



October 2019

Dear Friend.

“WOW, what is that crawling on the tree?” “Look at that pink bird!” “What is that in the mud?!”

These are exclamations the “Ding” Darling Conservation Educator Sara hears every time she takes kids out on a walk at the Refuge. When she goes to visit classes, she brings bones, fake animal scat and many other cool things to dissect and explore under a microscope and hears similar exclamations of surprise and awe.

“Kids today need hands-on experiences to really connect with nature,” Sara explains. “I remember growing up and coming home for dinner covered in dirt and mud. The woods and swamps were our playground. In today’s world, kids just don’t have as many of those unique experiences. Field trips to the Refuge, and even when we visit schools, give these kids an experience they will never forget. It truly does bridge that connection to nature.”

Chances are, you know of this connection too. From the smallest Mangrove Tree Crab to the Anhinga gracefully drying its wings, you become able to imagine the magical world that lives among these mangroves and the waters surrounding them. The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge offers the opportunity for people of all ages and backgrounds to resonate with nature, wildlife, and one another in a number of fulfilling ways.

Unfortunately, natural lands continue to disappear. Bulldozed and segmented to make room for housing or businesses, the destruction doesn’t seem to be stopping. Combined with continued issues of water quality, climate change, and so many others, wild places like “Ding” Darling are so important.

But there are still opportunities to protect and preserve what is left. **Your year-end gift today will help us continue the important work at “Ding” Darling.**

This year, with the help of many generous people, we protected the largest remaining parcel of land (68 acres) on Sanibel. Once permitted for development, this land will now be protected for generations as a part of the Refuge. It will remain a safe place for wildlife and birds, and it will also act as a natural filter for water, aiding in our fight for improving water quality.

But we cannot stop there. We must continue to help restore our lands, protect our waters, and educate and inspire people of all ages to understand and appreciate the power of nature and the importance of its protection. Whether that be through field trips to the Refuge, serving as advocates for wildlife protection and water quality, or educating people with the traveling Wildlife on Wheels (a project in the works), we can all be a part of the solution.

For nearly 40 years, the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society (DDWS) has supported the Refuge’s conservation efforts where federal funding has fallen short. **Your gift to support this work makes a difference.**

Your year-end gift today will help us continue this important work at “Ding” Darling. It will help support:

- **Future land acquisition and restoration efforts** to create safe havens for wildlife.
- **The busing and education of thousands of school children** to experience and learn from this wild place.
- **Wildlife on Wheels (WoW)**, a mobile extension of the Refuge that will visit hard-to-reach communities and teach about wildlife and land protection in an interactive way. **Double your impact by donating specifically to WoW; gifts will be matched dollar for dollar.**
- **The internship program**, which supports students and young graduates wanting to make a difference in conservation.
- **Research projects and equipment** for wildlife and water quality.

As the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge celebrates its 75th anniversary, we are all reminded of why saving and preserving land and educating the future generations of conservation stewards is so important. The “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge is a living, breathing place where people find that tie to the natural world.

Jay Norwood “Ding” Darling was a man ahead of his time, and I hope you will help continue his legacy by making a gift to support the Refuge named in his honor. Your gift will make a real difference in the overall conservation work being done at the Refuge and help carry out the legacy of “Ding” Darling. I hope you will consider making a gift today.

For the legacy,



Mike Baldwin, DDWS Board President

P.S. Together we can protect the land, water, and wildlife through conservation and education. **Your year-end gift will make a real difference in the important work being done at the Refuge.**