

inside:

WoW REPORT  
LECTURE SERIES  
UPCOMING EVENTS



DDWS and the Refuge thank all the generous donors who made building The Roost — shown here as an artist rendering — reality.

# Society Pages

October 21-22: ART IN THE WILD

## Celebrating The Roost & the Legacy of 'Ding' Art

**A**RT! It's in the Refuge's genes — spanning back to its 1945 conception at the urging of Pulitzer-winning cartoonist Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling, up to today, with the celebration of The Roost as a new outdoor venue. It will expand our capabilities to educate about conservation and our arts legacy mission.

The inaugural Art in the Wild kicks off with a 9:15 a.m. ribbon-cutting for The Roost — a 2,590-square-foot, earth-friendly pavilion that will serve as an outdoor classroom for visiting school and other groups. DDWS also foresees creative new uses that reflect the Refuge's arts legacy and experiential mission, including music and artist events, puppet

shows, lectures, mindfulness classes, and culture-driven programs. The artful programming begins with Art in the Wild, the weekend of October 21-22.

The two days bring five duck stamp celebrities presenting and signing; nine accomplished artists demonstrating their skills; eight others leading workshops and hands-on art stations; and an estimated 20-plus plein-air artists creating. They celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week and "Ding" Darling's 146th birthday.

The famous Hautman brothers, multiple Federal Duck Stamp Contest winners, will make personal appearances that day. A

*continued on page 2*

FALL/WINTER 2023

### JOURNEY TO RECOVERY, PART 2

In our last issue sent out in May, we looked back at how far the Refuge has progressed since Hurricane Ian knocked it back in September 2022. Since it officially reopened on April 4, "Ding" Darling has continued to demonstrate its resilience and determination.

"We took our cues from the wildlife," said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. "We had a banner year for baby birds, despite ravaged nesting habitat. Every day we see more reasons to celebrate and hope."

*continued on page 2*







Jim, Bob, and Joe Hautman will guest star.

## ART IN THE WILD

continued from page 1

special exhibition of their nature art also will be on display in the “Ding” Darling Visitor & Education Center Auditorium during the month.

Joe Hautman won the 2023-2024 contest and will be signing his winning stamp depicting three Tundra Swans. Brothers Jim and Bob will also appear, along with 2023-2024 Junior Duck Stamp (JDS) winner Mila Linyue Tong from Virginia and Florida’s JDS best-of-show placer Jenny Liu from Port Orange.

Artist Rachel Pierce will conduct a workshop “Paint on a Queen Palm Pod,” and former Junior Duck Stamp winner John Brennan will teach hands-on how to paint a duck. Refuge Artist-in-Residence Jacqui Roch will lead a Community Mural project in the afternoon.

Noted artists will demonstrate their skills from noon to 4 p.m. on Oct. 21. They include world-renowned bird sculptor Jim Sprankle, pottery artist and educator Tim Smith, and Andrew Corke, who sculpted — using recycled bike tires — the Refuge’s iconic manatees at its Best Restroom exhibit.

Other hands-on art activities include painting wine glasses, a nature journal hike, seashell painting, creating recycled jewelry, and decorating tea towels. Some activities limit participation. Visit [DingDarling.Eventbrite.com](http://DingDarling.Eventbrite.com) to pre-register free-of-charge.

The Roost will host live music, a “Ding” Darling reenactor presentation, a nature puppet show, and a yoga class during the weekend.

On Sunday, October 22, the Refuge expects more than 20 regional plein-air artists to participate in its first-ever Paint Out. Visitors can watch the painters along Wildlife



Drive and at Bailey Tract and can later place their vote for People’s Choice Award. Admission to Wildlife Drive is free both days. Visit [dingartinthewild.com](http://dingartinthewild.com) for a full schedule of activities and programs.

“This will become an annual fall tradition to celebrate ‘Ding’ Darling’s art legacy and role in creating the first duck stamp and Federal Duck Stamp Program, which has continued for nearly 90 years and preserved six million acres of sensitive wetlands and wildlife habitat,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “The two days offer something for everyone, all free of charge indoors and outdoors.”

Thanks to current sponsors for their support: **Roseate Spoonbill:** Wayne & Linda Boyd; **Great Egret:** Gretchen Banks, Friend of “Ding” Darling; **Great Blue Heron:** Margie Furniss; **Reddish Egret:** LCEC, Bob & Nancy Adams, Bella Signs & Designs, Tim & Louise Huyck, LCEC, Tom Mulligan & Deborah Kennedy, WooBamboo; **Snowy Egret:** Palm Printing, Maureen & Gary Saage, She Sells Sea Shells, Brian & Susan White.



Free Wildlife Drive admission and plein-air artist Paint Out are highlights.

## JOURNEY

continued from page 1

Habitat clean-up and restoration and Visitor & Education Center restoration continue with DDWS support. A big thank you to those who have and continue to support these efforts. Intern housing to replace what Hurricane Ian destroyed remains a top need. Since the storm, DDWS has been supporting housing rentals until the Refuge is able to build new accommodations.



New signage has refreshed the Refuge look and appeal.

## ABOUT THE SOCIETY

“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, the non-profit Friends of the Refuge organization, supports the J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge Complex through the generation of independent funds to undertake student education, internships, research projects, informational literature, advocacy, land acquisition, and facility enhancements. Efforts may extend beyond the Complex’s borders and involve partnerships with like-minded conservation organizations.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Art in the Wild on October 21 and 22 kicks off our event season at “Ding” Darling for 2023-24. We have an exciting lineup of programs, festivities, and special appearances in store for you. See the entire calendar below and read about some of the highlights.

## FREE WINTER PROGRAMS

Between January 8 and March 30, 2024, Refuge rangers and volunteers will be offering free tours and activities weekly. All programs and tours — such as Birding the Refuge and Biking the Refuge — will be listed at [DingDarling.Eventbrite.com](http://DingDarling.Eventbrite.com) to pre-register for free.

## REFUGE WELCOMES KINGSOLVER & HIAASEN

DDWS has engaged two Distinguished Authors to speak in January and February to benefit the Refuge this season. Mark your calendars for two blockbusters at The Community House on Sanibel Island, both starting at 10 a.m. Tickets for each of the two lectures are \$25 and will go on sale via Eventbrite — just in time for holiday gift-giving.



Barbara Kingsolver, a novelist and biologist best-known for her timeless, conservation-minded *Prodigal Summer* and classic *Poisonwood Bible*, will speak on Thursday, January 11. Tickets go on sale November 30.

Carl Hiaasen, a former *Miami Herald* columnist who turns Florida’s political system into bestselling crime novels like *Squeeze Me*, *Tourist Season*, and *Hoot*, talks corruption, scandal, and how to turn it into humor and fiction on Thursday, February 29. Tickets go on sale December 7.

continued on page 4



An observation tower moment on a Birding the Refuge tour.

**JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL FUN AND FESTIVE HOLIDAY SHOPPING NIGHT**  
**NOVEMBER 29TH, 4-6PM**  
**AT OUR REFUGE NATURE STORE**

**Now Available**  
 Artist Luc Century captures our spirit of resilience in his annual holiday ornament for 2024.

**FREE FOOD, DRINKS, GIVEAWAYS, AND SPECIAL DISCOUNTS. FUN FOR ALL!**

**ShopDingDarling.com • 239-472-1100 ext 241**

This beautiful etched glass ornament was created in a limited edition of only 200 pieces and is hand signed. Call today to reserve yours.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**GO WILD OFF "DING" INTO THE NIGHT**

**FEBRUARY 7, 2024**

**5:00 - 8:00 P.M.**  
**J.N. "DING" DARLING NWR RESERVATIONS REQUIRED**

**RESERVATIONS AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 9**

**\$150 PER PERSON**

**DINNER • ENTERTAINMENT • AUCTION**

**MORE INFORMATION AT [GOWILDFORDING.COM](http://GOWILDFORDING.COM)**

Interested in becoming a sponsor?  
 Email April Boehnen at [aprilbedingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:aprilbedingdarlingsociety.org).

**GO WILD OFF "DING" INTO THE NIGHT**



## UPCOMING EVENTS

continued from page 3

## 2024 LECTURE SERIES

Eagles, other birds, wildlife hurricane survival, electronic screens, toxic waste, and trash. What do they all have in common? They are topics of six speakers who fill the free "Ding" Darling Lecture Series this season.



Author, TV producer, and avid birder since age 7, James Currie will speak about his book When Eagles Roar.

- January 18:** Dr. Sabine Grunwald, "Unplug to Reconnect: How Less Time on Screens Makes You a Happier Person"
- January 25:** Author/artist Richard Crossley, "The Power of Birding"
- February 1:** Author James Currie, When Eagles Roar
- March 7:** Author/environmentalist Diane Wilson, "One Woman's Fight to Save Our Waters from Microplastic Pollution"
- March 14:** Author/Sanibel islander Charles Sobczak, "Surviving the Storms- Hurricanes, Humans and Wildlife"
- \*March 21:** Recycling expert Stephanie Kissinger, "Talking Trash: Post-Hurricane Clean-Up and Recycling"
- NOTE: Book signings will follow all lectures except those marked with an asterisk (\*).



This year's top Refuge fundraiser delves into the "after-hours" world of our Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night Herons. We have seen the night herons come back strongly at the Refuge and throughout the islands following Hurricane Ian, with lots of new chicks offering hope for the future. Let's go "into the night" to celebrate them.

Save the night of Wednesday, February 7, for this annual dinner and auction event at the Refuge with live entertainment. Watch your email box for news when tickets become available, because the event sells out quickly. For information on the fundraiser, visit [gowild-fording.com](http://gowild-fording.com). To sponsor this year's Go Wild, contact April Boehnen at [AprilBoedingdarlingsociety.org](mailto:AprilBoedingdarlingsociety.org).

## SOUNDS OF THE SAND



Sounds of the Sand returns for a second year to Bell Tower shopping center in Fort Myers March 23 and 24. This year's live music program will have a jazz and blues theme. Bring the whole family for kid's activities, Hoverball Archery, axe-throwing, and vendor tables. All profits benefit conservation, education, and research at the Refuge.

## Save the Date for "Ding" Darling Day Conservation Carnival

On April 20, 2024, Conservation Carnival returns to Lakes Park to celebrate "Ding" Darling Day and strengthen our outreach connection with the community. The third annual Lakes Park event also honors Earth Day. Highlights of last year's event included Hoverball Archery, Celebrity Dunk Tank, birding, face-painting, and free ice cream.

## WELLNESS IN NATURE @ "DING"

This year's Refuge nature wellness event kicks off January 18, 2024, with keynote speaker Dr. Sabine Grunwald, a professor in the Soil and Water Science Department at the University of Florida in Gainesville. She will speak on the topic "Unplug to Reconnect: How Less Time on Screens Makes You a Happier Person." Other highlights at the Refuge and around the greater community through January 21 will include a Wellness Fest at the Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) Food Forest, a Mindful Bird Photography Workshop at Bailey Tract, and Restorative Yoga at The Roost. Learn more at [dingwellness.com](http://dingwellness.com).

**Did You Know?** In a spiritual sense, people often equate heron sightings with stillness, abundance, opportunities, and harmony.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron by Rebecca Clemens



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 10-29, 2023 - Federal Duck Stamp Exhibition  
October 21-22, 2023 - Art in the Wild  
November 29, 2023 - Holiday Shopping Night  
December 6, 2023 - DDWS Annual Meeting  
December 13, 2023 - Ice Cream Social  
December 21, 2023-February 25, 2024 - Niki Butcher Exhibition  
January 8-March 21, 2024 - Free Winter Programs  
January 11, 2024 - Barbara Kingsolver Lecture  
January 18-March 21, 2024 - "Ding" Darling Lecture Series

January 18-21, 2024 - Wellness in Nature @ "Ding"  
January 30, 2024 - Event Planning Seminar  
February 7, 2024 - Go Wild for "Ding" - Into the Night  
February 29, 2024 - Carl Hiaasen Lecture  
March 23-24, 2024 - Sounds of the Sand  
April 8, 2024 - Solar Eclipse Viewing  
April 20, 2024 - "Ding" Darling Day Conservation Carnival  
May 10, 2024 - "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament

## CONGRATS TO THE 2023 "DING" DARLING & DOC FORD'S TARPON TOURNAMENT WINNERS



**Left (from left):** Chris Magnano, Jessica Potts, Captain Kyle Potts, Josh Constantine, Mike Price



**Left (from left):** Joe Harrity, April Boehnen (DDWS). Team members pictured: Captain Chris Argiro, Jackson Beverly, Brock Horner, Kyle Tidey



**Left (from left):** April Boehnen (DDWS), Shane Earhart, Steve Maillakakis, Captain Cory McGuire, Robbie Porterfield, Toni Westland (USFWS)



**Left (from left):** Team members pictured: Captain Kyle Petrick, Dennis Bunck, Travis Bunck, Nic Hill, Kyle Mills, Stephen Powers



**Left (from left):** Joe Harrity, April Boehnen (DDWS), Phil Pica, Captain Jason Moore, Toni Westland (USFWS).

**AMATEUR TEAM WINNER:** EZ LIVIN' - CAPTAIN PRESTON TOWLE, CARSON TOWLE, TREVOR ZAMNIAK, JACK SWEDBERG

**FEMALE ANGLER:** KRISTIN ALEY, K2TB

**SENIOR ANGLER:** GARY BILTGEN, CHASIN' POON

## THANK YOU TO THE 2023 "DING" DARLING & DOC FORD'S TARPON TOURNAMENT SPONSORS

OVER **\$165,000** RAISED FOR THE J.N. "DING" DARLING NWR IN THE 2023 TOURNEY



### TITLE SPONSOR



### CHAMPION SPONSORS



### PREMIERE SPONSORS



### PRESENTING SPONSORS



### PLATINUM SPONSORS



### GOLD SPONSORS



### SILVER SPONSORS





# MEMORIAL AND HONOR GIFTS

Memorial gifts and gifts made in honor of special occasions are a wonderful way to pay tribute to family and friends who are important to us. Throughout the year, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society has received gifts in memory and in honor of loved ones. Thank you to everyone who supported the Refuge in this thoughtful and meaningful way.:



## MEMORIALS

Mary Helen Allen  
Catherine F. Andrews  
Shirley Appleton  
Fred “Trae” Ballou  
Dr. Christina Barkley  
Mary Behar  
Mickey Bowers  
Roger Brandle  
Brad Brueckmann  
Dr. Howard E. Buhse, Jr.  
Samuel Bumgarner

Marsha Camitta  
Anita Cohen  
Rosalie Courter  
Stacey Crane  
Raymond A. Fisco  
Betty Fisher  
Dr. Elizabeth “Betty” Gazda-Smith  
Martyne Henderson  
Sylvia Serra Horvath  
Mike Howard  
Shelley J. Hudson  
June Ingraham  
Mary Jo Khuri  
Ben Klaus

James E. Kowalski  
Bonnie Kuhrt  
Rev. Shelby Larsen  
Dr. Joseph S. Lechowicz  
Joan Eakins Leffel  
Soline Leon  
Daniel J. Lidisky  
Kenneth L. Lloyd  
Lennart Lorensen  
Laura Ludington  
Margaret Ann Miller  
Paul Mumm  
Carl W. Ordemann  
Martin Packard

Andy Plankenhorn  
Evelyn Pomeranz  
Norm & Marge Poole  
Rev. Richard D. Rintala  
Hamilton Robichaud  
Edith Rood  
Nigel Russell  
Bud Ryckman  
Mary Lou Spencer  
Jack & Pat Stegmeier  
Tom Stohl  
Carol Strange  
Dorothy J. Swain  
Carol B. Watkins



**INCLUDE**  
*Ding*  
**IN YOUR WILL OR ESTATE**

**PROTECT THE FUTURE... NOW.**

Ensuring wildlife has a place to thrive in the future is as easy as naming “Ding” Darling in your will, or designating it as a beneficiary to your retirement plan, IRA, or other financial account.

**AN EASY WAY TO GIVE...**

- There is no minimum amount for the gift.
- You can change your plans at any time.
- Help protect “Ding” Darling and its wildlife and inspire future generations to do the same.



*Endangered Mangrove Cuckoo*

**HOW TO WORD IT:**  
I give, devise, and bequeath to The “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, Inc., a Florida non-profit corporation located on Sanibel Island, Florida [written amount or percentage of the estate or description of property] for [designate the purpose, if desired, or leave blank for gifts to be used to address the greatest need].



**WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU**

dingdarlingsociety.org /articles/include-ding-in-your-will

239-292-0566

Photo credits: Al Hoffacker, Janet Aaron Kirk

## HONORARIUMS

Bob Adams  
John Bailey  
Brian & Colleen Bauer  
The People on Sanibel Island & Fort Myers Beach  
Joan Buhse Bose  
Laurie & Bill Harkey  
Mark Heiman  
Kelsey Hendrix  
Amanda Hockensmith  
Diana Iglesias  
Joel & Wandrea Lauchner  
Cindy Lord  
M. David Lowe  
Melissa Maher  
Diane J. McMillen  
Birgie Miller  
Outrigger Beach Resort  
Kathy Rubin  
Cari Rudd  
Allan Sacks  
Bonnie Simms  
Ellie Threlkel  
Cheryl & Barry Tice

# YEAR-END GIVING

HELP WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION WITH A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE YEAR-END DONATION

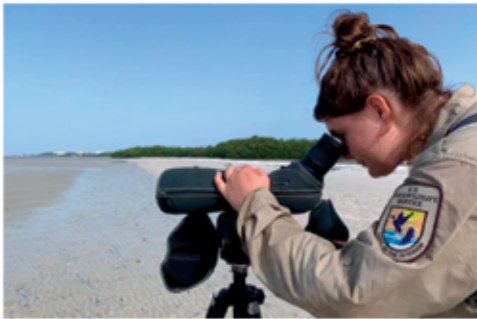


'Tis the season of giving: Gifts, family time, parties and celebrations, and donations to non-profit charities. Nationwide, more than 40% of all individual charitable donations are made in December by people wanting to make a difference. It is also an opportunity, through giving, to generate income tax deductions that may help reduce your tax bill for 2023.

**Now's the time - up to December 31 - to make a deductible gift.**

As 2023 draws to a close, please consider the value of donating to the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society to support the conservation and education efforts at the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Your tax-deductible gift helps support the Refuge in areas such as conservation education, water quality and wildlife research, internships, walkways and trails, interpretive exhibits, land acquisition and restoration, and so many other ways to preserve and protect this vital land and inspire future conservation stewards. With so many wonderful charities around the world doing work that makes a difference, please know how much we appreciate that you choose to support the work taking place here at the Refuge.

**Your gift, regardless of its size, will make a difference.**



## Ways to support conservation through the Society:

### Online with a Credit Card

On our website ([dingdarlingsociety.org](http://dingdarlingsociety.org)), it's easy to make a secure, online, year-end gift to the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. Options include Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover. Tax-deductible gifts for 2023 can be made any time before 11:59 p.m. (Central Standard) on December 31, 2023.

### Checks

Those wishing to receive year-end tax credit need to have a postmark and check date on or before December 31, 2023. Gifts can be made out to the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society and mailed to: “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, PO Box 565, Sanibel, FL 33957.

### Gifts of Appreciated Stock

Donated appreciated stock (if owned for more than one year) may help you gain a deduction on the fair market value and avoid capital gains tax that might be due if sold outright. Stock transfers should be initiated and received on or before the close of the market on December 31, 2023. To ensure appropriate credit, it is important that you contact the DDWS office when you are ready to make your stock transfer gift by calling 239-292-0566.

### IRA Charitable Rollovers

Congress permanently extended the Qualified Charitable Distribution provision which allows people over age 72 (70 ½ if you reached that age before January 1, 2023) to transfer money from IRA assets to qualified charitable organizations and have it satisfy your required minimum distribution without increasing your gross income.

If you are age 72 or older, you can request your financial advisor to make a direct transfer from your IRA to a charity in any amount up to \$100,000 without reporting it as taxable income. Contact your advisor to write a check to the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society and deliver to the address below. For a year-end tax deduction, envelopes must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2023.

With any charitable gift, we encourage you to check with your professional advisors to determine which type of giving makes sense for you.

**“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, Inc.**  
**Tax Identification #59-2240895**  
**Attn: Birgie Miller**  
**PO Box 565, Sanibel, FL 33957**





# "DING" DARLING 2023-2024 WISHLIST

HELP WILDLIFE, CONSERVATION, AND EDUCATION BY DONATING  
TOWARDS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

Membership donations and annual gifts are essential for the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society to continue its support of conservation and education efforts at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Below are just a few unique giving opportunities to enhance the impact of support at the Refuge. To see the scope of the Society's impact and for more ideas and opportunities for giving, please contact Birgie Miller Gresham at 239-292-0566 or visit [dingdarlingsociety.org](http://dingdarlingsociety.org).

All gifts are tax deductible.



## Honor or Memorial Gift: Any Amount

A gift in honor or memory of a loved one to the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society is a wonderful way to pay tribute to those special in your life. Send a general gift or designate it to a specific need. Gifts of all levels are appreciated, and the honoree will be notified (without the amount) of your thoughtfulness. For a gift of \$5,000 or more the honoree can be listed on our donor wall. For gifts of \$10,000 or more, a permanently endowed fund can be established to honor your loved one into perpetuity.



## Micro-Mania Supplies for our WoW (Wildlife on Wheels): \$320 per microscope and \$190 per set of slides (10 microscopes needed & 10 sets of slides needed)

WoW mobile classroom visits schools and communities to bring the Refuge off-island to areas with little access to the Refuge. WoW focuses on the State of Florida education standards, working with the teachers to meet lesson plans as beneficial as possible and teaching conservation. The WoW team created a new curriculum which uses microscopes and microscope slides. These moments with WoW may be what inspires students to become the next generation of conservation stewards, teachers, rangers, doctors, lawyers... all loving and caring for our natural world.



## Support Housing Costs for Six "Ding" Darling Interns: \$825 for 1 intern/month or \$4,955 for 6 interns/month

To offset shortages in federal budgets and Refuge staffing, the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society supports six to ten interns each year. The internship program provides students and recent college graduates an opportunity to learn hands-on about the environment and Refuge operations, creating young conservation stewards of the future. Interns are hired in the departments of Education, Visitor Services, Development & Communications, Wildlife on Wheels, and, at times, Biology. Unfortunately, the onsite intern housing was lost during Hurricane Ian, however, DDWS secured offsite housing to continue the program and support to the limited Refuge staff. Support housing for an intern or all six interns per month.



## Enhance a Pocket Refuge at a Local School: \$5,000 per Pocket Refuge

Getting students' hands dirty while planting native plants to attract pollinators is all part of the work of the "Pocket Refuges." The students work with the teachers, "Ding" Darling team, and others in creating a sense of "ownership" in these little refuges where they help do the work. Your support will go to enhance Pocket Refuges with items such as benches, soil, plants, bird houses, tables to hold classes outside, water sources, and other supplies that help Pocket Refuges make even more of an impact for the students.



## "Ding" Darling Annual Lecture Sponsorship: \$5,000 each (can be split between five individuals)

The "Ding" Darling Lecture Series continues with an impressive lineup for the 2024 season. Big names such as Richard Crossley and James Currie star in this year's series. Show your support for the Refuge by helping us provide this free educational experience for all. Lecture sponsorships can range from a \$1,000 partial lecture sponsorship to a full lecture sponsorship of \$5,000.



## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

DDWS Board of Directors recently voted to elect two island residents into its fold: Robin L. Cook and William "Bill" W. Millar. They will serve three-year terms on the Board, supporting the Refuge conservation mission.

Robin has lived in Lee County for the past 39 years. She met her husband Doug



Robin Cook

38 years ago, when they were both working on Sanibel, and in 2010, they moved to the island. In 2022, Robin joined Suncoast Equity Management (SEM) on Sanibel following a long career in the financial services arena, specializing in comprehensive wealth management services for high-net-worth individuals, families, foundations, and nonprofits. Prior to joining SEM, she served eight years as Executive Vice President of Wealth Services at The Sanibel Captiva Trust Company.

Bill gained an early appreciation for clean water and the wildlife dependent upon it while growing up on the Lake Erie shore in

Ohio. He earned a master's degree at the University of Iowa in urban and regional planning, specializing in urban transportation policy analysis. His 40-year career in the transportation field included developing and managing public transportation programs and systems.

In 2011, Bill retired after serving 15 years as the president and CEO of the American Public Transportation Association in Washington, D.C. — the principal trade organization for the public transit systems and private sector companies in the field.

Bill, his wife Barbara, and their family first visited Sanibel and Captiva islands in 1997, where they immediately discovered "Ding" Darling. The Refuge, with its wide variety of birds and natural beauty, played an important role in choosing Sanibel as their retirement home. After several years renting a home, the Millars purchased one in 2017. They reside there most of the year, spending summers in Sewickley, Pennsylvania.



Bill Millar

## WOW! WHAT A SCHOOL YEAR



While Hurricane Ian closed down the Refuge for six months to school visits, WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) mobile classroom made up for the loss of onsite education by breaking all records for community outreach during the 2022-2023 school year and summer.

Once WoW got back on the road shortly after the storm, it reached 7,625 students at 11 Title-I schools and 1,100 visitors at six different special events throughout the community. It continued reaching underserved communities — another 570 students — with a summer camp program themed Micro-Mania, partially funded by DDWS' Dr. David A. Drachman Education Fund. That brought the year's total to 9,295 people who experienced the Refuge through the exhibits and dedicated educators of WoW.

Already, the WoW team has geared up for the 2023-2024 school year with updated curriculum and scheduled visits. September 26 through 29, it participated in Goodwill's Pathways to Opportunity adult training program in Tice. The educators have six schools on the calendar starting October 2, and will be adding more schools eager to see the mobile classroom return to their campuses.

## ADVOCACY IN ACTION

## CAPTIVA ISLAND DEVELOPMENT CODE RULING

DDWS worked in partnership with SCCF (Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation) and several other island organizations to block the passage of a Lee County ordinance allowing an increase in building height on Captiva Island. Although the Board of County Commissioners voted on September 6 in favor of the amendment to the Lee County Land Development Code, we remain vigilant on the issue. As it will allow South Seas

Island Resort on Captiva Island to request rezoning for increased density, we stand ready to oppose the request when appropriate. Stay tuned to our "Ding" on the Wing bulletins to learn more and make your voices heard.

We also continue to support water-quality conservation in Southwest Florida. DDWS proudly sponsors the 39th annual Everglades Coalition Conference January 25-27 in Bonita Springs.



## SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

"Ding" Darling Wildlife  
Society Members & Friends:

This is your formal notice of the Annual Business Meeting of the Society scheduled for **Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at 12:30 p.m.,** at the Visitor & Education Center. Please check [dingdarlingsociety.org](http://dingdarlingsociety.org) for updates.





## HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

The “Ding” Darling–Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest invites high school students from five counties to compete for prizes, which this year included a Canon digital SLR camera package, a one-year subscription to Adobe photography software, and a one-year family pass to all Florida state parks.

The late Theodore Cross, the contest’s namesake, lived part-time on Sanibel Island. He marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; advised the Johnson and Nixon administrations on anti-poverty programs; wrote the influential book *Black Capitalism*, among others; and created Birders United, a birding website that ranked legislators according to their record of bird protection support.

Late in life, Cross decided to indulge his love for birds and photography and traveled the world to collect stunning portraits and stories to chronicle his adventures. He photographed often at “Ding” Darling. Cross published *Waterbirds: Portraits and Anecdotes from Birding Adventures* in 2009 at age

85; he passed away shortly after in February 2010. His family supported the annual contest in its ninth year.

Refuge Ranger Yvette Carrasco, Fort Myers News-Press photojournalist Andrew West, and Refuge supporter Nancy Adams judged the contest. They reviewed 321 images taken by students from nine different schools.

First place went to an image titled “Nature’s Bandit” by Chase Qurullo of Cape Coral High. In second place, Jakob Keyes from Cypress Lake High created a closeup floral portrait titled “Purple Rain.” Third place winner “Into the Sun” was submitted by Alessandra Sanchez from Community School of Naples.

Judges and contest coordinators expressed great difficulty in narrowing down the choices. “Amazing work by all,” said award-winning photographer Andrew West. “It was very hard to choose a winner.”

“Theodore Cross’ family made this contest possible, and it has become a solid success story,” said Birgie Miller Gresham, DDWS Executive Director. “We couldn’t be more thrilled



“Purple Rain” by Jakob Keyes took second.

the family wants its donations used this way – to reach an age group that often falls through the cracks of conservation education. Thanks to the ‘Ding’ staff, high school teachers, and judges who made this all happen.”

“We are so happy to be supporting a contest in my father’s name, a contest that will get our youth involved with nature by looking at it – as my father so loved doing – through a camera lens,” said Amanda Cross.

## STAFF NEWS

### New Refuge Hires

Two new, four-year-term staffers have come aboard to help with Refuge maintenance and post-hurricane recovery. **Simon Martinez** has accepted the position of Maintenance Mechanic, and **Scott Norwood** serves as Facilities Operations Specialist.

“We welcome Simon and Scott – with all their knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm – to the Refuge team,” said Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland. “We still have a lot of hurricane recovery work ahead of us, and their contributions are crucial to move forward and keep the Refuge in the best condition possible to support our wildlife.”

### Welcome New Interns

Starting in early September, “Ding” Darling welcomed its seasonal crew of new interns to help with staff crunches through May 2024.

Education Intern **Emily Sommerfeldt** started after graduating in May from Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina, with a bachelor’s degree in environmental science. Originally from Rutherfordton, North Carolina, Emily worked as a trail guide and naturalist at Chimney Rock Park in North Carolina, before heading to the Refuge.

A native of Johnston, Iowa, and graduate from Central Methodist University in Fayette,



Simon Martinez



Scott Norwood

Missouri, in May majoring in marine biology and minoring in environmental science and criminal justice, intern **Ashley McGovern** joined the WoW (Wildlife on Wheels) team on September 7. She last worked one-on-one with Wallace Elementary School students in Johnston as a substitute associate for students with disabilities or in need of special accommodations.

Wow Intern **Frank Tumminello**, from Cape Coral, Florida, graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University with a degree in biology and environmental studies, and previously interned with FGCU’s Wings of Hope program.

Two interns checked in on September 12 to work with “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society on its Refuge support mission. This year’s Harkey Development & Communication Intern **Maisie Peters**, who hails from Madison, Wisconsin, arrived from Washington, D.C., where she spent her second summer as a tour guide for an educational travel group. Maisie

graduated in May from Miami University in Florida with degrees in sociology and speech pathology/audiology. Her permanently endowed, fully funded internship is made possible by the generosity of DDWS Board Vice President Bill Harkey and his wife Laurie.

**Carmen Wolfe**, from Wausau, Wisconsin, recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire with a bachelor’s degree in integrated strategic communications and public relations and a minor in European studies. She has been working as an intern nearby as a webinar hostess and part of a marketing team of HalfMoon Education, a nonprofit continuing education provider.

Sue Tray Memorial Visitor Services Intern **Sarah Riedlin** reported for duty on September 6 to assist Supervisory Refuge Ranger Toni Westland and her team with operating the Visitor & Education Center and programs. Born in Sitka, Alaska, Sarah grew up living in seven different states, and came to the Refuge from an internship with the Bald Head Island Conservancy in North Carolina, after graduating from the University of North Carolina in Wilmington with bachelor degrees in biology and environmental science and a minor in chemistry.

Her permanently endowed, fully funded internship is made possible by the generosity of former, longtime Sanibel Island resident Hal Tray in memory of his wife, who loved the outdoors and Refuge.

## Community Connection Highlights

In addition to WoW’s (Wildlife on Wheels) awesome outreach, Refuge staff has been busy representing “Ding” Darling at events and programs for all ages. Some highlights:

- Refuge Ranger Jessica Barry visits retirement communities with her Mobile Mindfulness programs that include nature-based guided meditation and mindful nature walks.
- Representatives from the Refuge and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society participat-

ed in Islands Night at Hammond Stadium on May 3.

- Urban and Community Connections Ranger Yvette Carrasco represented the Refuge at Fort Myers’ Juneteenth Celebration at Roberto Clemente Park on Saturday, June 17. The event featured live music, games, learning, food, and performances plus an award ceremony recognizing academic excellence of Lee County School District students.

- A partnership started with Fort Myers’ Lakes Park two years ago when the Refuge moved “Ding” Darling Days off-island. It continues to grow and blossom like the park’s gardens. Rangers led hikes and other kids’ programs throughout the summer. On September 15, Ranger Yvette organized a kickoff to Hispanic/Latine Heritage Month with a Family Fun Night at the park, filled with nature and cultural activities.



### WILDLIFE SPOTLIGHT



Despite the devastating effects of Hurricane Ian on Refuge habitat, bird nesting was robust this season along Wildlife Education Boardwalk and throughout the Refuge. Besides Green Heron chicks, pictured here in a photo by Refuge volunteer Jim Bennight, we watched Anhingas, Common Gallinules, and Ospreya nesting, hatching, branching, and fledging.

**Did You Know?** The male Green Heron begins building the nest before pairing up to breed, but afterward passes off most of the construction to his mate. As the male gathers long, thin sticks, the female shapes them into a nest 8-12 inches across, with a shallow depression averaging less than 2 inches deep to hold a clutch of three to five eggs.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES SCHOLARSHIPS

DDWS this summer awarded \$29,200 in conservation education scholarships to 13 students from the surrounding five-county area. During its 18-year history, the DDWS Environmental Scholarship Program has awarded a total of \$262,400 to deserving students.

Of the 13 scholarships, three are permanently endowed. Individuals who are passionate about helping students make a difference in all areas of conservation donate the other scholarships on an annual basis.

Named scholarships include: The Richard Bailey Scholarship, the Mike & Terry Baldwin Scholarship, the Dr. Andrew and Laura Dahlem Scholarship, the Dr. H. Randall Deming Endowed Scholarship for Conservation & Environmental Studies, the “Ding” Darling Conservation Scholarship, two Leslie & Hans Fleischner Scholarships, the Mary Elaine Jacobson Memorial Scholarship, the Win and Marilyn Kloosterman Memorial Scholarship, the Barry & Francine Litofsky Scholarship, the Tarpon Bay Explorers Scholarship, and two Jane Werner Endowed Environmental Scholarships.

DDWS will be awarding scholarships starting at \$1,000 each at the end of the 2023-2024 school year. For an application and

to read full descriptions of 2023 scholarship winners and donors, visit [dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/student-scholarships](http://dingdarlingsociety.org/articles/student-scholarships).

Individuals and businesses interested in establishing a named scholarship of \$1,000 or more or about general endowments in support of the work at the Refuge should contact DDWS Executive Director Birgie Miller Gresham at 239-292-0566.

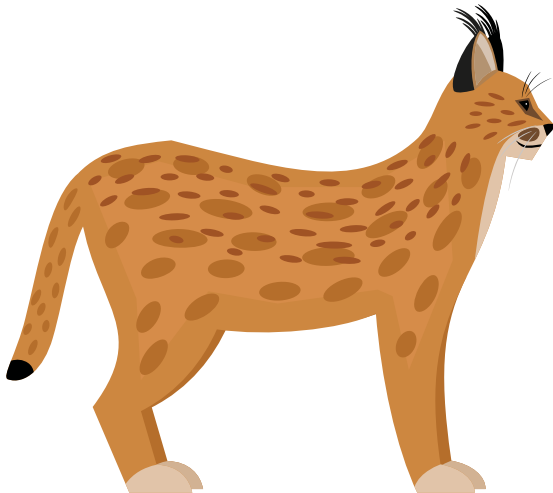
## FOLLOW US

To “like” us on **Facebook** (along with more than 20,000 others), search for “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. (You can also “like” the Refuge by searching for its “Official” page.) Follow us on **Instagram**, where we have more than 21,000 followers) at @dingdarlingwildlifesociety. Also visit our **YouTube** channel by searching “Ding Darling Wildlife Society.”





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## HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO CONTEST

DDWS announced winners and finalists in the ninth annual "Ding" Darling-Theodore Cross High School Photography Contest. First place went to an image titled "Nature's Bandit" by Chase Qurollo of Cape Coral High. For more winning photos and contest details, see page 10.

**Did You Know?** Although some researchers theorize the Raccoon's dark masks hide their eyes from predators, others believe they help deflect the sun's glare and enhance night vision.