The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge provides a sanctuary for many species of wild animals, birds and native vegetation. Many people come to the refuge each year to observe and photograph the inhabitants of this unique ecosystem. While the disturbance of a single visitor may be small, the cumulative impact by nearly a million people a year is large. To enhance the experience of each visitor and to reduce our impact on the wildlife, these guidelines should be followed:

- **Leave nothing but footprints; take nothing but pictures.**
- For all who take pictures, use courtesy to fellow visitors and wildlife.
- Enjoy and appreciate our native vegetation, but please leave it untouched. It is the food and lodging of the wildlife.
- Please place all trash and recyclables in receptacles. If you do not, wildlife could ingest or become entangled in plastic and other trash. They often become ill and die.
- Do not feed or approach the wildlife. Animals that are fed lose their fear of us. They become dangerous and may have to be destroyed.
- Cars make good observation blinds because the wildlife have become accustomed to them. For better observation of feeding, resting, and preening birds, minimize noise by turning down radios, closing doors quietly, and speaking softly. Park at the edge of the road but not where birds are close to the road.
- Maintain a “comfort distance” from wildlife so that your presence does not alter their behavior. While wildlife may accept one observer, it will be disturbed by several people. Tell-tale signs: the bird “freezes”, lifts feet, walks or flies away. Let a telephoto lens or binoculars bring you a closer image.
- Please observe all speed zones and closed areas when boating. Manatees can be injured by props and birds can be disturbed when approached too closely.

**For An Enjoyable Visit...**

- Start your tour of the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge at the Education/Visitor Center. The staff and volunteers will orient you to the refuge. Take your binoculars, cameras and water. Drive slowly, walk a trail and look closely. This will help you see animals that blend in with their surroundings. Visit the refuge during periods of low tide for the best wildlife observation opportunities. Tide changes occur on the refuge one to two hours later than times stated on island tide charts.

Sanibel was once known for its immense mosquito population. Current mosquito control practices help keep insect populations under control. You should still be prepared for mosquitoes and other biting insects.

**Refuge Map**

- Indigo Trail: enables visitors to see alligators, wading birds and other wildlife. The Trail starts at the Education/Visitor Center and ends at Cross Dike.
- Wulfert Keys Trail: takes visitors to an open view of Pine Island Sound.
- Shell Mound Trail: has interpretive signs to inform visitors of their surroundings.

Over 1 3/4 miles of trails are located at the Bailey Tract where alligators, herons, egrets and other wildlife are found.