

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Celebrate National Public Lands Day by helping to clean up the beach while learning about beach flora and fauna.

Free Wildlife Drive admission, beach clean-up highlights of National Public Lands Day at the Refuge

J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island will celebrate National Public Lands Day and Urban National Wildlife Refuge Day on Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019, with a beach clean-up at its Perry Tract and a free film showing. The day, also a designated fee-free day by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), will offer free admission to Wildlife Drive.

A signature event of the National Environmental Education Foundation, National Public Lands Day promotes both recreational enjoyment and volunteer conservation of public lands. The FWS also celebrates urban refuges that day; “Ding” Darling is considered among the 101 urban refuges out of more than 560 total across the U.S. because of its proximity to a municipality and nearly one million annual visitors.

Wildlife Drive opens at 7 a.m. for free touring and closes at 7 p.m. Narrated tram tours will run at normal cost and schedule – 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 3 p.m. Visit www.tarponbayexplorers.com to reserve. The always admission-free “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center opens at 9 a.m.

From 9:30 to 11:30, refuge staff will lead a beach clean-up of its Perry Tract area adjacent to Gulfside City Park Beach. City parking fees apply. All participants receive a free nationwide Public Lands Pass good for one year. Those who aren’t here at that time can post a picture of themselves on social media cleaning up a local public land, using #NPLD. Email the picture to Toni_Westland@fws.gov to receive the free pass.

At 1 p.m., refuge staff invites the public to a free showing of the 56-minute documentary *The Forgotten Coast: Return to Wild Florida* in the Visitor & Education Center. Following in the footsteps of a

wandering Florida black bear, three modern-day explorers leave civilization and enter a lost American wilderness on a rugged thousand-mile journey by foot, paddle, and bike.

Traversing Florida's vast and seldom seen "Forgotten Coast," the expedition encounters stunning and rare wildlife in a fragile corridor stretching from the Everglades to the Florida-Alabama border.

Premiered in April 2017, the PBS documentary captures manatees, alligators, ancient river fish, and endangered woodpeckers. On the wind, in the waves, through the trees, and under the stars, *The Forgotten Coast* offers a chance not just to look back in time but to look forward to a future filled with new hope.

For more information about the event, contact Ranger Monica Scroggin at 239-472-1100 ext. 237.

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

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