

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Caption: The 2017 “Ding” Darling Days kicks off with Sunday Family Fun Day on Oct. 15 and culminates on Oct. 21 with Conservation Art Day.

‘Ding’ Darling Days themes spotlight family, pollinators, art

Family, hiking, art, bees and butterflies, Calusa, and beach and water: This year’s “Ding” Darling Days, Oct. 15-21, 2017, 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 celebrates the 141st birthday of the refuge’s namesake, father of the Duck Stamp, on Saturday, Oct. 21.

Family Fun Day kicks off the weeklong birding and eco-festival with all-free activities including narrated refuge tram tours, live animal presentations, a butterfly house, fly-fishing demos, music, hot dogs, and archery lessons. The Lee County VCB’s Shell Love Bug will be on hand for photo ops. The estimated value of all the free activities exceeds \$75 for a family of four.

New this year, the refuge’s Monofilament Busters will be exchanging environmentally friendly fishing gear for those who bring in lead weights and jigs. Florida WaterVentures Traveling Lab will be open for touring throughout the day.

The lab will also be on hand the next day, Monday, Oct. 16, when Lee and Collier schools have the day off. Themed as “Let’s Go on a Hike Day,” it includes scavenger hunts, Animal Olympics, hike-and-storytime, and the showing of *The Lorax*, all for free.

The Duck Stamp Artist presentation headlines Saturday’s Conservation Art Day on Oct. 21, which also includes cartooning, a photography tram tour, nature painting, and free art supplies. Five-time Federal Duck Stamp winner Jim Hautman will be speaking and signing his 2017-2018 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 and films at the refuge. A special exhibit of this year's Federal Duck Stamps will display in the Visitor & Education Center auditorium throughout the week, and guests can participate in the Dress-Up Photo Station.

Below is a schedule of highlights for the week. For a full "Ding" Darling Days schedule, visit www.dingdarlingdays.com, or call 239-472-1100.

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

'DING' DARLING DAYS HIGHLIGHTS

Sunday, Oct. 15 FAMILY FUN DAY 10:45am- 3pm

All FREE events at "Ding" Darling Visitor & Education Center

FREE Giveaways

FREE Live Animal Presentations

FREE Florida WaterVentures Traveling Lab

Continuous and FREE throughout the day

- Refuge Tram Tours
- Introduction to Archery Clinics
- Fly-Fishing Demos
- Shell Love Bug Photo Op
- Butterfly House
- Hands-On Nature Crafts
- Hot Dogs

Monday, Oct. 16-Saturday, Oct. 21

Free and discounted birding, tram, biking, hiking, kayaking, and nature boat excursions. Free Dress-Up Photo Station in the Visitor & Education Center

10% off select gifts in the Refuge Nature Store

Monday, Oct. 16 LET'S GO ON A HIKE DAY

FREE Florida WaterVentures Traveling Lab

FREE Ranger Hike & Story Time at Wildlife Education Boardwalk

Tuesday, Oct. 17 BEACH & WATER DAY

FREE Beach Walk at Perry Tract

FREE Horseshoe Crab Presentations & Hands-On Clinics

Wednesday, Oct. 18 BEES & BUTTERFLIES DAY

FREE *Wings of Life* Film Showing

FREE What's the Buzz? Bee Presentation

Thursday, Oct. 19 CALUSA DAY

FREE Making Calusa Mounds of Midden Program

FREE Guided Tour of Calusa Shell Mound Trail

Friday, Oct. 20 DUCK STAMP DAY

FREE All-Day Wildlife Drive Admission (for bikers & hikers only)

FREE Wildlife Drive Ranger Biking Tour

FREE *Million Dollar Duck* Film Showing

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 (reservations required)

ROSEATE SPOONBILL SPONSORS: Doc's Ford Sanibel Rum Bar & Grille; **GREAT EGRET SPONSORS:** Blue Giraffe Island Dining, Wayne & Linda Boyd, Gardner Families, Jim & Patty Sprankle; **GREAT BLUE HERON SPONSORS:** 97.7 Latino & Juan Radio, Andrew Thompson Company, Bailey's General Store, Mike & Terry Baldwin, Bank of the Islands, Cape Coral Kiwanis Club, Island Condo Maintenance, Island Sun, Panther Printing, Sanibel Captiva Beach Resorts, Sanibel Captiva Community Bank, Sanibel Captiva Rotary Club, Sanibel Moorings, Santiva Chronicle, Sunny Day Guide; **REDDISH EGRET SPONSORS:** Sarah Ashton & Jim Metzler, Blu Site Solutions, Casa Ybel Resort, Art & Susan Cassell, Cedar Chest Fine Jewelry, Jerry Edelman & Maryanne Daly, Sally & Rich Ennis, Florida Weekly, Phyllis Gresham, Grounds by Green Ways, In Memory of Roger Bell, Intech Printing & Direct Mail, Island Inn, Jensen's on the Gulf and Marina & Cottages, Mitchell's Sand Castles, Muench Families & Periwinkle Park, Painting With a Twist, Sanibel-Captiva Kiwanis Club, Roberta and Realtor David Schuldenfrei, Stewart and Sons Insurance, Inc., TopBirdingTours.com; **SNOWY EGRET SPONSORS:** Ambu Yoga, Barefoot Charley's Painting Co., Big Red Q Quickprint, John Brennan, The Butterfly Estates, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP), Colony Inn, Henderson Franklin Attorneys at Law, Island Therapy Center, Marina Customer Service Training, Sanibel Art & Frame, Sanibel School Steel Drumming Band, George & Wendy Schnapp, Jim & Anne Scott, Seashells.com, Vasanta Senerat, Winston & Barbara Spurgeon, Tents and Events, Chelle Koster Walton.

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

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