

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

[ChelleTrav@aol.com](mailto:ChelleTrav@aol.com)

Caption: May Jernigan

### **Refuge welcomes art intern**

Visitor services art intern May Jernigan arrived recently to help the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island with staffing shortages this fall, thanks to funding from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS).

Jernigan, a 2016 graduate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, holds a bachelor of fine arts degree and is currently earning a graduate certificate for science illustration from California State University Monterey Bay. Through Thanksgiving, she will be assisting supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland in art projects related to the “Ding” Darling Days eco-festival Oct. 12-14 and plastic awareness projects.

“I’m looking forward to working on a poster detailing how plastic waste affects wildlife and the environment, not just on Sanibel but the world as a whole,” said Jernigan. “I’m hoping to transform the kinds of issues the refuge workers see on a daily basis into a concise poster that is effective to a broader audience. I also am excited to draw loggerhead sea turtles on that poster!”

The St. Louis, Mo., native has visited Sanibel many times with her family. “It feels like another home to me,” she said. “I’m thrilled to see all my favorite wildlife again. I also love how generous and kind everyone has been at the refuge.”

“We are looking forward to putting May’s talents and energy to use during ‘Ding’ Days, when she will lead a number of hands-on art projects,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “We are so thankful to our friends group. Without them, our internship program would not be possible, which would leave us woefully understaffed as refuge personnel continues to shrink due to budget cuts.”

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 Birgie Miller, DDWS executive 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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