

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton

239-699-4754

ChelleKWalton@gmail.com

Event Logo attached

CAPTION: Award-winning author-photographer Paul Bannick will host a private tour as a Go Wild live auction item.

Celebrity birding author tour goes on auction block for Go Wild for ‘Ding’

Award-winning author and wildlife photographer Paul Bannick will host a private island birding tour for up to five people on Thursday, March 5, as a banner live auction item at the eighth annual fundraiser for the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS). Go Wild for “Ding” – Lovin’ Spoonbills takes place on Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2020, at The Community House on Sanibel.

This year’s Go Wild theme continues a series of annual bird events to benefit conservation education efforts at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel.

“Roseate spoonbills are ‘Ding’ Darling’s most iconic bird, so we saw it fitting to make them the official totem for the refuge’s 75th anniversary celebration, which runs through Dec. 1, 2020,” said Birgie Miller, DDWS executive director. “We are also ‘showing them the love’ as this year’s species of choice for our Go Wild, the biggest fundraiser of the year to benefit the refuge.”

Go Wild attendees can bid for Bannick’s exclusive tour the evening of the event. Those unable to attend the event may bid on auction items remotely by contacting DDWS executive director Birgie Miller at 239-472-1100 ext. 4 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

Bannick authored the bestselling *Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls* and *The Owl and The Woodpecker, Encounters with North America’s Most Iconic Birds*. His photography has been featured prominently in bird guides from Audubon, Peterson, The Smithsonian, the Stokes, The National Wildlife Federation, and Birds of the World; and has appeared in a variety of publications from *The New York Times* and *Birds and Blooms to American Way* and the *Seattle Times*.

The author-photographer has appeared on NBC Nightly News, Evening Magazine, and dozens of NPR stations and programs, including Travels with Rick Steves and BirdNote. Bannick will also be a guest speaker at the refuge on Friday, March 6, at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. for this year's lecture series.

Admission to the Feb. 12 event is by reservation only. Tickets to the Go Wild at "Ding" party are \$150 each. Only 50 seats remain for this event, which sells out each year. To reserve your spot, visit dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/go-wild-for-ding. Or contact Dot Voorhees at 239-472-1100 ext. 239 or dot@dingdarlingsociety.org to make reservations.

Event sponsorships are still available; for more information, contact Voorhees.

The following sponsors have already pledged their support for Go Wild for "Ding" – Lovin' Spoonbills. **Call of The Wild Level:** Jim & Patty Sprankle; **Champion Level:** Todd & Barbara Bluedorn, Boomer Duvin & Family; **Guardian Level:** Jim & Dulce Doss, Bill & Diane Valerian; **Protector Level:** Sarah Ashton—Remax of the Islands, Mike & Terry Baldwin, Doug & Sherry Gentry, John & Kay Morse, Tiffani Kaliko & John Silvia, Ron E. & Josephine Smith, Hank & Linda Spire; **Defender Level:** The Gresham Family, William & Barbara Millar, Mitchell's Sand Castles; R.S. Walsh Landscaping, Sanibel Moorings, Stewart & Sons Insurance Inc., Bob & Kathy Weisemann.

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.

###