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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Caption: Own a rare mangrove cuckoo sculpted by legendary wildlife sculptor Jim Sprankle.

Go Bully auction features Sprankle works, visit from ‘Teddy Roosevelt’

In the wake of Hurricane Ian, “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society-Friends of the Refuge (DDWS) has evolved its annual Go Wild for “Ding” annual fundraiser to Go Bully for “Ding” – An Evening with Teddy Roosevelt, riffing off one of the popular president’s favorite expressions. The sold-out event takes place on March 6.

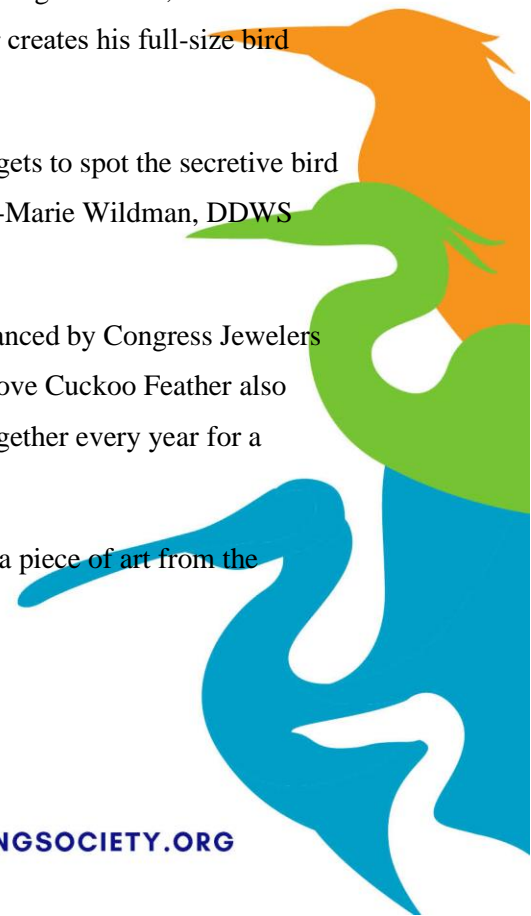
Although tickets are no longer available, anyone can bid on unique live auction items while helping the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge recover from severe hurricane damage to facilities and wildlife habitat.

Headlining the auction prizes, a Mangrove Cuckoo sculpture in a display case, carved by renowned bird carver Jim Sprankle, is as rare as the bird it depicts. Much sought-after by birding lifelisters, the mangrove cuckoo is elusive but iconic of “Ding” Darling. Sprankle no longer creates his full-size bird sculptures, which have been valued at up to \$60,000.

“The lucky bidder who takes home the Sprankle Mangrove Cuckoo not only gets to spot the secretive bird every day, but will possess a keepsake highly prized by collectors,” said Ann-Marie Wildman, DDWS associate executive director.

Sprankle has also carved one of his famous Feather Club jewelry pieces, enhanced by Congress Jewelers with 14-carat gold and diamond accents. The successful bidder on the Mangrove Cuckoo Feather also becomes a member of the prestigious Sprankle Feather Club, which flocks together every year for a special event starring the sculptor himself.

Other prizes on the auction block include a Teddy Roosevelt Experience and a piece of art from the Refuge Welcome Archway.





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Reprisor Joe Wiegand has been bringing President Roosevelt to life for more than a decade and has performed in all 50 states and overseas, including a White House performance in honor of Roosevelt's 150th birthday in 2008. He has made numerous appearances at "Ding" Darling, one of his favorite venues, and he will make a day's appearance at your choice of locales, whether it be your grandchild's school or a private gathering at your home.

The original 3D artwork created by North Carolina artist David Williams for the archway on the entrance ramp to the Visitor & Education Center got broken into pieces by Ian. One segment, realistically depicting a raccoon tucked into mangrove leaves, has been rescued to put on the auction block as a one-of-a-kind piece of wildlife art for indoors or out.

Those who are unable to attend the function but would like to bid on the auction items, please contact either April Boehnen at 440-452-9083 or Birgie Miller at 239-292-0566 by 4 p.m. on Friday, March 3.

Sponsors for this year's event include: **Call of the Wild:** Gretchen Banks, Jim & Liz Birmingham, The Bluedorn Family, Jim & Patty Sprinkle; **Champion:** Wayne & Linda Boyd, In Memory of Boomer Duvin, Bill & Laurie Harkey, In Memory of Ron E. Smith; **Guardian:** Doug & Sherry Gentry, Milestone Auctions, William & Barbara Millar, Bill & Heather O'Keefe, Sue & Bob Thoreson; **Protector:** Mike & Terry Baldwin, Kay & John Morse, Tiffani Kaliko & John Silvia; **Defender:** A Friend of the Refuge, Congress Jewelers, The Gresham Family, HighTower Advisors - Fort Myers, Rachel Pierce Art Gallery, Chip & Nancy Roach, Laura & Shawn Shaffer, Hank & Linda Spire, Bob & Kathy Wiesemann, Sanibel Captiva Islander, Gilah Pomeranz.

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 239-292-0566 or director@dingdarlingsociety.org.

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