

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release  
Contact: Chelle Koster Walton  
239-699-4754  
[ChelleTrav@aol.com](mailto:ChelleTrav@aol.com)

Caption: Shannon MacKenzie

### **Refuge welcomes summer education intern**

Education intern Shannon MacKenzie arrived on May 7 to help the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island with staffing shortages this summer, thanks to funding from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

MacKenzie, a senior at Washington State University in Pullman, is studying environmental and ecosystem sciences with hopes to become a teacher or park ranger.

“That’s why this internship in the education department is so perfect for me!” she said. “I get to teach children about the environment around them. It’s a lot of fun to see a child’s face light up when they learn something new.”

Having visited family often on Sanibel Island, MacKenzie was excited to spend the summer here and learn about a new ecosystem. She will assist refuge conservation educator Sara Hallas through mid-August, when she will return to school to finish her degree.

“There is always something new to learn here, with new wildlife on the refuge every day,” she said. “I absolutely love it at ‘Ding’ Darling. There’s great staff who are so knowledgeable.”

DDWS provides living stipends and other benefits for about a dozen interns each year. The refuge supports interns and resident volunteers with free housing.

“Our interns bring youthful energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to the refuge team,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “At the same time, the program gives students and recent graduates an opportunity to learn hands-on about the environment and refuge operations.”

For more information about the refuge's internship programs, contact Westland at 239-472-1100 ext. 237. To learn about supporting the refuge intern program, contact Sarah Lathrop, DDWS associate director, at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

#### 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 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or [director@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:director@dingdarlingsociety.org).

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