



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

Caption: Local environmental organizations will host carnival games, such as Octopus Bean Bag Toss, and participants can win prizes during “Ding” Darling Day.

Caption for WILDLIFEOLYMPICS: Make like an osprey and grab fish with a talon-like tool.

Games, tours part of ‘Ding’ Darling Day’s Conservation Carnival at Lakes Park

The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge celebrates its 33rd annual “Ding” Darling Day jointly with Earth Day at Lakes Park in Fort Myers on Sunday, April 24. The refuge and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) have planned a full day of Conservation Carnival and nature activities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

More than 20 local conservation non-profits will be participating to engage visitors with information and carnival games where they can earn prizes. Games include Tarpon Bay Explorers’ Dolphin Toss, Lee County School District’s Shark Feeding, and SCCF’s Coconut Bowling. Gamers can earn a free treat from Southern SnoBalls, plus other gifts and prizes. The refuge hosts a Dunk Tank, where festival-goers can try their luck at sinking surprise “celebrity dunkees.” All activities are free, but Lakes Park charges a \$1 per hour, \$5 per day parking fee.

“The games will all have an educational component, plus the day brings a number of tours and nature art activities,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland, who chairs the event’s committee. “We will have our WoW Wildlife on Wheels mobile nature experience open all day to touring, plus there will be

Earth Day crafts and lots of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, such a bilingual birding walks, biking, and not just one, but two ‘Ding’ artists-in-residence on hand.”

Past artist-in-residence Rachel Pierce will lead a nature journal walk and do painting demonstrations. Upcoming artist-in-residence Jacqui Roch also will be painting plein-air. A schedule of the day’s activities follows below. Attendees can shop for unique nature-themed items at the Refuge Nature Store table, where all purchases support conservation. For more information about the event, visit dingdarlingday.com.

Note: The “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center on Sanibel Island will be closed all day April 24, but Wildlife Drive, Tarpon Bay Explorers, and Bailey Tract will remain open.

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

Sponsors include: **Great Egret:** Doc Ford's Rum Bar & Grille; **Great Blue Heron:** Gretchen Banks, Island Sun/River Weekly, John R. Wood Properties; **Reddish Egret:** Bank of the Islands, Media Source, Mike & Terry Baldwin, Mitchell's SandCastles; **Snowy Egret:** 50% Of Framing, Florida SouthWestern State College Foundation, Florida Weekly, John & Anette Gritti, Jensen's Marina & Cottages, Kearns Restaurant Group, Lee County Parks & Recreation, McCallion & McCallion Realty, Parker Waichman LLP, Sanibel Moorings Resort, Southern SnoBalls, Stewart & Sons Insurance LLC, Tarpon Bay Explorers, West Wind Inn.

SCHEDULE OF FREE ACTIVITIES

(schedule subject to change)

10 a.m. “Ding” Darling Day opens at Lakes Park. Check in at Welcome Table in Main Pavilion for free goodie bags (one per family while supplies last) and information.

10 a.m. Ranger-led Urban Birding for Beginners: 30 minutes, 20-guest maximum

10 a.m. Caminata de Avistamiento de Aves: 30 minutos, 20 personas maximo

10 a.m. Bring-Your-Own-Bike Tour (or rent from Lakes Park): 1-mile loop, 1 hour, 10-guest maximum



Protect. Educate. Inspire.

"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

11 a.m. Mindfulness Walk: 30 minutes, 10-guest maximum

11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Free Southern SnoBalls: Main Pavilion, compliments of DDWS with proof of "Ding"
Day participation (while supplies last)

12 p.m. Ranger-led Urban Birding Walk: 30 minutes, 20-guest maximum

12 p.m. Caminata de Avistamiento de Animales de Urbanos: 30 minutos, 20 personas maximo

1 p.m. Nature Journaling with Artist-in-Residence Rachel Pierce: 1 hour, 15-guest maximum

FREE ONGOING ACTIVITIES 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) mobile interactive experience touring

Dunk Tank in the Main Pavilion, see schedule of “celebrity dunkees” at tank and Welcome Table

Wildlife Olympics, Main Pavilion

Face painting, Main Pavilion

Conservation Carnival Games hosted by partnering exhibitors in tents around Pavilion

Earth Day Crafts at WoW and in Main Pavilion

Selfie Station near Main Pavilion

Plein-air Artist-in-Residence Demos, adjacent to the lake

Prizes upon check-out at Welcome Table

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.

###