

We are working our way toward spring, and we are recovering from the news that Carmen Villarose and Alexis Campbell are leaving our ranks for new opportunities.

Carmen will be working for a local contractor, whom she has known for many years. During her five years here, she made the position of office coordinator the hub of our public persona. Whether on the phone, chatting with a walk-in guest or in the gift shop, Carmen treated each visitor as the most important person, no matter how backed-up the work. Carmen also elevated the quality and the presentation of the gift shop, worked diligently with the Festival Committee, often volunteered for programs and spent many late nights in October and November as a member of the Northern Saw-whet Owl banding crew.

Alexis came to us in 2008, quickly showing us why we needed her here full-time. Artistically, she managed programming for Arts & Entertainment, the Amphitheater and the Festival, as well as several event committees. She has also taken care of our publicity and marketing and served as in-house editor for the *Drumming Log*. Alexis has taken an opportunity to work for PennDOT.



Stephen V. Quigley

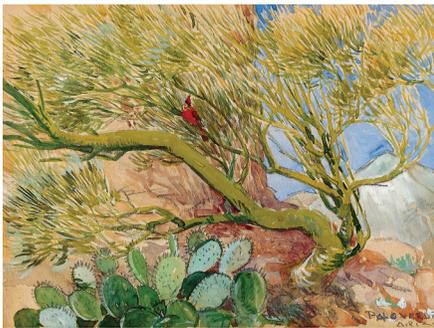


Illustration by Jay Norwood Darling

“The Hidden Works of Jay N. ‘Ding’ Darling” will be in the Olewine Gallery through June. The exhibit includes never-seen artwork and artifacts of Darling’s career as a syndicated political cartoonist and national conservationist from the 1930s to the 1960s. As part of the exhibit opening, the Center was awarded the “*Brush of Excellence*.” You can read more about the honor and the exhibit on pages 2-5.

In the Romberger Gallery, there is an exciting exhibit of art by students from Ned Wert’s workshops that have been held at the Center for some years. All of these artists are members of the Millersburg Art Association.

For our members and supporters who work with, or for, larger corporations, I ask that you check to see if your company has a matching contribution program or if they are willing to make application for the Pennsylvania EITC (educational improvement tax credit) program. This allows the corporations to donate a portion of their taxes to the Center. Please call me if you would like more information.

Finally, please continue to share your extra copies of the 2015 spring *Drumming Log*, our “field guide” to the Center’s history and programs, with friends who may be interested in the Center. If you need extra copies, please call the Center.



Illustration by Ned Smith ©Ned Smith Center

STEVE

Stephen V. Quigley
Executive Director



Hidden World of a Cartooning Conservationist

BY SCOTT WEIDENSAUL

An unusually intimate glimpse into the life, art and legacy of one of the most influential conservationists of the 20th century has come to the Center.

“The Hidden Works of J.N. ‘Ding’ Darling” will remain on exhibit in the Olewine Gallery through June 18.

Curated by Kentucky documentary filmmaker Sam Koltinsky, it explores the life and times of a man who was a nationally famous political cartoonist, but whose most far-reaching contributions include creating the federal Duck Stamp Program, and the dramatic expansion of the national wildlife refuge system that it funded.

Jay Norwood Darling — “Ding” was a contraction of his last name — was born in 1876 in Michigan. His start was inauspicious. Darling was suspended from Beloit College for depicting the school’s president and male faculty in ballet tutus in a year-book illustration.

Fortunately, that sense of irreverence and visual wit led him to become the nation’s leading editorial cartoonist in the first half of the 20th century. From his home base at the *Des Moines Register*, Darling’s work was syndicated to more than 150 newspapers across the country and won the Pulitzer Prize twice.

A frequent target of his staunchly Republican pen was Democratic

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, but in 1934, FDR asked Darling to serve as the chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, the forerunner of today's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It was an inspired choice. Darling was an avid angler and duck hunter, and never missed an opportunity to use his political cartoons to push for a stronger conservation ethic.

Soon after taking the job, Darling created the federal Duck Stamp (and drew the design for the first one) as a way to raise desperately needed money for wildlife conservation during the Depression. In the years since then, the stamp program has generated more than \$800 million for wildlife conservation, allowing the purchase of more than 6.5 million acres on more than 300 national wildlife refuges.

Darling was also instrumental in founding the National Wildlife Federation in 1936 (the exhibit marks the federation's 80th anniversary), and he used his own funds to establish

the first Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Iowa State College in 1932, as a way to professionalize wildlife management. There are now 40 such graduate education programs in 38 states, including Penn State.

Exhibit curator Sam Koltinsky describes himself as "obsessed and possessed" by Darling, but when he first encountered the late cartoonist's work, he was pretty clueless about the man whose life would soon come to dominate his own.

Koltinsky was working on a documentary on Sanibel Island in Florida around 2003. "I knew about the refuge," he said — Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel, near where Darling had a winter home — "and I knew that he was the creator of the first Duck Stamp. But I was wet behind the ears about everything else."

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Illustration by Jay Norwood Darling, courtesy of Sam Koltinsky



Decoy by Jay Norwood Darling, courtesy of Carolyn Hunter

(above, left) NWF Federation Stamps.
 (above, right) One of Darling's wooden duck decoys, one of many objects included in the exhibit. (bottom) A flock of mallards — a favorite subject of the duck-hunting artist — swirl across the page in an unfinished Ding Darling sketch.

But once he met Darling's grandson, Christopher "Kip" Koss, who had become the steward of his grandfather's work and legacy, Koltinsky was quickly drawn into the story of a man who bridged the worlds of art, politics, public opinion and conservation in a way few in history have ever done.

"Kip saw me as a willing soul to absorb all this information and reflect it in a way that honors Darling's legacy. I felt very honored to be part of these stories. We became friends, and he was my mentor," Koltinsky said.

Koss also opened doors for Koltinsky, and opened the family archive as well. The result was an hour-long documentary, *America's Darling: The Story of Jay N. "Ding" Darling*, which premiered in 2012, as well as the traveling exhibit currently at the Center.

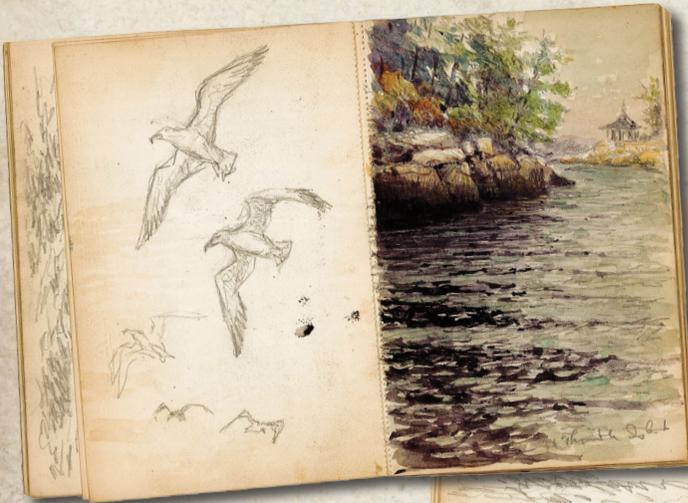
The exhibit traces Darling's life and work. It includes many of his cartoons — some biting, some whimsical, on subjects ranging from the Depression to the



Illustration by Jay Norwood Darling, courtesy of Des Moines Register, Sam Koltinsky
Included in the exhibit are original printing plates from some of Darling's Pulitzer-winning cartoons.

horrors of World War II to the transient charms of summertime when you're a kid — including the metal plates from which several of the cartoons were printed at the *Register*. Many of Darling's best-known conservation cartoons are included.

It is an art- and artifact-rich exhibit, with items drawn from dozens of sources, largely private and rarely, if ever, exhibited. Darling's work space is recreated, a pair of his wool slacks tossed casually over the back of the chair, his pens and drawing implements close at hand. The art he did for his own enjoyment and amusement — etchings of fishing and duck-hunting scenes, watercolor sketches from his travels around the world, fanciful wooden cutouts of wildlife — are featured. So are his top hat, books from his library and the yearbook that



A unique glimpse into Darling's life and work comes from his sketchbooks, some of which are included in the exhibit.



Illustrations by Jay Norwood Darling, courtesy of Koss; Koltinsky

got him tossed out of Beloit. The very first federal Duck Stamp ever issued — to Darling, of course — is included in the show.

Asked about his favorite objects in the exhibit, Koltinsky goes quiet for a moment — there are too many. “The unfinished [art] studies,” he finally says. “Gosh, they represent a Darling who is having fun and without the pressure of creating cartoons on a daily basis. They show him in a different light that people don’t know, and



Illustration by Jay Norwood Darling, courtesy of Sam Koltinsky

they’re a wonderful insight into this man’s soul,” he said.

“I also really like the desk and his preserved artifacts — people can identify with that — and I love the fact that for the first time there’s an interactive component for young people,” he said. (The exhibit includes an arts corner for kids, who can take inspiration from the original works around them, and try their own hand at cartooning.)

“It also goes without saying that it’s a great way to connect the legacies of Darling and Ned Smith,” Koltinsky said. “I have to say that I was so amazed at the Center — the camaraderie there, the way people are so engaged. It takes an entire team to make it work so well.”

So impressed with the Center was he that at the opening reception for the exhibit in January, Koltinsky presented the Center with the “Brush of Excellence” award — one of Ding Darling’s original



Illustration by Jay Norwood Darling

Illustration by Jay Norwood Darling

A pair of mallards drops into a marsh in a Darling etching (above), unfinished study (left).

paint brushes, to be used to further the Center’s mission. Previous recipients, like the Friends of Lake Darling, Sani-bel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, the Wildlife Society are using the brushes to acknowledge great stewardship and raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for conservation.

“The Hidden Works of J.N. ‘Ding’ Darling” is presented by Kip and Andrea Koss, Carolyn Hunter, the Ding Darling Wildlife Society, Iowa Public Television, Mahr Park at Hidden Hills Farm, Gloria Payne, the Wildlife Society and Marvo Entertainment Group LLC. The exhibit is dedicated to Kip Koss, who died in 2013. 🌿

Scott Weidensaul is a trustee of the Center, and the author most recently of the Peterson Reference Guide to Owls of North America and the Caribbean.

