

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release.

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Images available upon request

Caption:

‘Ding’ Darling lecturer traces story of Florida panther survival

The cast of characters in *Cat Tale* includes a grizzled Texas puma hunter who decides he likes his prey better than the sheep he was hired to protect; a pioneering female scientist who once gave a dying panther mouth-to-mouth resuscitation; a museum employee who became known as "the Scat Lady;" a Native American tribal chief who killed a panther and ate its heart; and the fabled, fragrant Skunk Ape.

The book’s author, Craig Pittman, will present two programs beginning at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 28, in the admission-free “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center on Sanibel Island.

Subtitled “*The Wild, Weird Battle to Save the Endangered Florida Panther*,” Pittman’s fifth nonfiction book follows a long, award-winning career as an environmental reporter for the *Tampa Bay Times* and acclaimed Florida author.

His previous book, *Oh, Florida! How America's Weirdest State Influences the Rest of the Country*, won the gold medal for Florida nonfiction from the Florida Book Awards.

Cat Tale tells the true story of how the most endangered large mammal in America, the Florida panther, made a remarkable comeback from the brink of extinction -- with the help of some biologists who had to fight their own bosses at times to save it.

Following his presentations, Pittman will sign copies of his books, which are available for purchase in the Refuge Nature Store, profits from which benefit refuge conservation and

education programs.

HighTower/Thomas & Swartz Wealth Management and Sanibel Carts co-sponsor the free 12-lecture series with support from the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). The free lectures take place every Friday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Seating is limited and available on a first-come basis. Early arrivals can save their seat and one extra with personal items and then can explore the Visitor & Education Center or Indigo Trail before the lecture starts. Saved seats must be filled 15 minutes before lecture time or risk being reassigned. This year, DDWS will be filming most lectures and broadcasting them on Facebook Live at www.facebook.com/dingdarling.

As usual, Wildlife Drive closes on Friday, but visitors are welcome to enjoy the Visitor & Education Center, Indigo Trail, Bailey Tract, and recreational opportunities at Tarpon Bay Explorers, the refuge’s official recreation concession located at its Tarpon Bay Recreation Area.

Note: Opinions expressed in guest lectures do not necessarily reflect the views of refuge and DDWS management, staff, and board of directors.

The season’s remaining schedule is listed below. Book signings follow all starred (*) lectures. For more information, call 239-472-1100 ext. 241 or log on to dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/lecture-and-film-series.

*Feb 28 – Author Craig Pittman, *Cat Tale: The Wild, Weird Battle to Save the Endangered Florida Panther*

*March 6 – Author & Photographer Paul Bannick, *The Owl and the Woodpecker: Encounters with North America’s Most Iconic Birds*

March 13 – Upcycle Designer Nancy Judd, RecycleRunway.com

*March 20 – Author Eliot Kleinberg, *Black Cloud: The Great Hurricane of 1928*

*March 27 – Author Jack Davis, “All About Eagles and Other Florida Eco-Topics”

*April 3 – Jeri Magg, *Remarkable Women of Sanibel & Captiva*

*starred lecture indicates book signing to follow

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 dingdarlingsociety@gmail.com.

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