

# A toast to 'America's Darling'

Famed Register cartoonist 'Ding' Darling's life's work to be lauded in documentary.

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A Kentucky-based film producer this year will launch a documentary project to honor Pulitzer Prize-winner Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling, whose conservation efforts influenced the nation as much as his front-page Des Moines Register cartoons.

Today marks the 50th anniversary of Darling's death.

Samuel Koltinsky of Princeton-based Marvo Entertainment Group assembled a team that includes graphics specialist Allen Hemberger of "Avatar" and "King Kong" fame to detail Darling's cartooning and conservation work. He approached Darling's grandson, Kip Koss of Florida, about the project after working on an introductory video for J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, Fla., where Darling spent winters for years.

Who was Darling, you ask? He was far more than a decorator. See **DARLING, Page 2B**

Former Des Moines Register cartoonist J.N. "Ding" Darling, who died 50 years ago, is the subject of a new documentary. Shown are one of his most famous cartoons, a tribute to Teddy Roosevelt; an etching marking the Ding Darling Greenway in Des Moines; scenes from the Darling refuge on Sanibel Island, Fla.; and Ding's distinctive signature.



## J.N. 'DING' DARLING'S IMPACT

### NEWSPAPERS

- » Two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, editorial cartooning, The Des Moines Register.
- » Syndicated in more than 130 newspapers.

### WILDLIFE ADVOCACY

- » Pushed for creation of national wildlife refuge system.
- » Led predecessors of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.
- » Championed federal protections for migratory waterfowl still in place.

### COMMUNITY

- » Donated land for parks in Des Moines and West Des Moines.

# Ding Darling's Legacy

MORE ABOUT DARLING To learn more about the documentary and related events, visit [www.marvorentertainmentgroup.com](http://www.marvorentertainmentgroup.com).

## DARLING Jay Norwood 'Ding' Darling, 1876-1962

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### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

ed editorial cartoonist.

If you have visited a national wildlife refuge, there's a good chance that Darling helped establish it while leading what now is called the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

He personally pushed for the one on Sanibel Island, which later was renamed in his honor.

He once headed the Iowa Fish and Game Commission, now the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, pushing to preserve habitat.

He created a mural at Ashworth Pool, a turtle sculpture at the Des Moines Art Center, gave Des Moines land for Prospect Park and donated his farm getaway to West Des Moines for what is now Penny Park.

He also founded the National Wildlife Federation.

He is perhaps more widely known as the Register's editorial cartoonist from 1906 to 1949, with some interruptions to work in New York for what is now the International Herald Tribune.

Koltinsky plans to finish the documentary, "America's Darling," this summer before debuts expected to include Des Moines and Sanibel Island.

The documentary will be shown at federal wildlife refuges and at schools, and may appear on a cable network or two, Koltinsky said.

"I think Iowa needs this project," Koltinsky said. "They need to be reminded of who Darling was. Darling was a very focused person. He would not let go. He did not give up."

"We wanted to show how timeless Darling is," Koltinsky continued. "We want to inspire people to be better stewards of this planet because of that passion and love that Darling so had for the environment."

In the University of Iowa's special collections, Koltinsky found a decade's worth of audio of Darling dictating letters. Some of those will be used in the documentary, along with rare etchings and film footage.

"My motivation is because of Darling's conservation message, which was wise use of our natural resources," Koltinsky said. "Those messages that we think as sort of new, Darling had been pursuing for years and years."

It was quite a life. Jay Norwood Darling was born on Oct. 21, 1876, taking his middle name from his birthplace, Norwood, Mich. His father was a preacher.

When he was 10, his family moved to Sioux City, Ia., where he graduated from high school before earning a degree from Beloit College in Wisconsin in 1899.

### Darling, now 'Ding,' finds his niche

Darling called himself Jay, but signed his art "Ding" as a contraction of his last name. The nickname stuck.

The name Ding first appeared in a Beloit yearbook.

Darling, failing miserably in class, was suspended for a year after he published a drawing of the entire male staff at Beloit wearing tutus and dancing in a chorus line.

Hoping to earn money to attend medical school, he took reporting jobs at a couple of Sioux City newspapers. One day he was assigned to photograph a judge who refused to allow his picture to be taken. So Darling offered the editor a sketch instead.

The boss loved it and asked Darling to sketch other Sioux City notables. That launched a cartooning career that spread Darling's biting cartoons into more than 130 newspapers.

In a Des Moines Register and Leader career that

1876 - Jay Norwood Darling born Oct. 21 in Norwood, Mich.

1888 - At the age of 10, Jay and his family move to Sioux City, Ia.

1906 - Marries Genevieve "Penny" Pendleton on Oct. 31 in Sioux City. Starts work at The Des Moines Register and Leader.

1909 - Wife, Penny, gives birth to son, John.

1924 - Wins the Pulitzer Prize.

1925 - Stricken with peritonitis and unable to draw for most of the year. Awarded an honorary degree from Beloit College.

1928 - Receives honorary doctor of laws degree from Drake University.

1931 - Appointed head of the Iowa Fish and Game Commission (now known as Iowa Department of Natural Resources).

1932 - Donates \$9,000 to the Cooperative Wildlife Research Center at Iowa State College.

Visits Russia at the request of Joseph Stalin.

1934 - Appointed chief of the Biological Survey (now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Designs the first federal duck stamp.

1935 - General Wildlife Federation is renamed National Wildlife Federation. Sanibel and Captiva Islands Conservation Association established (Darling elected president).

1942 - Wins second Pulitzer Prize.

1945 - President Harry Truman creates the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge at the urging of Darling.

1949 - Resigns from The Des Moines Register.

1961 - Suffers a stroke that paralyzes his left hand.

1962 - Dies from a stroke on Feb. 12.

The farewell drawing from 1959 is published in The Des Moines Register on Feb. 13.

J.N. "Ding" Darling Foundation is formed in Iowa.

1989 - Featured in Palau's stamp series "Environmental Heroes of the 20th Century."

1967 - Refuge land is turned over to the federal government, and the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge is renamed the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge (the first time a refuge is named after a person).

In October, the Ding Darling Memorial committee is renamed the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation.

1900 - Graduates from Beloit College (considered class of 1899).

Goes to work as a reporter for the Sioux City Journal.

1904 - Receives statewide attention for his cartoons supporting George D. Perkins for governor.

1911 - Accepts a job at the New York Globe (moves family to N.Y.).

1913 - Accepts job at The Des Moines Register and Leader.

1916 - Signs a 10-year contract for syndication through the New York Herald Tribune (now the International Herald Tribune) and the Herald Tribune Syndicate on Oct. 21 — his 40th birthday.

1918 - Moves family back to New York to appease New York Herald Tribune, lives in Grantland Rice's apartment.

1919 - Returns family to Des Moines for good.

1933 - Resigns from the Biological Survey.

Goes back to work at The Des Moines Register.

Begins organizing the National Wildlife Federation.

Starts wintering at Captiva Island, Fla., because of health problems.

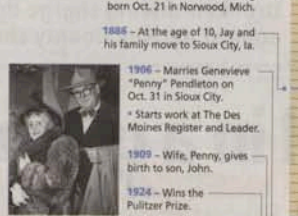
1936 - First annual North American Wildlife Conference held in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 3-7.

Darling elected first president of the General Wildlife Federation at the conference.

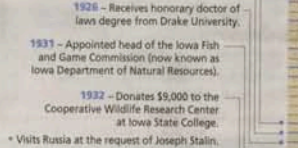
Darling's grandson, Kip Koss, was 27 when Darling died. He grew up next door.

"Darling was a bigger-than-life guy," said Koss, 76, who lives in Key Biscayne. "Someone whose opinions appeared in papers every day around the country had a lot of clout."

"He was a pioneering conservationist," Koss said. — Perry Beeman



Darling and his wife, Penny, in 1949



One of Darling's homes in Des Moines



General Wildlife Federation stamp



Darling, in 1937, head of the General Wildlife Federation, sits with Frederick F. Jordan, director of National Wildlife Week Restoration campaign.



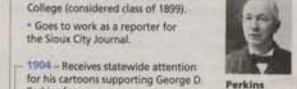
Darling, now 'Ding,' finds his niche



Pulitzer-prize winning editorial cartoonist J.N. "Ding" Darling is shown working at his desk at The Des Moines Register. REGISTER FILE PHOTO

began in 1906, his often-elaborate drawings appeared on the front page as part of an unusual tradition that lasted decades. He is perhaps most famous for a cartoon he and his editor both hated, "The Long, Long Trail." The hurriedly drawn tribute to Teddy Roosevelt, marking the president's death in 1919, depicted Roosevelt waving his hat from a horse and preparing to ride a trail to the skies. Millions of

copies sold, and the cartoon was cast in bronze. Darling's estimated 20,000 drawings pointedly commented on pollution, political issues, conservation, government spending, war and the plight of everyman. He won journalism's highest honor, the Pulitzer Prize, in 1924 for "In Good Old USA," a cartoon that celebrated ambition and the American Dream. Cartooning was just the



Perkins



One of Darling's homes in Des Moines



Darling, in 1937, head of the General Wildlife Federation, sits with Frederick F. Jordan, director of National Wildlife Week Restoration campaign.



Palau's stamp series "Environmental Heroes of the 20th Century."

Source: Marv Entertainment Group THE REGISTER

## 'Ding' Darling leaves legacy of cartoons, conservation

J.N. "Ding" Darling inspired generations of cartoonists and conservationists in Iowa.

Former Register cartoonist Brian Duffy first saw a Darling cartoon in a textbook at his suburban Milwaukee high school.

"His legacy is pretty strong but it's not just cartooning, which made him a lot different than a lot of the other cartoonists," said Duffy, one of Darling's successors at the newspaper.

"He had a very wide impact on especially conservation. He was very involved in the first Izak Walton League chapter in Iowa, and very involved in the Republican Party, too."

Darling mentored another famous Iowan, Des Moines wildlife artist Maynard Reece, who is still painting in his 90s.

Decorah farmer Paul Johnson directed the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the newest version of the state agency Darling once headed.

"We became a national leader in conservation because of Ding Darling," Johnson said.

Darling was an unlikely national environmental force.

"It's pretty amazing," Johnson said. "He was a plain citizen who really cared about these things. He wasn't a biologist. He was an editorial cartoonist."

Darling's grandson, Kip Koss, was 27 when Darling died. He grew up next door.

"Darling was a bigger-than-life guy," said Koss, 76, who lives in Key Biscayne. "Someone whose opinions appeared in papers every day around the country had a lot of clout."

"He was a pioneering conservationist," Koss said. — Perry Beeman

### IN HIS OWN WORDS

In 1935, Darling was heading the Bureau of Biological Survey, now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, when he wrote: "We have invaded all of the national ranges, the homes of our wild life species. We have evicted them and spread ourselves out with all of our paraphernalia and our implements and civilization now reigns where game used to live. In fact, we have thrown nature's cradle out the window and made our home where nature used to cradle its wildlife species. We have driven game back to the river margins, the ragged edges of this country."

### MORE ONLINE

At [DesMoinesRegister.com/darling](http://DesMoinesRegister.com/darling): HEAR Ding Darling explain his famous "Long Trail" cartoon.

WATCH a video based on the "America's Darling" documentary.

VIEW a gallery of 31 images, including many of Darling's cartoons.

Darling returned to the newspaper — by then called The Des Moines Register — winning a second Pulitzer in 1942. That panel, "What a Place For a Waste Paper Salvage Campaign," slammed government waste and red tape.

Three years later, Darling persuaded President Harry Truman to create Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge, which was later renamed in his honor.

By 1950, Darling was so famous that the state of Iowa dedicated Lake Darling State Park, a 1,400-acre park near Brighton.

Darling's health eventually began to fail, and after a series of strokes he died at age 85 in 1962.

Darling thought he was going to die in 1959, and drew a farewell cartoon. The Register finally published the work upon his death. The caption: "Bye Now — It's Been Wonderful. Knowing You."

"I think Iowa needs this project. They need to be reminded of who Darling was. Darling was a very focused person. He would not let go, he did not give up. We wanted to show how timeless Darling is. We want to inspire people to be better stewards of this planet because of that passion and love that Darling so had for the environment."

### SAMUEL KOLTINSKY

Film producer working on "America's Darling"

start, though. An avid hunter and outdoorsman, Darling became one of the nation's conservation leaders, working with Iowa-born conservation giant Aldo Leopold of Burlington, author of "A Sand County Almanac."

Darling was appointed head of the state Fish and Game Commission in 1931. His work there caught the eye of Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin, who invited Darling to lunch in Stalin's hometown outside Moscow in 1932.

In 1933, Darling authored a 25-year state conservation plan, the first of its kind nationally.

In 1934, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt persuaded the reluctant Darling to head the Biological Survey. In 20 months, Darling prodded Roosevelt to spend millions buying

land marginalized in the Great Depression, forming the country's system of wildlife refuges.

That year, Darling drew the first duck stamp, part of a system still in place for licensing waterfowl hunters across the United States.

Darling resigned from the Biological Survey in 1935, frustrated by the slow pace of government in Washington. The tongue-in-cheek letter he wrote to the president read: "It now seems the strategic moment to demand my resignation for insubordination, murder, incest and the good of the service."

That same year, he began creating the nonprofit National Wildlife Federation.