Fri Sun. All 2 hours prior to sunset.

Aquarium & Touch Tank: Daily at 3pm
Rentals and fishing charters: Daily 8am-6pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

Free Summer Programs — Through August 5, 2017

National Public Lands Day (fee-free day on Wildlife Drive) — September 30, 2017

"Ding" Darling Days — October 15-21, 2017

Veteran's Day Weekend (fee-free days on Wildlife Drive) — November 11-12, 2017

Go Wild for "Ding" Fundraiser — February 14, 2018

Seventh Annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament — May 11, 2018

FOLLOW AND LIKE US

DDWS is currently active on three social media platforms. Please "LIKE" us on **Facebook** (join our 10,700+ fans!) by searching for "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society." (You can also "LIKE" the Refuge by searching for its "Official" page.) **Instagram** users can find us at @dingdarlingwildlifesociety. Also visit our YouTube channel by searching "ding darling wildlife society."





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Wulfert Acquisition a Success

Lee County Commissioners in March gave their final approval to funding \$1.4 million toward the purchase of 8.15 acres on Sanibel Island's Wulfert Road, a crucial wildlife corridor for the "Ding" Darling Refuge. As part of a unique partnership and collaboration, the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society raised the remaining \$600,000 of the \$2 million needed to purchase the parcel, which lies between SCCF land and the Refuge. The City of Sanibel had permitted five homes on the property. The Refuge, by agreement with the county, will maintain the property, which provides habitat for 80 different land and marine species that live or feed on or near this property. Thanks and a rousing Refuge cheer to everyone who contributed to this important campaign. To learn more about DDWS land acquisition efforts, please contact Executive Director Birgie Miller at 239.292.0566.

