



# Protect. Educate. Inspire.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Trail sign?

### **DDWS to celebrate Wellness Week: Mind, Body, Heart in February**

As part of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration this year and to connect individuals with the natural world, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) has announced Wellness Week: Mind, Body, Heart Feb. 7-12 in partnership with the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, which it supports, and Tarpon Bay Explorers, the refuge recreation concession.

Highlights of the week will include a ribbon cutting for the new self-guided Mindfulness Trail at the Bailey Tract with the Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce, a ranger-led bike tour of Wildlife Drive, sunrise yoga at the beach, guest expert speakers on healing through nature, TK something TBE is doing, and guided mindfulness walks.

“Wellness Week makes that connection between physical and mental health and the healing properties of being out in the natural world, especially coming off the stressful holiday season and entering into our resolutions for a more centered new year,” said Jessica Barry, DDWS development and outreach assistant and project leader. “We are excited to debut our Mindfulness Trail, which has been something so close to my heart since I joined the refuge staff as an intern in 2020.”

“We are grateful for Jess and others for encouraging us to enhance the work at the Refuge in the area of true mindfulness in nature,” said supervisory refuge ranger Toni Westland. “It has resulted in this wonderful Bailey Tract trail with QR codes and podcasts so hikers can self-guide their mindful journey. We also welcome three visiting certified forest therapy guides who will be leading hikes and presentations that week.”

Guest presenters include Dr. Joseph Blanda, a recently retired orthopedic surgeon who now helps people with well-being and mindfulness; Cristina Shaul, who leads guided meditation and mindfulness walks; and Kim Sowinski, who teaches ayurveda-inspired nature yoga in Cleveland, Ohio.

Watch for a calendar of free activities you can pre-register for through the refuge’s Eventbrite page. Event participation is limited to 10 individuals. To keep abreast, visit [dingwellness.com](http://dingwellness.com) or email Barry [jess@dingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:jess@dingdarlingsociety.org).

#### 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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