

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton, DDWS Media Liaison

239-699-4754

[ChelleKWalton@gmail.com](mailto:ChelleKWalton@gmail.com)

Caption: Kyle Patterson

### **Refuge welcomes visitor services intern**

Visitor services intern Kyle Patterson arrived June 4 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).

Patterson attended Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vt., the past two years and will be attending Paul Smith’s College in New York State’s Adirondack Mountains in the fall to study fish and wildlife management. Through mid-August 2019, he will be assisting supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland in overseeing programs and amenities for the more than one million annual visitors to the refuge.

“Having been to the refuge and coming to Sanibel almost every spring for a long time now to visit my grandparents, I’ve always found Wildlife Drive during the in-season migrations and breeding seasons really spectacular,” said the Red Bank, N.J. native. “But getting to see the off-season side of things has been rewarding in many ways as well, such as getting an almost silent morning view of a flock of spoonbills with very few other people to be seen.”

Patterson said he looks forward to working with Boy Scout and summer programs “to help spread the passion for wildlife and conservation that this refuge gave me.”

“We welcome Kyle’s energy and enthusiasm to the team,” said Westland. “We thank our friends group for making his internship possible. With our shrinking staff, due to federal budget cuts, it’s crucial for this sort of partnership to keep the refuge running.”

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. 232.

#### 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).

###