

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Michelle Martin and Andrea Centola began their biology internships with the refuge last month.

Refuge welcomes 2018 biology interns

Two new biology interns joined the team effort at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge in July. Andrea Centola and Michelle Martin plan to stay into early summer 2019 as part of the refuge’s internship program supported by the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

Centola, originally from Rochester, N.Y., most recently lived on Big Island, Hawaii, completing an internship for the U.S. Geological Survey at its Kilauea field station. She graduated in 2015 with a bachelor’s degree in environmental science from the College at Brockport, State University of New York, where she did her field study on terrestrial ecology

“My favorite part of Sanibel and the refuge is the manatee sightings,” Centola said. “I have never seen them before, so I am very excited every time they show up to the surface.”

Martin comes to the refuge from South Texas, where she conducted small mammal trapping and avian point counts for Texas A&M University. She graduated in 2016 from Florida State University in Tallahassee with bachelor degrees in neuroscience and animal behavior.

“So far, I have loved the old Florida feel the refuge allows visitors and staff alike to experience while among the mangroves and tropical hammock,” says Martin, who plans to concentrate her refuge time on avian behavior.

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 www.dingdarlingsociety.org or contact Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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