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"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society - Friends of the Refuge

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Caption: Participate in a virtual discussion about nature's healing with Dr. Joe Blanda.

DDWS Wellness Week kicks off next week

As part of its 40th anniversary celebration this year and to connect individuals with the natural world, the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) presents Wellness Week: Mind. Body. Heart. Feb. 7-12. In partnership with the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, Tarpon Bay Explorers, and the Sanibel Rec Center's Heart Healthy Month, Wellness Week kicks off with a ribbon cutting for the new self-guided Mindfulness Trail at the Bailey Tract with the Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce.

Other highlights include Refuge Bootcamp, ranger-led tours, sunrise yoga at the beach, guest expert speakers on healing through nature, discounts on paddling tours, and guided mindfulness walks. See the calendar of activities below. For everyone's safety, participation is limited for many of the activities; pre-register for free at DingDarling.Eventbrite.com.

"Wellness Week makes that connection between physical and mental health and the healing properties of being out in the natural world," said Jessica Barry, DDWS development and outreach assistant and project co-leader. "We are excited to debut our Mindfulness Trail, which has evolved from an activity the

refuge began in 2020 in response to the impact the pandemic was having on people's mental state and on refuge programming."

"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, who also leads the project. "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 two visiting and one resident nature 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 wellbeing and mindfulness; Cristina Shaul, who leads guided meditation and mindfulness walks; and Kim Sowinski, who teaches ayurveda-inspired nature yoga in Cleveland, Ohio. Tarpon Bay Explorers will be offering a 10 percent discount on kayak and paddleboarding tours to anyone who mentions Wellness Week.

Visit dingwellness.com for information and to learn how to pre-register for all activities.

WELLNESS WEEK ACTIVITIES

DAILY FEB. 7-12

8 a.m.-5 p.m. 10 percent off kayak and paddleboard tours at Tarpon Bay Explorers. Mention Wellness Week when reserving (required) at 239-472-8900.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7

9-10 a.m. Guided Mindfulness Hike at Bailey Tract

12:30-2:30 p.m. Mindfulness Trail Ribbon Cutting with Chamber of Commerce and Pop-up Stations

4 p.m. Virtual Guided Mindfulness Meditation

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8

7-8 a.m. Sunrise Yoga on the Beach at Perry Tract

8:30-9:30 a.m. Guided Mindfulness Hike at Bailey Tract

9-10 a.m. Sunrise Yoga on the Beach at Perry Tract

10-11 a.m. Mindful Nature Journaling on Indigo Trail



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11-11:45 a.m. Refuge Bootcamp

12-12:45 p.m. Refuge Bootcamp

3-4 p.m. Hike Indigo Trail with Ranger Toni

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

8:30-9:30 a.m. Guided Mindfulness Hike at Bailey Tract

10-11:30 a.m. Ranger-led Bike the Refuge

11-11:45 a.m. Refuge Bootcamp

12-12:45 p.m. Refuge Bootcamp

2-2:45 p.m. Refuge Bootcamp

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10

8-9 a.m. Morning Yoga at the Refuge

10-11 a.m. Morning Yoga at the Refuge

7 p.m. Virtual "Nature Can Heal" Q&A with Dr. Blanda

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11

8:30-9:30 a.m. Guided Mindfulness Meditation at the Wildlife Education Boardwalk

10-11 a.m. Ornithery Lecture by author Holly Merker at The Community House

4-5 p.m. Guided Mindfulness Hike at Bailey Tract

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12

8:30-9:30 a.m. Walking Meditation, Earthing, and Grounding 101 at Bailey Tract

11 a.m.-12 p.m. Paint a Planter with Resident Artist Rachel Pierce

1-2 p.m. Paint a Planter with Resident Artist Rachel Pierce

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.

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