

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

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

Caption: The refuge has unveiled the logo for its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

### **‘Ding’ Darling to kick off 75<sup>th</sup> celebration**

In 1945, in fear for the wildlife and wetlands that claimed most of Sanibel Island, Jay Norwood “Ding” Darling succeeded in petitioning for the creation of the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge.

“He became aware of the proposal by the state of Florida to sell over 2,000 acres of state-owned lands to developers here on Sanibel,” said Paul Tritaik, refuge manager of today’s J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, renamed after the death of its creator. “And he convinced the governor, Spessard Holland at that time, to postpone the sales and eventually convinced the state to create a state wildlife sanctuary. And following that he was able to eventually convince the Truman administration to establish this area as a national wildlife refuge.”

As the refuge approaches its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020, staff and the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) are gearing up to celebrate now through the milestone year. Last week, they released the official 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo, featuring whimsical wildlife art by artist Lynne Egensteiner and the slogan “A Legacy of Protecting Wildlife.”

“Seventy-five years, that’s huge!” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “And we plan on celebrating it big time, starting now through December 2020, the official anniversary date.”

The occasion’s commemoration begins with a special limited-edition glass Sea Star Ornament etched by island artisan Luc Century for 2019. He has been crafting refuge-themed glass ornaments for the refuge since 2002. In past years, he created 250 ornaments etched with his signature, the year, and the refuge’s name. This year, for the 75<sup>th</sup> kickoff, he will create only 75 Sea Star Ornaments, each also etched with edition numbers from 1/75 to 75/75.

The ornament first will be available in the Refuge Nature Store during its Happy Hour Holiday Shopping event on Nov. 27, 5 to 7 p.m. for \$60 each. For shoppers who pre-order and pre-pay prior to Nov. 27, the price rolls back to \$45.

Other highlights of the anniversary season will be a Clyde Butcher photography exhibition starting the end of 2019; an exhibit beginning January 2019 to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Woodring Home, now part of the refuge; special offers at Tarpon Bay Explorers, the refuge's recreation concession; one-of-a-kind 75<sup>th</sup> logo and "Ding" cartoon items in the Refuge Nature Store; and other unique celebratory events and programs throughout the years.

Darling twice won Pulitzer Prizes for his often-controversial political cartoons in the *Des Moines Register* from 1900 to 1949. Many focused on conservation issues way ahead of their time. Darling also served as the first head of the U.S. Biological Survey, the precursor to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. While serving, he created the Federal Duck Stamp program to fund new refuge lands and drew the first duck stamp himself.

"Jay Darling would surely be proud of how far the refuge has come since its inception," said Tritaik. "We have added acreage to the complex, built a Visitor & Education Center with the help of our friends group, educated hundreds of millions, and, most importantly, given wildlife a safe haven."

"Darling once said: 'I'm learning one thing the hard way... you have to re-educate the public mind about every 15 or 20 years or it forgets everything learned a while back.'" said Birgie Miller, DDWS executive director. "Although we've made impressive strides in the past 75 years, we must understand – as this summer's water crisis reaffirmed – that our work to educate, protect, and preserve is never finished."

For more information about "Ding" Darling's 75<sup>th</sup> celebration as it becomes available, visit [www.ding75.org](http://www.ding75.org).

#### 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 profits.

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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