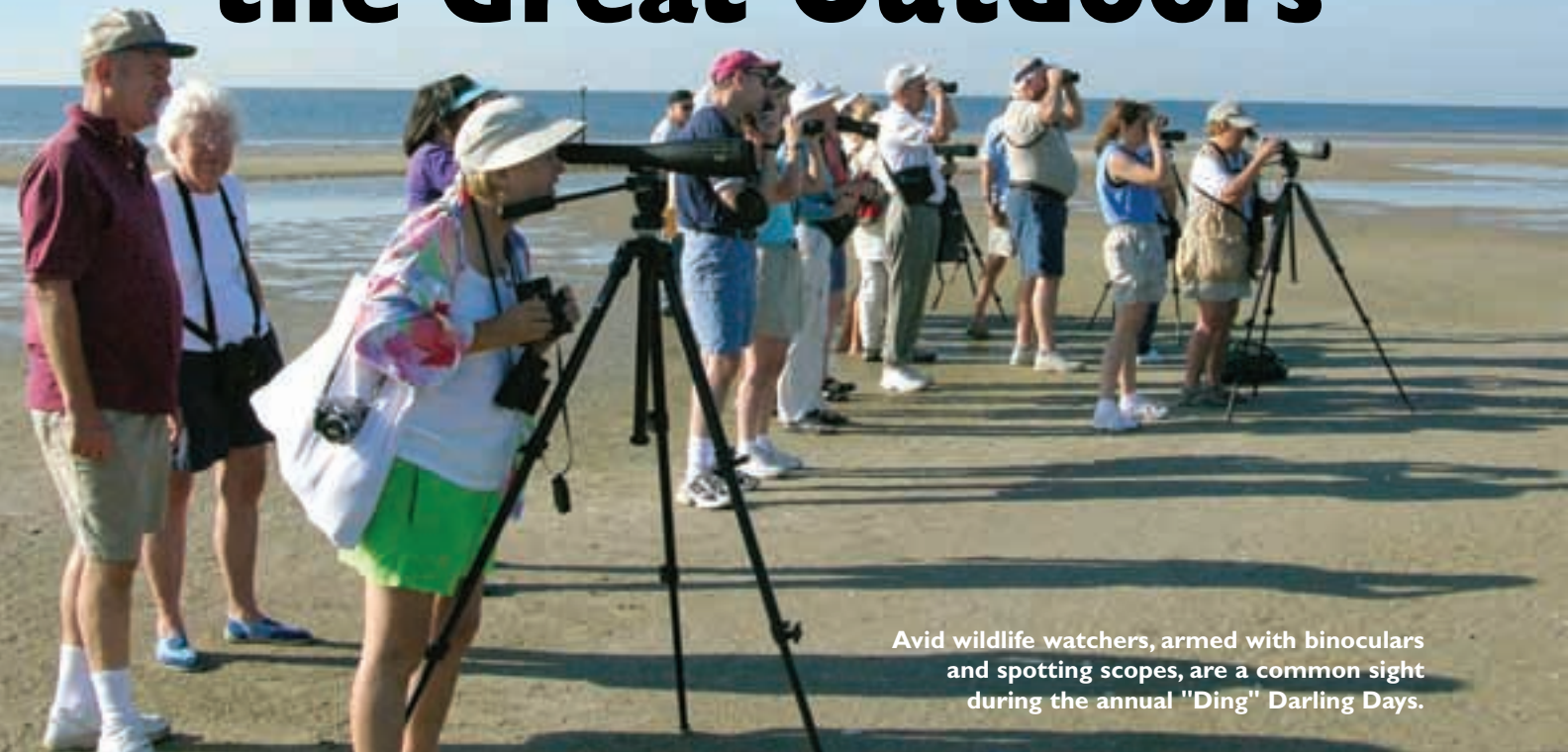


Enjoying the Great Outdoors



Avid wildlife watchers, armed with binoculars and spotting scopes, are a common sight during the annual "Ding" Darling Days.

*It's a great time of year to learn more about the natural world around us
— Ann Marie O'Phelan*



Removal of trash and monofilament fishing line from coastlines and waterways helps improve the area's appearance as well as protect wildlife that often mistakes dangerous materials for food.

The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum

Through September 30

Since 1995 the Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum has given national and international scientists, students, and shell enthusiasts the opportunity to see, touch, and learn about marine and terrestrial mollusks of the Gulf of Mexico and Florida, through exhibits, educational programs, library services, and publications. During the month of September, Lee County residents (with a valid ID) can enjoy half-price admission. "The discount...aims to entice the local community to visit the museum in that time of year when things calm down for a while," says Dr. José H. Leal, museum director. Residents can also help support the museum by purchasing a new "Seashells of Sanibel and Captiva" poster that depicts 65 local shell species

and was designed and photographed by Dr. Leal himself. The 18" x 24" posters are available at the museum bookstore for \$10.95, and all proceeds help support the museum.

Regular admission prices: Adults (17 and up) \$7.00, Youth (5 to 16 years) \$4.00, Children (4 and under) free. During September: Adults (17 and up) \$4.00, Youth (5 to 16 years) \$2.00, Children (4 and under) free. Open Daily from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, 3075 Sanibel-Captiva Road, Sanibel, 239-395-2233, www.shellmuseum.org

Coastal Cleanup
**Fort Myers, Cape Coral, and
Pine Island sites**
Saturday, September 15
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Coastal cleanup is part of an interna-

Seashells of Sanibel and Captiva Islands



(Above) The colorful seashell poster being sold to help support the Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum. (Below) A future environmentalist works on a craft project during "Ding" Darling Days.



tional effort to remove litter and debris that is not only unsightly but also poses a threat to wildlife. Sea turtles, for instance, often mistake plastic bags for jellyfish, and birds often swallow discarded fishing tackle. In 2006 more than 950 volunteers helped clean up the Fort Myers, Cape Coral, and Pine Island sites, removing approximately 4,500 pounds of trash and monofilament fishing line from the area's coastline and waterways. This annual cleanup is organized nationally by The Ocean Conservancy and is coordinated locally by Keep Lee County Beautiful, Inc., the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, the Environmental Education Department of Lee County Schools, and The Bonita Beach Improvement Association. Sponsors include Waste Pro, Veolia Environmental Services, Pepsi South, Town of Fort Myers Beach, Outrigger



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Beach Resort, and South Florida Water Management District.

For more information, contact: *Keep Lee County Beautiful, Inc.*, 1617 Hendry Street, Suite 414, Fort Myers, 239-334-3488, info@klcb.org, www.klcb.org

Coastal Cleanup

Sanibel, Captiva, and Causeway Islands
Saturday, September 15
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Coastal Cleanup will also take place on Sanibel, Captiva, and Causeway Islands (part of the same organization and coordination effort as in Fort Myers, Cape Coral, and Pine Island) with additional support by The City of Sanibel and McCarthy's Marina. "Last year we had about 400 volunteers, including children from the local schools, who removed approximately 3500 tons of trash along 25 miles of coastline," says Melissa Upton, Nature Center Manager at the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, who explains that the volunteers at all Cleanup locations also fill out data cards that record

the debris that is removed. "Afterwards, we always provide our volunteers with free hot dogs, lemonade, chips, and t-shirts—thanks to our generous local sponsors," says Upton. Captiva Kayak Co., Earthgraphics, Bank of America, Jensen's Twin Palm Resort & Marina, West Wind Inn, Sanibel Inn, and Song of the Sea help sponsor the event, while Keep Lee County Beautiful provides the dumpsters. Volunteers helping with Coastal Cleanup efforts are encouraged to wear older clothing, hats, gloves, and sunscreen.

For more information, contact: *Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation*, 3333 Sanibel-Captiva Road, Sanibel, 239-472-2329, www.sccf.org

"Ding" Darling Days

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel
October 8–14

The 18th anniversary of "Ding" Darling Days also includes the 75th Federal Duck Stamp Contest—which was initiated by Darling in 1934. Hundreds of prominent wildlife artists

from across the country enter, hoping that their design will be featured on the following year's Duck Stamp. All entries will be on display at BIG ARTS' Phillips Gallery from September 24 through October 20, and the public is invited to watch the judging and special presentations that take place on October 12-13. On October 14, "Ding" Darling Days' Family Fun Day offers all-free refuge tram tours, live animal presentations, a butterfly house, conservation exhibits, hot dogs, sodas, and more. Additionally, birding and kayaking tours, environmental speakers, a nature photography contest, Junior Duck Stamp Awards, and showings of an historical film about Darling's life will be part of this day filled with environmental activities for all ages. "Ding' Darling Days' Family Fun Day is the absolute best thing you can do with your kids to teach them a little about the environment while they're having fun making crafts and playing games," says Toni Westland, Park Ranger and "Ding" Darling Days committee co-chair and environmental education coordinator. "Home Depot comes with their little

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Two youngsters meet a friendly bird during "Ding" Darling Days.

projects, and we make stuffed manatees, wildlife masks, and more. Plus there are free hot dogs, refuge tram tours, and live wildlife presentations.”

For a complete list of events and times, contact: J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel, 239-472-1100, www.dingdarlingdays.com or www.fws.gov/duckstamps.

The Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival

**Throughout Southwest Florida
October 26–November 4**

This annual festival celebrates Southwest Florida’s 100-mile marked paddling trail, with a series of activities and events that take place along the trail throughout Lee County, from Pine Island to Fort Myers beach and beyond. The Midpoint Paddle Sprint and the Bunche Beach National Estuarines Day on October 27, along with the Calusa Blueway Fest events on Pine Island from November 2-4, are just a few of the events taking place during the Festival—which, thanks to its growing popularity, now spans two full weekends. Other activities include paddling demonstrations, live music, guided tours, children’s activities, and monofilament clean-up. “Last year’s event was a great success, and because of that, we’ve expanded the 2007 festival to include more events, more days, and more communities along the Great Calusa Blueway,” says Betsy Clayton, Lee County Parks & Recreation waterways coordinator.

The Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival, 239-433-3855, www.calusabluewaypaddlingfestival.com or www.greatcalusablueway.com

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