

## **DRAFT--Vision Statement for J.N. Ding Darling NWR**



The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge is an interwoven, dynamic system where salt water meets fresh, where shorelines recede within the tangle of mangrove roots, where coastal and freshwater marshes meet subtropical hardwood hammocks, and where submerged aquatic vegetation thrives providing the foundation for estuary life. These diverse habitats are managed, conserved, and protected to support a vast array of native birds, fish, mammals and other wildlife. Visitors can hear songbirds calling in the hammocks, and watch wading birds on the tidal flats during feeding frenzies, or find solitude in the backwaters of the Wilderness Area.

The refuge is a gateway to the National Wildlife Refuge System, providing educational awareness of this national network of lands and waters to thousands of visitors annually. The refuge is a memorial to Jay Norwood “Ding” Darling; continuing his legacy where environmental education and conservation through art continues in earnest and reflects the grass roots environmental efforts that established the refuge and continue to exist today. The refuge is utilized as a world class living laboratory to foster excellence in biological and ecological research and to enable integrated and adaptive management. The refuge is a premier example for developing partnerships to accomplish the greatest of goals.

