

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

ChelleTrav@aol.com

Caption: Artist renderings of the new exhibit and mural

‘Ding’ to unveil new cartoonist studio exhibit Dec. 2

As the official kickoff to the 75th anniversary season for J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, the refuge staff and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) will host a public unveiling of an exhibit makeover and new mural dedicated to the achievements of the refuge’s namesake.

The unveiling takes place Monday, Dec. 2, at 9 a.m. in the Visitor & Education Center. A Donuts with “Ding” coffee social will follow.

Jay Norwood “Ding” Darling twice won Pulitzer prizes for the political cartoons he penned over 50 years, a great deal of them conservation-related. The updated “Ding” Studio Exhibit recreates his workplace at the *Des Moines Register*, which carried his cartoons on its front page daily.

Whereas before the exhibit was cordoned off, now visitors can enter and become part of the life of “Ding.” Added enhancements, made possible with DDWS funding, will include a “Ding” selfie station, an electronic timeline of his life, interactive replications of his drafting table and desk, and never-before-exhibited artifacts from the archives of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia.

Visitors can still see examples of his cartoons, a video, and the long-barreled swivel gun he received in gratitude for his help in prosecuting hunters who once used such weapons to hunt birds and waterfowl. In the Everglades and throughout the country, plume and duck hunters once nearly decimated populations with the weapon of mass destruction.

Among his many other accomplishments in the name of conservation, Darling created the Federal Duck Stamp program in 1934 to support the purchase of wetland habitat. To date, the program has preserved more than 5.7 million acres as national wildlife refuge lands.

To pay tribute to that legacy, a new 127' x 98' mural revolves around an amplification of the first 1935 Duck Stamp, which Darling himself designed. Three-dimensional mallards will appear to be flying out of the stamp.

David Williams of North Carolina has designed and is creating the mural in a style and method similar to the award-winning Visitor & Education Center restrooms and welcome archway he created for the refuge in the past.

“We continuously want to tell the story of ‘Ding’ the man, because he is a legend in conservation and conservation art history,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland, who is overseeing the exhibit makeover with DDWS development officer Sierra Hoisington. “So as we celebrate 75 years of what he started here by creating this refuge in 1945, it only seemed fitting to begin by shining a spotlight on him and his amazing work.”

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.

###