



# Protect. Educate. Inspire.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Joe Wiegand, shown here with the refuge's Blue Goose mascot, will reprise his persona of Teddy Roosevelt to regale guests at the daytime celebration and evening gala.

w/logo

### **DDWS celebrates refuge's 75<sup>th</sup> with gala drive-in theater event**

In 1945, out of fear for the wildlife and wetlands that claimed most of Sanibel Island, Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling succeeded in petitioning for the creation of the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge.

Seventy-five years later, J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR, which adopted its creator's name in 1967 following his death, celebrates its rich history and legacy on Dec. 1, 2020. The "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge is helping to support a daytime celebration and will be hosting an evening gala to commemorate the refuge's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The daytime celebration, in concert with "Ding" Darling Day, will be free and open to the public. It will combine a day of safe family fun, live music, and special guests, while following CDC guidelines. Visit [dingdarlingdays.com](http://dingdarlingdays.com) for the schedule of activities.

The day's festivities then will culminate with a ticketed evening event. The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala will harken back to the 1940s with a drive-in theater theme and visits from "Theodore Roosevelt" repressor Joe Wiegand. It will take place in the parking lot across from the Community House on Sanibel Island.

Guests will safely enjoy live music and a program projected onto a drive-in style screen with audio broadcast to their cars. “Car hops,” wearing masks and other protective gear, will deliver food and drinks to guests.

“Dec. 1 will be a once-in-a-lifetime celebration to remember and an occasion to look forward with optimism to the refuge’s future,” said DDWS executive director Birgie Miller. To join in the memory-making by becoming a sponsor, email development officer April Boehnen at [aprilb@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:aprilb@dingdarlingsociety.org) or call her at 239-472-1100 ext. 4.

Tickets to the gala will go on sale the end of October. Space is limited to 70 cars, but there is no limit as to how many people can occupy each vehicle. To learn more about the Refuge 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration & Gala and buying tickets, visit [ding75.org](http://ding75.org).

The following sponsors have already offered their generosity in support of the refuge: **Champion Sponsors:** Wayne & Linda Boyd; **Guardian Sponsor:** Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille; **Protector Sponsor:** Mitchell's Sand Castles Resort, Rotary Club of Sanibel-Captiva. **Defender Sponsor:** Sanibel Moorings Resort.

#### 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).

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