

# Birdsong Nature Center

September-October 2021

*Closed in August for Summer Break, re-open on September 8th*

**TRAILS OPEN WEDNESDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS;  
HOUSE AND BIRD WINDOW REMAIN CLOSED.**

*Hours: Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays 9 to 5  
Sundays 1 to 5*

## **September**

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays  
Free Family Day on September 11th

## **October**

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays  
Free Family Day on October 2nd

*Please, no pets on Nature Center property.*

**Admission:** members, free; non-member adults, \$5.00; children 12 and under, \$2.50  
*Please see our website at [www.birdsongnaturecenter.org](http://www.birdsongnaturecenter.org) in advance of your visit for our COVID safety protocols.*

**BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER**  
**WEB SITE:** [www.birdsongnaturecenter.org](http://www.birdsongnaturecenter.org)  
**EMAIL:** [birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org](mailto:birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org)  
**TWITTER:** @BirdsongNatureC  
**FACEBOOK:** Birdsong Nature Center  
**YOUTUBE:** Birdsong Nature Center  
**PHONE:** 229-377-4408

Dear Friends of Birdsong,

One year ago, we asked for your help in navigating the Covid-19 crisis and your response was heroic. Your generous gifts sustained the Center through the difficult year of Covid lockdowns and restrictions. Thanks to your support and the exemplary work of staff and volunteers we were able to continue our active stewardship of the Center's mission and property - managing the 565 acres of irreplaceable land and its diversity of habitats, refurbishing cherished historic structures, and, with hopeful optimism, preparing for better days ahead.

We had no idea, of course, that in 2021 we would still be dealing with this pandemic, but the reality is that it continues to pose significant financial challenges for Birdsong. Major fundraising events had to be canceled earlier this year due to Covid-19 and although we were able to re-open the nature trails for visitors, customary revenue-producing programming has not been advisable given the ongoing public health issue.

To address the financial impact this pandemic has had on the Nature Center we are again launching a virtual and mail-in campaign to help raise recovery funds, and we ask for your help. *Would you please consider making a greatly appreciated donation to Birdsong's Summer Appeal 2021?* Our goal is to raise \$50,000 to help us make up for financial losses due to the extended pandemic. Thanks to generous gifts from several donors and our entire Board of Directors, we have already received over \$7600 or 15% of our goal.

Donations can be made via U. S. mail to the address shown on this newsletter, and online via our website at [www.birdsongnaturecenter.org/Donate](http://www.birdsongnaturecenter.org/Donate).

Please know that your gift will make a great difference and will be deeply appreciated.

For insight into the pandemic's effect on Birdsong and how we've been able to respond please see [www.birdsongnaturecenter.org/Appeal](http://www.birdsongnaturecenter.org/Appeal). There you will find an outline of the pandemic's effect on operations, what we have been able to accomplish, and our plans for the immediate future.

We also want to share with you that work on the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grant and conservation easement with Tall Timbers continues in earnest. We recently hosted a site visit by a Georgia DNR representative and we were very pleased and encouraged by the positive comments we received. We cannot say with certainty when work on this major project will be completed but we are hopeful it will be finished mid-2022.

We offer our most sincere thanks for your generous support of Birdsong. The Nature Center would not be here today but for your kind support, and we can never thank you enough. We hope you will have a happy and healthy autumn and will frequently visit Birdsong to walk the peaceful trails. Please keep safe.

With warmest regards,  
Joe Peresich, Board President

### **FALL PLANT SALES Starting on Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Birdsong plant sale volunteers are gearing up for a series of fall sales starting on Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> at Birdsong. The sales will feature many trees, shrubs, and perennials that will thrive from being planted in the fall of the year.

We are still planning all the details, so be sure that your email address is on the Birdsong email list. We will be notifying our members and friends via email when we have our plans ready to share with you. If you did not receive any emails from Birdsong earlier this summer, please send a note to Lynn Brown at [birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org](mailto:birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org) to get on the list. You may also check the Birdsong website at [www.birdsongnaturecenter.org](http://www.birdsongnaturecenter.org) for updates, starting in mid-September.

We are fortunate to have a great team of volunteer plant specialists and growers getting ready for these sales. Margaret Titus purchased a Pink Swamp Milkweed plant at one of our prior spring sales and saved the seed, which was delivered to Barbara Jinright, who has sprouted dozens of seedlings. These have been growing all summer in four-inch pots and Albert Harrison and I have just re-potted them into gallon-sized pots. These valuable native milkweed plants, larval food for the Monarch Butterfly, will be well rooted and ready for fall planting in your garden by October.

Another lovely spring-blooming plant, *Iris hexagona*, was donated back to Birdsong by a satisfied plant sale shopper. This gorgeous little true-blue is a native iris she bought a few years ago. It has increased so plentifully that she thinned her flowerbed and potted up extra rhizomes for our sales.

We will also have a nice selection of prized native trees and shrubs, and a new array of beautiful wild azaleas from our friend and grower Ernest Koone in Pine Mountain.

Fall is the very best time of year for planting in our garden zone. The plants will get their roots down during the rainy winter season and will be well established in the landscape by spring, ready to face the withering heat and frequent dry weeks of summer.

- June White  
Plant Sale Chair

### **TRAILS WILL NOW BE OPEN ON WEDNESDAYS!**

The trails will re-open on Wednesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, from 9am to 5pm. We will now be open on Wednesdays in addition to Fridays, Saturdays and Sunday afternoons.

We ask that our visitors continue to observe Covid-19 safety protocols including wearing a mask when signing in at the checkpoint and when encountering other individuals closer than six feet away. Once you are out on the trails away from others you are welcome to go mask-free. Our Covid protocols can be found on our website and on the back of our trail maps onsite.

We look forward to seeing you on Wednesdays!

**FREE FAMILY DAYS**  
**Saturdays: September 11 and October 2**

This poem was written many years ago by our friend and Bluebird Monitor, Alice Honea, who passed away last year. Alice had been present for the release of a baby Martin that had bailed out of its gourd early due to heat and knew the background about its feeding and care. I happened to find this poem the other day and it meant a lot after all Lynn and I went through earlier this summer helping this year's baby Martins. It was nice to hear Alice's voice again and be reminded of her unique take on a nature event that we shared.

-KDB

**The Rescue**

She found the bewildered baby martin  
Beneath the gourds,  
One foot clinging to a sumac seedling,  
The other uncertain on hard red clay.

At home she fed the feathered youngster crickets  
And commenced flying lessons,  
Waving her arm gently up and down  
While the fledgling,  
Claws curled tightly round her fingers,  
Flapped its wings enthusiastically.

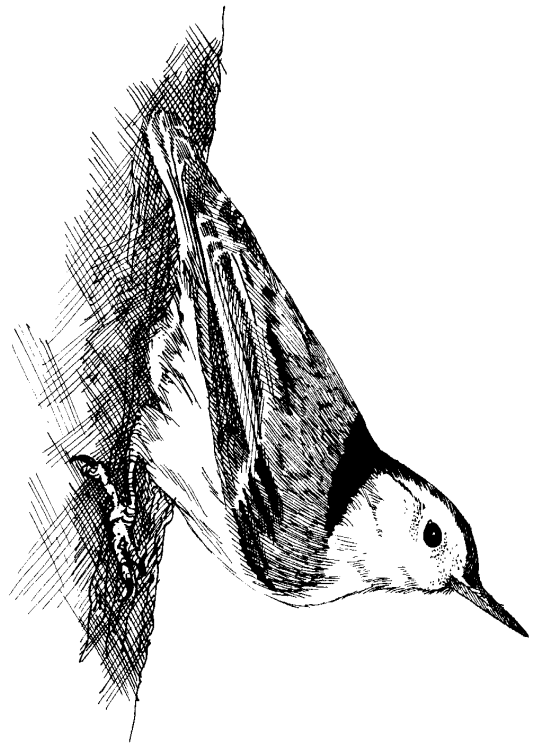
Her plan to return the young martin  
Within easy adopting distance  
Was pre-empted  
By the fledgling's sudden launch  
Into first flight,  
Wings chopping air  
Until sure rhythm sent it soaring  
Over gourds and barn  
And into a distant pecan.

Too far! She despaired,  
Until one, then another  
Flash of iridescent purple  
Shot past her anxious gaze  
Straight to the pecan,  
A dragonfly in each beak for the new adoptee.

- Alice Honea

We are closed for summer break on the first Saturday of September, so Free Family Day will occur on Saturday, September 11<sup>th</sup>. We'll be back to our usual first Saturday schedule on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. On these Saturdays admission is free and we will offer a \$5-off membership special. If you know of any families who have never been to Birdsong, please let them know about this opportunity. This is a nice chance for first-time visitors to enjoy the trails and get to know the property.

**Admission: free**



## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

### August 13, 2021

**Weather** We needed more rain, and we got it. We received 10.07 inches of rainfall in July and 3.64 inches so far in August, in part due to a number of intense storms. We appear to be in a cycle of endless rain predictions, many of which come true, but in patches here and there. We can be having a deluge at Birdsong while our friends in Tallahassee or Cairo or Thomasville are enjoying blue skies. The rain is always welcome. Our ponds and swamp need topping up and it always reduces the temperature by at least a degree or two, providing some relief.

There is certainly no lack of heat and humidity. It just presses on you from all sides when you step out the door, even late at night. There was a weekend not long ago when we were told that the heat “felt like” 105 to 112 degrees. We didn’t have a single visitor that weekend – no one wanted to suffer heat stroke out on the trails. Our Greeter, Lynette, managed to keep cool thanks to her fan array at the checkpoint. Lately, every now and then, there is something about the angle of the light in the morning that hints at a fall to come. Meanwhile, we are doing our best to enjoy what summer offers us – the land is lush and green, the creeks and spillways are flowing, and our birds and wildlife are thriving.

**Land Management** As mentioned last time, with this kind of humidity we really can’t plan any burning in the thick woods where it is really needed, so we will wait until September for a shift in weather. Alan has his hands full keeping the trails and parking lot and lawns mowed – as soon as he has finished the whole cycle the grass has grown so fast it is time to mow all over again.

In the early summer we started working at scheduling some site repairs on the property. If you have visited lately you will have noticed that there has been some erosion on our driveway – we want to get that corrected as soon as we can. We also need to get the Upper Pond spillway repaired. It is an earthen spillway and over time has deepened and we want to get it smoothed out and layered with gravel. If you have walked across Big Bay Dam or the Farm Pond Dam you will have experienced the tall brush encroaching on both sides. Mowing the steep sides of these old earthen dams requires a certain type of equipment that we don’t have – a tractor with an extendable mulching head that can reach out over and down the sides, mulching as it goes. For all these projects we have to hire contractors and we learned this summer that somehow because of Covid contractors are now extremely busy and have all the

work they can handle. It can take months to get on their schedule. We have been hoping to get these special operators out to work on our projects since early June but still don’t have definite times of arrival. So if you are walking on the dams at Birdsong and can’t see Big Bay Swamp for the head-high elderberry shrubs and sweet gum, you’ll know what we are waiting for.

**Special Visitors at the Bird Window** One of the hardest things about Covid for us at Birdsong has been the necessity of closing the Bird Window to visitors. It is a magical place year-round and a favorite destination for our guests, especially people who love birds and/or have enjoyed a long walk on the trails. It is however a fairly small enclosed space and we want to keep people safe. We miss having company here and getting to share the Window with guests, and we really miss our dear friends who volunteered every week: Phil Gornicki and Wolf and Winnie Adolph.

Our staff provides daily maintenance and feeding at the Window, but ever since closing we rarely come and spend any time here – we are usually just passing through on an errand to the house or kitchen, usually by ourselves. So we have not kept regular records of birds or wildlife seen at the Window; we stay pretty busy and just haven’t taken the time on a regular basis to sit and observe. That is why we have not reported regularly on the Window activity in the newsletter – that and we didn’t want to feature interesting wildlife activity in a place our visitors cannot come to see and enjoy for themselves. I do have to tell you about something that happened this summer though.

Over the past two years we have had an interesting phenomenon at the Bird Window in the middle of summer. You may recall our reporting on two baby Black Vultures that showed up in 2019, or the three we saw last year, apparently an adult and two young ones, but we are not really sure. I wanted to include this story in the last newsletter but we didn’t have the space.

One sunny day back in May I had something to take care of at the house, and made a perfunctory check on the Bird Window. I glanced quickly into the room, and no matter how many times I see this, it is always a shock: there were two vultures standing in the bamboo seed trough at the base of the Bird Window. The sheer size and black presence of these huge, slow-moving birds contrasts so greatly with what we normally expect to see: small, colorful, busy songbirds. It takes a split second to adjust to the surprise of seeing two vultures taking up so much of the usual vista. I called Lynn to come over and see what was going on. We took some cover at the kitchen door and the gift shop door. I’m sure the birds knew we were there, but they did not seem at all perturbed by our presence.

These two vultures were facing each other, standing in the trough, with their chests about 8 inches apart. They looked young, but weren't babies – the pebbled skin on their faces, heads, and necks looked soft and charcoal gray. One bird was taller and slightly larger than its companion. They were totally absorbed in grooming each other. They reached out and were busily nibbling all over each other's head and neck, tiny rapid little nibbles, sometimes turning their heads completely upside down to get under the other's chin. In a particularly fervent moment you could hear their bills clack against the glass. They were doing this simultaneously; it went on for a full minute or more at a time, and then they'd take a short break and start grooming their own wing or tail feathers. Then they'd gaze at each other for a moment, reach out and start nibbling again. They seemed to be oblivious to anything else. It looked like an exchange of affection and they seemed to really be enjoying themselves.

This display went on and on – Lynn and I finally slipped out and left them alone. We have seen them on several other occasions; we're sure it is the same two birds. There have been several more of these nuzzling sessions at the Bird Window, including one where they were grooming beyond the gray neck skin and into the short black feathers on the throat and back of the neck, again, simultaneously. During the last session I witnessed, the larger bird was leaning down and grooming the other's foot! We have seen this couple wandering around on the lawn by the back door taking slow deliberate steps and keeping an eye on us. They have also been spotted on the crest of the kitchen roof at near mid-day with their wings spread wide, backs to the sun. Last week I was working on the back porch and stepped down the stairs and startled them up from the gravel – they'd been right behind the tea olive only a few feet away – they lifted up into the cedar tree and waited for me to move along. They are wary of us, but don't feel compelled to leave.

It is a special experience to have vultures close by. We never know when they will appear – it is not something we see on a daily or even weekly basis – they come and go. You can tell them apart, they have beautiful innocent expressions, big brown soulful eyes. They are clearly fond of each other and want to be together. We feel really fortunate to get to witness their displays of endearment – there is something very sweet about these big birds. Hopefully they will come back next summer and by then Covid will be history and all of you will get to see them too.

***Orange Fringed Orchids*** We had a very nice surprise about a week ago...Alan came back from a morning of mowing trails to tell us about some unusual flowers he had seen. He'd been working over on the west side south of the Farm Pond near what we

call the Bog Garden. This area is a seepage slope/acid flatwoods environment where clubmosses and sundews and yellow-eyed grasses grow. This is where Betty introduced a number of different pitcher plants; all of them were rescues she had taken long ago from sites that were going to be drained and developed. Alan took Lynn and me down the trail by the Garden and pointed out a surprising number of Orange-fringed Orchids along the edge of the bog. The last time I had seen these orchids was on an exploratory walk with Betty back toward the drain, well off-trail where it was quite wet, and that was over 25 years ago. And we only saw one plant flowering. So seeing several dozen of these beautiful plants in full bloom right along the trail was astonishing. Orange-fringed orchids are not rare or under threat, but they have not been common at Birdsong, so this find was very special to us. We went back to check on them several times and they passed their peak quite quickly. We are told that these plants are known for erratic bloom seasons. We will be very interested to see what happens next year.

We will be closing for our annual summer break next week and will look forward to seeing you all in September, especially now that we will be open on Wednesdays, starting September 8<sup>th</sup>. The landscape will have changed a little by then – we are starting to see some fall sunflowers beginning to bloom, some ironweed in its deep purple glory and an abundant showing of the lovely Butterfly Pea. It is everywhere. The Bluebird nesting season has wound down – our Monitors tell us there are only a few more boxes with babies about ready to fledge. They've had a good summer. Lynn has done a wonderful job of caring for our Ruby-throated Hummingbirds – she has been making sure that the three feeders are kept pristine and topped up with nectar. We have no idea exactly how many hummingbirds we have, but the usual manic competition over each feeder is still in full force and our birds go through a lot of nectar every day. It is very entertaining to observe. The Butterfly Garden is really beautiful right now, with very colorful patches of orange fireweed and purple Echinacea. We've been seeing a lot more Tiger Swallowtails around, as well as many small clusters of Cloudless Sulfurs.

There will be a lot to look forward to when we re-open in September. The Garden will still be beautiful and attracting lots of butterflies. We are looking forward to the fall emergence of Zebra Longwings – one of our favorites. The gold and purple of the fall wildflower bloom will just be starting. There will still be plenty of hummingbird antics until mid-October. Perhaps on your next visit to Birdsong you will get to see a pair of Black Vultures canoodling in the cedar tree.

- KDB

**BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:**

*Gift in Memory of David Edwards:*  
Harriet Hawkins

*Gift in Memory of Rebecca Jean Stephens:*  
Marlene Bombay

*Gift in Memory of Sharon Patricia Kesler Chastain:*  
Patricia McManus

*Gift in Memory of Mirhi Childs:*  
Donald Johnson

*Gift in Memory of Dan Kimel:*  
Leslie Kimel

***Special Financial Gifts:***

Linda Peresich Long  
Robert Peresich  
Adam Peresich  
Grayal Farr  
Kathleen Dellenger  
Tom Bergman  
Craig Kittendorf  
Travis and Karen MacClendon

**NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG**

Nancy Tillinghast      Thomasville  
Jane Hayes              Tallahassee

**REGISTER WITH AMAZONSMILE AND SUPPORT BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER**

If you like to shop on Amazon.com, registering with AmazonSmile will enable you to support Birdsong every time you shop, at no cost to you. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases on Amazon to Birdsong Nature Center, one of AmazonSmile’s registered charities. (Donations are made by the AmazonSmile Foundation and are not tax deductible by you.) If you have an existing Amazon account all your shopping cart, Wish List, and registry settings will remain the same. Go to smile.amazon.com for more information about this program and sign up to benefit Birdsong!



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2020-2021**

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**Treasurer**                    Bill Preston  
**Secretary**                    Margaret Tyson

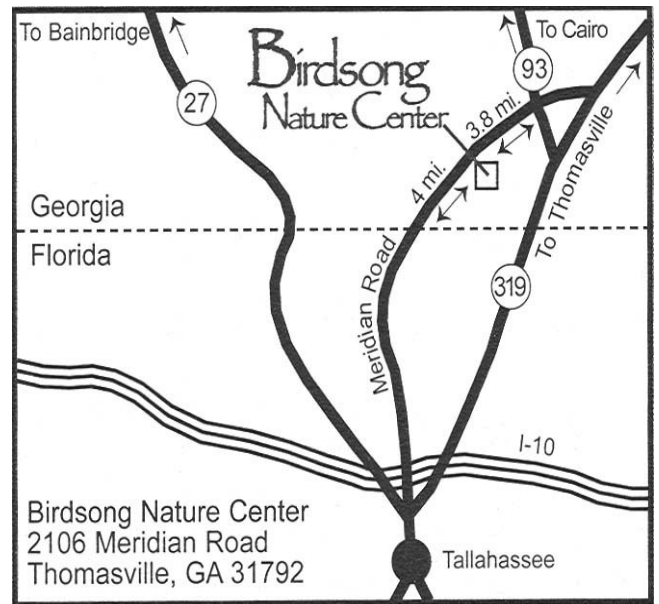
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**DIRECTIONS:**

From Tallahassee: Meridian Road north, 4 miles past FL/ GA border (marked by a blue sign that reads Grady Co.), on right side of road. OR 319 north, turn left onto Rt. 93, then turn left onto Meridian Road, 3.8 miles on left side of road.

From Thomasville: 319 south, turn right at Marathon gas station onto Meridian Road, approximately 5 miles from Marathon or 3.8 miles from stop sign at Rt. 93, on left side of road.

Watch for small sign that reads "Birdsong".

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