



# Protect. Educate. Inspire.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Chelle Koster Walton  
239-699-4754

[ChelleTrav@aol.com](mailto:ChelleTrav@aol.com)

Caption: Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) tours, guided hikes, and other family activities will introduce the greater community to the refuge on "Ding" Darling Day, Oct. 10.

### **Add photo contest and free WD admission**

### **Refuge takes 'Ding' Darling Day on the road**

To further its mission to reach and connect with underserved urban communities, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge migrates its 33rd annual "Ding" Darling Day celebration to Lakes Park in Fort Myers on Sunday, Oct. 10, 2021.

The refuge and "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) have been keeping in sync with the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, a national refuge system-wide initiative to encourage community connection.

The Wildlife on Wheels (WoW) project was the first big step that refuge educators took toward spreading the word about conservation beyond refuge borders. Since December 2020, the mobile classroom has reached 5,620 students at local schools, 60 students at Spring Break Camp at the Fort Myers YMCA, and 625 visitors while parked at the refuge. It continued its outreach this summer at three weeklong WoW day camps, where more than 300 kids visited the classroom to learn about wildlife, habitat, and the refuge.

WoW will be at the center of the free "Ding" Darling Day @ Lakes Park. Besides tours of the classroom, the refuge and DDWS have planned a full day of activities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Special outdoor

programs include games, nature crafts, guided walks and educational interactions with other local conservation organizations.

“We look forward to reinventing ‘Ding’ Darling Day to make that connection actually out IN the community,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, who chairs the event’s committee. “We’re still ironing out details, but expect fun and enrichment for the entire family. Watch [dingdarlingdays.com](http://dingdarlingdays.com) for details as they unfold.”

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS), and Tarpon Bay Explorers cosponsor “Ding” Darling Day with generous support from the local community and businesses.

DDWS seeks sponsors for the event, which will be highly publicized throughout the Southwest Florida area. Contact April Boehnen at [april@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:april@dingdarlingsociety.org) or 239-472-1100 ext. 4 for more information.

Sponsors to date include: **Great Egret:** Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille; **Great Blue Heron:** John R. Wood Properties, Island Sun; **Reddish Egret:** Mitchell’s SandCastles; **Snowy Egret:** Florida SouthWestern State College Foundation, Jensen's Twin Palm Cottages & Marina Resort, Sanibel Moorings Resort, Southern Snoballs.

#### 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).

###