



**SPRING 2018**

# 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.

## Time for Tarpon!



Next up on the fundraising circuit, our seventh annual "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament takes place on May 11 at Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille on Fort Myers Beach. Registration for the 55 available boat entries filled within two hours as anglers anticipated another exciting tournament.

As 100% of the purse goes to awards, we raise money from this fundraiser for the Refuge strictly through sponsorships and silent auction. For information on the event and becoming a sponsor or auction donor, please visit [www.dingdarling-](http://www.dingdarling-)  
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*A live auction "bid to give" surpassed its \$25,000 goal to match a \$25,000 donation from Hans and Leslie Fleischner and underwrite a Refuge conservation educator for another year.*

## SEASON 2018

# Feathering the Nest

The winter-spring season shaped up as a profitable one for feathering Refuge coffers. The annual Stokes Birding Tram Tours was a success on a glorious day of birds and fundraising. Our Go Wild for "Ding" – In the Nest on February 14 raised \$130,000 in ticket sales and auction proceeds. In addition, "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society received a \$25,000 challenge gift from Hans and Leslie Fleischner to fund the Refuge Conservation Education staffer for another year. The "bid to give"

match auction that night overshot the challenge, accounting for \$40,000 of the \$130,000 raised.

"This is a new record!" said DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller. "This is testament that our mission is strong. When people learn what we are able to accomplish with their philanthropic support and the good that is happening as a result, they are proud to become a member of the 'Ding' family."

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*Conservation Educator Sara Hallas, Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik, education donor Hans Fleischner, DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller, and education donor Leslie Fleischner*





## Horseshoe Crabs Are Hot!

This season, for the first time, the Refuge added a Horseshoe Crab program to its calendar of free tours and activities. On our end-of-year Wish List, DDWS asked for funding for a take-apart Horseshoe Crab replica to use in the program. A generous donor, who prefers to remain anonymous, answered our wish! Durable and perfect for interpretive programs, the first-of-its-kind model is one of only 80 produced and being used around the world for education purposes.



## TARPON TOURNAY

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tarpontourney.org or contact Executive Director Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org. See a list of our tourney sponsors to date on the back of the newsletter insert.



## EARTH DAY 2018



Make up-cycled crafts to take home.

Bike or hike Wildlife Drive for free, watch a free film, and take advantage of free upcycle projects at this year's Earth Day at the Refuge on Saturday, April 21, 2018.

The Refuge will celebrate the 48th anniversary of Earth Day in partnership with Ding Darling Wildlife Society and Tarpon Bay Explorers. The morning's highlights include earth-friendly, upcycled crafts to take home and a ranger-led bike tour. Throughout the day, guests can meet Bagzilla, a "bag monster" dressed

in the average person's annual plastic bag consumption, and take advantage of free bike rentals from TBE, the Refuge's official recreation concession, located 2 miles south of the Visitor & Education Center.

In the afternoon, watch the award-winning film *STRAWS*, a 30-minute documentary about plastic straw litter and how we can make a sea of change - one straw at a time. For a full schedule for earth-friendly and free fun throughout the day, visit [dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/events](http://dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/events).

## SEASON 2018

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Event attendees enjoyed a surprise visit from Teddy Roosevelt (in the personage of repressor Joe Wiegand), a delicious buffet dinner donated entirely by Sanibel Catering Company at Bailey's, treats from Queenie's Ice Cream, and serenading by the Gulf Coast Harmonizers.

Thanks to our generous sponsors for making this



event an unprecedented success. See the newsletter insert for a list of sponsors and auction donors, so you can too thank them for their support of conservation on Sanibel Island.



Left, Teddy Roosevelt repressor Joe Wiegand jokes with fans Jim Sprankle, Greg Scherer, and Bill Valerian. Right photo: John Kindig, Wendy Kindig, Phyllis Gresham, and Bailey's Richard Johnson, who donated the night's dinner and took the stage as auctioneer



Don and Lillian Stokes donated their time and expertise for the always quick-to-fill Birding Tram Tours fundraiser in February. A special thanks to them and Tarpon Bay Explorers, which donated the use of two trams.



## High School Photo Contest

At a special ceremony at the Refuge on February 3, the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society announced winners and finalists in the fifth annual "Ding" Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest.

Sponsored by the Theodore Cross family, the competition invited high school students from Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties to compete for prizes that included a digital camera package, chartered class trips to the Refuge, Tarpon Bay Explorers excursions, and copies of *Waterbirds: Portraits and Anecdotes from Birding Adventures* by contest namesake, the late Theodore Cross.

World-renowned New York photographer and friend of the Cross family, Arne Svenson judged this year's contest, along with "Ding" Darling Law Enforcement Officer John Thompson and Sanibel resident Deb Szymanczyk. They reviewed 363 images taken by students from 16 different schools.

First place went to an image titled "Dead Butterfly" by Cape Coral High 10th-grader Hankyeol Yang.

"This one says so much about the intersection of nature and society," said Arne. "I found the juxtaposition of color in the butterfly and the black-and-white background to be very dynamic. The animal scale-wise overshadows what man has created, leaving one to believe it will be there after we're gone."

In second place, Tiffany Sanchez, a ninth-grader from Cape Coral High, captured a Southern Black Racer in her portrait "The Visit from a Snake." "For me, it's about the timing," said Deb. "And the head up, the details, the pattern on its chest, its eyes looking at me."

Francisco Mayorga, in 11th grade at Lehigh Senior High, took third place with "Weigela," a portrait of a girl in the background of flowers. "It's well-composed," John explained his vote. "She has this dream-like expression."

Honorable mention winners and other finalists are listed in the accompanying box.

"It always amazes me, the quality of photos we get from these young adults," said Sierra Hoisington, who coordinates the contest. "We marvel at the unique perspectives and angles."

"Theodore Cross' family make this contest possible, and it has become a solid success story," said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director. "We couldn't be more thrilled



"The Visit from a Snake" by Tiffany Sanchez won second place.

that the family wants its donation used in this way — to reach an age group that often falls through the cracks of conservation education. Kudos to senior intern Sierra and our staff for a fabulous job of running the contest."

"We are so happy to be supporting a contest in my father's name, a contest that will get our youth involved with nature by looking at it — as my father so loved doing — through a camera lens," said Amanda Cross.

Winning and honorable mention images are on display at the free "Ding" Darling Visitor & Education Center and are available to view by Facebook album on DDWS' page [www.facebook.com/dingdarling](http://www.facebook.com/dingdarling). For information on the 2019 photo contest, visit [dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/photo-contests](http://dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/photo-contests).



In third place, Francisco Mayorga's "Weigela"

### Honorable Mentions

(in alphabetical order)

Chabely Acevedo, Estero High  
Rebecca Brownlie, North Fort Myers High  
Myers High  
Bella Bastedo, Port Charlotte High  
Alyssa Fraser, Estero High  
Karina Gonzalez, Lehigh Senior High  
Brandon Hill, Port Charlotte High  
Sydney Luzik, Lehigh Senior High

John Olvera, Lehigh Senior High  
Moises Ramirez, Lehigh Senior High  
Donovan Souppa, North Fort Myers High  
Leidy Tejon, Lehigh Senior High  
Christina Walch, Cape Coral High

### Finalists

(in alphabetical order)

Derick Battle, Lehigh Senior High

Meredith Brown, Estero High  
Kira Cambino, Cape Coral High  
Dominic Covietz, North Fort Myers High  
Alexis Henry, South Fort Myers High  
Carlye Morgan Mahler, Charlotte High  
Justin Marcum, Lehigh Senior High  
Luke Mitchell, Lehigh Senior High

Jackson Mytnik, Cape Coral High  
Erik Parent, Riverdale High  
Logan Rollmann, Lehigh Senior High  
Donovan Souppa, North Fort Myers High  
Shawna Werner, Lehigh Senior High  
Bailey White, Cypress Lake High  
Anthony Zhang, Cape Coral High



Contest coordinator Sierra Hoisington (far left) and Refuge Ranger Monica Scroggin (far right) with honorable mention winners and finalists

## FOLLOW AND LIKE US

DDWS is currently active on three social media platforms. Please "LIKE" us on Facebook (join our 11,300 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."







DDWS associate director Sarah Latthrop with Bill "Jake" Jacobson, Candice Ettridge, and Kevin Bowden

## New Permanently Endowed Fund

Friends of the late Elaine Jacobson, Kevin Bowden and Candice Ettridge, have honored her memory with an endowment fund to permanently support education efforts at the Refuge through the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society.

Elaine served as a "Ding" Darling volunteer for 15 years at the front desk in the Visitor & Education Center, as a bird rover on Wildlife Drive, and as a plant guide at Bailey Tract, for which she had a deep passion.

About 18 years ago, Kevin and Candice met her and husband Bill "Jake" Jacobson and became fast friends, both on the island and off, meeting in Canada several times and once on the Lewis and Clark Trail. On the island, Elaine and Candice went botanizing almost daily and led SCCF plant walks for 10 years.

"For most plants at 'Ding,' Elaine knew both their botanical name and common name," said Candice. "As a grandmother of three, she particularly enjoyed helping children, so with Elaine's death, Kevin and I wanted to remember her with a fund for children's nature education at 'Ding.'"

Endowment funds establish a permanent donation from which DDWS draws only the earnings on the account to support various earmarked aspects of the Refuge including education, interns, and student conservation scholarships.

"We are deeply grateful for this generous gift to remember one of our well-loved volunteers," said Birgie Miller, DDWS Executive Director. "Permanent endowment funds have become the lifeblood of the Society, providing a measure of financial stability for the Refuge long into the future. It's a wonderful, lasting way to honor family and friends."

DDWS' first ever endowment came from Kip Koss, the late grandson of the Refuge's namesake, Jay Norwood Darling. It supports overall conservation education projects, including annual teacher conservation grants. Former Refuge volunteer Jane Werner later endowed a conservation scholarship in her name. Several more endowments have come along through the years, with two more under discussion at this time, said Birgie.

Donors can establish a permanent endowment fund with a contribution of \$10,000 or more. To learn about establishing an endowment to support the Refuge or the 45/82 legacy society, contact Birgie or DDWS Associate Director Sarah Latthrop at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

## Volunteer Awards Luncheon

"Ding" Darling Refuge and "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society celebrated their annual Volunteer Awards Luncheon on February 9, at The Community House. The luncheon also honored Ranger Jeff Combs, Volunteer Coordinator, for his 20 years at the Refuge.

"With budget cuts and staff reduction, the only way we continue is because we have what I call our three secret weapons," Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik told the volunteers, "you all, the 'Ding' Darling Wildlife Society, and Tarpon Bay Explorers."

Refuge staff reports that in fiscal year 2016, 294

volunteers worked 40,658.5 hours at the Refuge, representing a labor and benefits savings of more than \$1 million or almost 19.55 full-time employees.

Following the awards, Ranger Toni "got the party started" by surprising Ranger Jeff with testimonials from longtime volunteers and staff, presentation of candy bars wrapped with pictures of Jeff then and now, and a framed tree with leaves signed by volunteers and staff.

Below is a list of volunteers who won awards for reaching hour and year achievement levels.

Ranger Jeff Combs and Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik presented John Masuka's 5,000-hour award posthumously to his daughter Bonnie (second from left) and wife Shirley.



Rangers Toni Westland (left) and Monica Scroggin present Ranger Jeff with candy bars wrapped with pictures of his 20 years at the Refuge.

### YEARS AWARDS

**20 years:** Terry Baldwin, Bart Cuderman, Dan Davis, Judy Davis, Georgia Nef, Phil Scheiber; **10 years:** Kathy Boyd, Claudia Burns, Robert Gilsdorf, Marcia Legru, Buck McDonald, Carol Strange

### HOURS AWARDS

**8,000, 7,500, and 7,000 hours:** Doris Hardy; **5,500 hours:** Ed Combs, Ann Wollschlager; **5,000 hours:** John Masuka; **4,500 hours:** Jack Wettstein, Patty Wettstein; **4,000 hours:** Latham Morris; **3,500 hours:** Miriam Hursey; **3,000 hours:** Ken Kopperl, Virginia Kopperl, Alan Parker, Linda Parker; **2,500 hours:** Ben Klaus, Mary Klaus, Ken Kopperl, Virginia Kopperl, Jim Scott; **2,000 hours:** Tom Mustachio, Phil Scheiber; **1,500 hours:** Alan Gast, France Paulsen, Martin Pokedoff, Greg Scherer, Elaine Swank; **1,000 hours:** Mike Baldwin, Jim Bennight, Ja-

net Lucree, Ed Sessa, Sally Stranahan, Karl Werner; **500 hours:** Stan Bunsick, Jan Cohen, Marion Evans, Cecy FASTER, Michael Galloway, Bob Gonser, Joan Gonser, Mary Horney, Ron Horney, Barb Kennedy, Nancy Sebree, John Waszmer, Dawn Weatherstein, Frank Weatherstein, Jonathan Weatherstein, Jim Winn; **250 hours:** Susan Beittel, Randi Ellassal, Lee Ann Emerson, Bob Gonser, Joan Gonser, Mary Horney, Ron Horney, Christine Makenzie, Paul McKenney, Sherri Neues, Patricia Rawert, Marvin Richards, Francie Slane, Dave Trout, Dawn Weatherstein, Frank Weatherstein, Jonathan Weatherstein, Pam Weiner, Rich Yanke; **150 hours:** Charles Baumann, Bob Brooks, John Coleman, Henry DeRonck, Vic Enns, Sandy Gage, Bob Gonser, Joan Gonser, Mary Horney, Ron Horney, Sam Huntington, Wendy Kindig, Herb Lawrence, Peter Meekin, Dan Moeder, Lee Ann O'toole, Mary Rice, Bernie Swartz, Dawn Weatherstein, Frank Weatherstein, Jonathan Weatherstein



Refuge Ranger Paul Tritaik, Birgie, Deputy Refuge Ranger Nate Caswell, and Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland gather at Birgie's pet project.

## STAFF NEWS

### Birgie Submits Resignation Notice for Early Summer

Birgie Miller, Executive Director for the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society since 2010, has tendered notice of her resignation to the Board of Directors, effective summer 2018.

"I am making a life change and leaving the island," said Birgie. "But because of my commitment and loyalty to the 'Ding' family, I felt the responsibility to let them know even before I knew where my future will be taking me."

"Those of us on the Board of Directors are only too aware what a great loss Birgie's departure will be," said DDWS President Mike Baldwin. "Her accomplishments while serving as Executive Director have been nothing short of remarkable, achieving tremendous growth within the organization and greatly strengthening our mission to support the Refuge."

The Board of Directors hired Birgie eight years ago as DDWS' first-ever executive director. She had previously served as a member of the Board for three years.

Raising millions of dollars through donations, fundraisers, and grants, she has overseen the acquisition of several parcels of new Refuge lands and the implementation of more than a dozen new exhibits, improvement projects, and research studies for the Refuge. To help accomplish all this, Birgie has grown the DDWS staff from two fulltime and one part-time employees to six fulltime employees and two fulltime interns.

"She has been the brains and muscle behind starting the 'Ding' Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament, our first-of-its-kind iNature QR-code trail and Ding Darling game app, Go Wild for 'Ding' fundraisers, our

seasonal film series, the 45/82 legacy society, and so many more programs," said Mike. "We will miss her sorely, but must begin the process of seeking a successor to fill the position."

DDWS has formed a search committee of board members and other volunteers who will be working with a hired search firm to fill the position, Mike added. "Birgie has transformed the 'Ding' Darling Wildlife Society into a powerhouse professional nonprofit that is the envy of refuge support groups across the country," said Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik. "Birgie will probably best be remembered for her accomplishments in supporting the Refuge. Under Birgie's leadership, the Society has successfully increased support for educational and research programs and the hiring of a new Conservation Educator to teach thousands of children the wonders of nature."

"We jokingly call her 'Red Bull' because of her fierce energy," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "Her crowning achievement, funny as it may seem, was to see the Learning Lavatories project come to fruition last year. She has talked about turning our restrooms into award-winning educational exhibits for years, and we are all proud to say she has certainly achieved that goal."

"The Refuge is in much better shape thanks to the support that Birgie has generated, and we will miss her passion, enthusiasm, vision, friendliness, and commitment," said Paul. "On behalf of the Refuge staff and volunteers, we are eternally grateful for Birgie's contributions."

### Welcome New Intern

Education intern Christina Scroggin recently arrived to help the Refuge with staffing shortages this season, thanks to funding from the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society.

Christina graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers last fall with a major in psychology and minor in interdisciplinary studies. The Miami native previously worked as an intern for St. Matthew's House in Naples with the development department.

Growing up with Kip Koss, "Ding" Darling's grandson, as a good family friend, Christina has long known about the Refuge. Recently, she says, her interests have taken her away from her college studies and more into the environmental fields.

At "Ding" Darling, she will be helping Sara Hallas, the Refuge's Conservation Educator, with program development and delivery to local students and visitors.

"I like that I have only been here for a short time and feel as though I am already surrounded by family," said Christina, who actually is the sister of part-time Refuge Ranger Monica Scroggin. "Everyone here is so friendly and so excited to help me with whatever I may need. I've been helping out with the Junior Duck Stamp presentations and am so excited to see all of the entries this year."

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

For more information about the Refuge's internship programs, contact Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland at 239-472-1100 ext. 237. To learn about supporting the Refuge Intern Program, contact Sarah Latthrop, DDWS Associate Director, at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.



Christina Scroggin

## Meet Your Board



The "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society Board of Directors for 2018: (front from left) Mark Banks, Secretary Wendy Kindig, Brett Gooch, Immediate Past President Doris Hardy; (back) Ann-Marie Wildman, Phyllis Gresham, President Mike Baldwin, Treasurer Bill Valerian, Kirstin Sawicki, and Jen McSorley. Not pictured: Vice President Sarah Ashton, Jim Hall, and Richard Yanke



**MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS**

**December 1, 2017 – February 28, 2018**

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:

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Paula Albert                 | Art and Molly Krival    |
| John and Kathy Allen         | Ted Kucera              |
| Richard Bailey               | Mary Helen Ladner       |
| Vernon & Clara Baltus        | Jenny Lenz              |
| Frank and Jane Bopp          | Margaret Sillers Martin |
| Mickey Bowers                | Dr. Robert G Meeker     |
| Sydney Chayes, Jr.           | David P Mills, Sr.      |
| Dr. Howard Randall Deming    | Patti Mink              |
| Chuck Donofrio               | Diane Norfroy           |
| Rhoda Dorsey                 | Paulette Pitrak         |
| Dr. David Drachman           | Carol Redeker           |
| Dr. Mary Alice D Edwards     | Sally Reed              |
| Milly Ellis                  | Harry Sabiers           |
| Wilfred E. Gardner Jr.       | Florence Savage         |
| Christine Glancy             | Lisa Schill             |
| Dr. Lamar Harrell            | Gerri & Richard Schrier |
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| Lorinda Hollon               | Betty and Phil Shute    |
| Michael Howard               | Oberon Thoma            |
| George Howe                  | Janet Vea               |
| Elaine Jacobson              | Margery Milbrook Wilder |
| Weldon and Nita Johnson      | Anna Zimmerman          |
| Marie Parkes Kenerson        |                         |

We recently received gifts in HONOR of the following:

- |                                     |                             |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Kim Milling and Joyce Barney        | Dr. Stephen Kress           |
| Debbie Dill-Bergman and Dan Bergman | Lambiase Family             |
| Christie Borthwick                  | Carol and Alan Landholt     |
| Andrew and Ruthelen Burns Family    | Birgie Miller               |
| Ben Burton                          | Betty and Sandy Moffett     |
| Doug and Lorna Caulkins             | Jim and Becky Ott           |
| Jeffrey & Rebecca Clemens           | Susan and Bob Phipps        |
| Charlie Davis                       | Rick and Jane Ranieri       |
| Dr. John DePinto                    | Richard and Barbara Russell |
| Sidney Ecker                        | Sawicki Family              |
| Mary Geib                           | Susan and Randy Shellhorse  |
| Pat Godfrey                         | Pat Smith                   |
| Glen Gresham                        | The Smith Family            |
| Mary Guillette                      | Joe Stack                   |
| Doris D. Hardy                      | Peter & Gail Walcott        |
| Susan Jones                         | Tom and Judy Ware           |
| Drew Kanne                          | Sarah and Gordon Wean       |
| Marilyn Kloosterman                 | Doug and Gloria Wetmore     |
|                                     | Roger & Jocelyn Wiggins     |



Family Beach Walk combines sand, water, and learning every Friday morning.

**Free Summer Programs**

Wildlife Wonders talks, weekly walks, and nature crafts highlight the free summer programming to be offered June 4 through August 6, 2018, at the Refuge. Summer programming is made possible by support from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. The schedule of weekly activities follows. No pre-registration is necessary.

- Reading at the Refuge, every Wednesday at 10 a.m.
- Indigo Trail Hike, every Thursday at 10 a.m.
- Family Beach Walk, every Friday at 9 a.m.

**Mangrove Cuckoo Study**

The Mangrove Cuckoo study being funded by the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society has been making good headway this winter, according to Ken Meyer, Executive Director of the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) in Gainesville, which is conducting the research.

The team was able to capture and band its fourth cuckoo in February at the Refuge Cross Dike, fitting it with an ultra-light, 2-gram telemetry satellite transmitter. The first two birds, one banded in fall 2016, another in spring 2017, were fitted with older transmitters that are no longer tracking.

ARCI banded the third cuckoo in October 2017. With the small solar-powered transmitters, the researchers are able to track cuckoo movement in their mission to answer the question “Where do the birds winter?”

The newly banded bird should be trackable for two to three years to answer that question and others, say the researchers. ARCI also hopes to do aerial surveillance to find Mangrove Cuckoo nests, which have never been found before.

“Ding” Darling is considered one of the Mangrove



- Wildlife Wonders, every Saturday at 11 a.m.

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

**Save the Date: ‘Ding’ Darling Days 2018**

Mark your calendars for October 12-14, the dates for this year’s 30th annual “Ding” Darling Days at the Refuge. “Because of increasing budget cuts and staff reductions, we are shortening this year’s eco-festival from one week to three weekend days,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland.



The weekend kicks off with Friday’s Get Outdoors Day, followed by Saturday’s traditional Conservation Art Day. Sunday Family Fun Day will crown the weekend with all-free activities for kids and adults and a celebration of “Ding” Days 30th year.



A researcher tags a Mangrove Cuckoo at the Cross-Dike.

Cuckoo hot spots,” said Dr. Meyer. “Its population is believed to be declining, but there is so little known about its nesting biology and migration. This is the only place they’ve been harnessed for tracking.”

ARCI is concurrently conducting a DDWS-funded study on the Reddish Egret using the satellite transmitters. In that case, the transmitters weigh 22 grams compared to the cuckoos’ 2-gram equipment. “We are tasked with keeping the equipment less than 3 percent of the bird’s body weight,” said Dr. Meyer. “The transmitters we are using are prototypes, the first of their kind being used in the field.”

Stay tuned as the tracking devices let us in on secrets to the shy, mysterious Mangrove Cuckoo.

**Society Founder Awards**

During a special presentation at the February 28 Board of Directors meeting, DDWS presented Bill and Jeanne Rankin with Founder Awards. The new awards go to individuals who made a vital contribution to the success of the Society within the first 10 years of its foundation. Earlier recipients in December included Millie Ford and Marilyn Kloosterman.

Those selected as a Society Founder are recognized with their name on a wall plaque specifically designed for this purpose and displayed in the Society’s offices.



**WILDLIFE SPOTLIGHT**



Here we showcase the best of wildlife shots taken recently at the Refuge by photographers, volunteers, staff, and others. Spring is here and nesting has begun. Thanks to Rebecca Clemens for this photograph of a Yellow-crowned Night Heron sitting on her nest. Photographer Bill Fischer captured a recent visit from this Sora, a member of the rail family.

If you have a wildlife picture to share, please contact Sarah Lathrop at [sarah@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:sarah@dingdarlingsociety.org).

**Teacher Grant Awards**

This winter, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society awarded \$7,303 in grants to conservation education-related projects at eight different schools in Lee, Charlotte, and Collier counties for the 2017-2018 school year.

“This is the 12th year the Society has awarded these conservation teacher grants,” said Wendy Kindig, Education Committee Chair. “To date, we have awarded more than \$75,000 in teacher grants. The Society is pleased to help the future of conservation stewards in this important way.”

In 2018, DDWS will again be awarding up to \$10,000 in teacher conservation grants for schools in the three-

county area. The grants are funded by monies received from the DDWS Conservation Education Endowment Fund earmarked specifically for education by the late Kip Koss, grandson of Jay N. “Ding” Darling.

For information on next year’s grants, contact Conservation Educator Sara Hallas at 239-472-1100 ext. 236 or Wendy at [wendykindig@aol.com](mailto:wendykindig@aol.com), or visit [dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/teacher-grants](http://dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/teacher-grants). Anyone interested in supporting conservation education at “Ding” Darling can visit [dingdarlingsociety.org/donation](http://dingdarlingsociety.org/donation) or contact Sarah Lathrop at [sarah@dingdarling-society.org](mailto:sarah@dingdarling-society.org).



The Sanibel School fifth-graders educate classes about their new recycling program, the result of a DDWS Teacher Grant for this school year.



**New Fishing Kayaks**

Tarpon Bay Explorers (TBE) is now offering an upgraded alternative for anglers to rent for use within the Refuge. Pedal-powered Hobie fishing kayaks provide avid anglers a stealthy, efficient, and hands-free fishing experience. They replace TBE’s motorized canoe fleet.

“The Hobie kayaks have really gained popularity over the past decade,” explained TBE Assistant Manager Adam Sauerland. “These boats do not rely on an electric trolling motor that can run out of battery life and are more suitable to combat stiffer wind conditions.” TBE is the Refuge’s official recreation concession; a portion of its proceeds benefit National Wildlife Refuges all over the country.

**BAILEY TRACT CLOSING**

As part of a habitat restoration project, Bailey Tract will close mid-April for an undetermined period of time. The Refuge waited until after the height of season to commence, following a small weeklong project in early March.



**Optimists Donation**



Thanks to the Sanibel-Captiva Optimist Club and George & Wendy’s Seafood Grille, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society recently accepted a check for \$5,000 to benefit Refuge education and conservation. The donation reflects proceeds from the Optimist Club’s second annual Sanibel Jazz & Blues Festival in November 2017.





One Wildlife Drive  
P.O. Box 565  
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**dingdarlingsociety.org**  
**office@dingdarlingsociety.org**

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**Photography** Chelle Koster Walton,

Refuge & DDWS Staff

**Design and Production** Susan Holly,

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Ft. Myers, FL



**High School Photo Contest Winners 2018**

*Cape Coral High School 10th-grader Hankyeol Yang took first place in the fifth annual "Ding" Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest with his image titled "Dead Butterfly." The contest requires students to write about what they were thinking when they took the picture. Here's what Hankyeol wrote: "I found this dead butterfly as I was walking home from school. It was an ordinary day for me, but that was not the case for the butterfly. This incident helped me realize that death occurs in nature every day unbeknownst to us, and I understood the fragility of life, especially of an insect as delicate as a butterfly. But I also observed the beauty of the butterfly even unto death, and I appreciated the pure and true magnificence of creation." See page 3 for more photos and information about the contest.*

