

Birdsong Nature Center

November-December 2021

**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*

November

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on November 6th

December

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on December 4th

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

Admission: members, free; non-member adults, \$5.00; children 4-12, \$2.50

Please see our website at www.birdsongnaturecenter.org in advance of your visit for our COVID safety protocols.

Holiday Closure: Birdsong will close for the holidays on Friday, December 24 and re-open on Wednesday January 5.

Dear Friends,

In our September-October Newsletter we asked for your help in sustaining Birdsong's stewardship of the Center's mission and property as we navigated yet a second year of pandemic-impacted operations. Our *Summer Appeal 2021* was launched in July to raise recovery funds to help offset the loss of major fundraising events and normal revenue-producing programming in 2021. Your incredible response has been heroic. We want to offer our heartfelt appreciation to all of you, our members, and donors, for your exceptional and generous response to our request. Your gifts are making a great difference in keeping Birdsong operating and caring for the Center's 565 acres of irreplaceable land. *We can never say "thank you" enough.*

October has brought with it an amazing display of wildflowers at Birdsong. False foxglove (*Agalinis*) has been flowering in record abundance this year. We can't wait to see what other great surprises autumn has in store and we look forward to sharing them with you. Birdsong's trails are now open on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 9AM to 5PM, and Sunday from 1PM to 5PM. These mark a return to our normal, pre-pandemic hours. For now, the House and Gift Shop, both indoor, confined-space areas, remain closed. We hope you will visit to walk the flower-lined trails one day very soon.

We want to share with you that we are all deeply saddened by the loss of our dear friend, Lane Green, who passed away August 15, 2021. Lane, who retired as Executive Director of Tall Timbers in 2012, was a long-time member of Birdsong, an alumnus of co-founder Betty Komarek's 1980s Leadership Training courses, and a member of Birdsong's original Board of Directors. Lane was a gifted and widely respected leader in natural areas and wildlife conservation. His exceptional experience, wisdom, endearing charm and humor will be greatly missed. We offer our love and most sincere condolences to Lane's dear family. He will forever hold a very special place in our hearts.

With warmest regards,
Joe Peresich, Board President

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER
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FACEBOOK: Birdsong Nature Center
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THREE STAND-OUT PLANTS FOR THE WINTER LANDSCAPE

Spring blooming trees and plants with brilliant fall color get a lot of attention. But in North Florida and South Georgia, Winter is our most glorious season. We should make the most of it by growing trees and shrubs that show off their most attractive features during the winter months.

The Winged Elm Tree (*Ulmus alata*) or Wahoo is a fast-growing medium sized tree (40 - 60 feet) with an open rounded crown. It is an easy-going, undemanding tree, tolerant of wet or dry conditions and poor drainage. The “wings” of Winged Elm are irregular corky ridges which line the twigs, giving its bare branches their distinctive Winter appeal.

American Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) can be leggy and awkward where it grows in deep woods and has to reach for the light. But when planted in the open it will grow to be a graceful, mounded shrub. Its leaves turn bright yellow in the Fall, but its special feature is the yellow ribbon-like, fragrant flowers which line the branches in early winter.

Oak leaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) is famous for its long-lasting panicle flowers and big floppy lobed leaves which turn all shades of pink, red, and maroon in the Fall. But in late Fall when the lush leaves are gone the flowers turn into a ghostly silvery version of their summer selves, and the bare, gnarled, twisting trunks and branches with their rough exfoliating bark give this versatile shrub a whole new personality.

These three and many other plants suitable for planting late in the year will be available at Birdsong during our Fall weekend plant sales.

-June White
Plant Sale Chair



FOR OUR FRIENDS WHO ARE NOT RECEIVING OUR MAILCHIMP EMAILS In Thomasville and Cairo

We have learned that a number of Birdsong members and friends who live in Thomasville or Cairo are not receiving our new Mailchimp emails. Apparently Mailchimp is not sent through when mailed to addresses at rose.net or syrupcity.net. Our Greeter, Lynette Joye Hitt, recently called Rosenet to ask about this and within a few weeks, she began receiving our Mailchimp emails. We recommend that those folks affected by this please call your service and ask if they will enable Mailchimp for your address. It is worth a try!

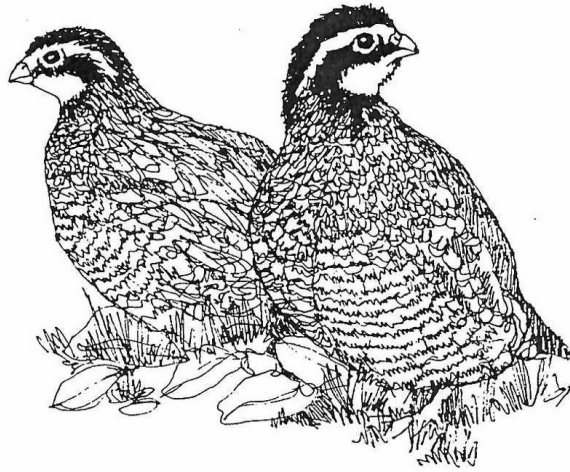
IN MEMORY OF LANE

Lane Green passed away on August 15th and the landscape of the Red Hills conservation community will never be the same. Lane was well-known in our region as a conservationist and leader who really made a difference. He loved his family, his friends, his dogs, being out in the woods, and baseball. He had a great sense of humor and was always fun to talk to. Teaching about nature and ecology and fire came to him naturally; in any conversation, Lane would enthusiastically share his knowledge and appreciation of any aspect of nature and usually relate it back to fire. He was a dear and valued friend to many, many people.

Lane participated in Betty Komarek's Leadership Training programs at Birdsong in the early 1980's when he was the Executive Director of the then Tallahassee Junior Museum and served on Birdsong Nature Center's original founding Board of Directors from 1986 to 1990. He was hired at Tall Timbers that year, became the Executive Director and served until 2012. Lane, with his unique personality, abilities, and drive used his considerable skills to develop Tall Timbers into an extremely effective conservation organization. He was a force of nature. He loved his work and tirelessly promoted the use of prescribed fire and the benefits of conservation easements.

One of our fondest memories of Lane was in the fall of 2019 when he led a group out in the woods at Birdsong for a pre-dawn covey count. We had a wonderful time and the quail rose to the occasion!

Lane left his mark on the conservation of the Red Hills and on the hearts of all of us who knew him. We offer our sincere condolences to Susan, Kelly, Jeremy and his granddaughters. Lane will not be forgotten.



FREE FAMILY DAYS **First Saturdays:** **November 6 and December 4**

On first 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

POSTING ON EBIRD

The next time you go birding at Birdsong, we invite you to post your sightings on eBird (google eBird.org). Your list will help other birders learn what has been seen at Birdsong and help us keep a comprehensive species list. You will also be contributing to a worldwide database that helps researchers understand bird distribution and abundance. Go to eBird.org, click on Birding Hotspots, type in Birdsong Nature Center, and you will see our list. You can then sign up to add your sightings.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

October 9, 2021

Weather As we have mentioned before, our friend Leon Neel used to say that dog days are over when the Mockingbirds begin to sing. After a summer-long silence, ours began singing on September 20th and Lynn heard one imitating a Chuck Will's Widow, which was quite a surprise! The singing started close to the fall equinox, but the summer weather with all its oppressive humidity continued for several more days, along with afternoon thundershowers. Then on September 24th, we woke up to cool breezes, sunny blue skies, and a huge sense of relief – it really was Fall, after all! The Mockingbirds know what they are doing. Beautiful days have since persisted for weeks and we are truly enjoying the pleasant mornings. It still gets hot late in the day, but the humidity is lower and much more tolerable. We have also been the recipients of abundant rain. After our first two weeks of nice fall weather, the rains returned and we don't mind a bit. They keep refreshing our fields and woods and the ponds and swamp are full and flowing. It is still early in the month, but no drought so far this October! Since the last newsletter, we've received 12.31 inches of rainfall, including two major storms: one in late August brought us 5.55 inches of rain and another in early September brought 3.23. The woods and wildlife have responded with an explosion of beautiful wildflowers like we have not seen in ages.

The *Agalinis* Bloom *Agalinis purpurea* or False Foxglove is a locally common wildflower that makes an appearance in the fall throughout the fields and woods of Birdsong. For many decades it has shown up in the fall at varying levels of abundance in the Gin House Field. In the years before Birdsong became a Nature Center, 1980 – 1985, founder Betty Komarek ran Leadership Training sessions, and the educational materials and the earliest newsletters that Betty and Donna Legare wrote referred to the Gin House Field looking like a "Pink Cloud" when the *Agalinis* was in bloom. Every year the *Agalinis* shows up and is always beautiful but can be sparse or full; we can never really predict. This year we have an explosion of False Foxglove – we have not seen this many plants and flowers in years. It is stunning and Betty would love it!

It all started with a few plants noticed on September 23rd, and by about a week later it became apparent that we were going to have a good season. The following week it just got better, and this trend continues. We sent out an email about 10 days ago to alert our members and friends to come out to enjoy the bloom, then we had a rainy week. I was concerned that maybe the

blooming would get set back, but as of yesterday, the field is even deeper pink and there are more flowers than ever. I'm not sure how long this exhibition will last, or if it will still be going on by the time this newsletter reaches you, but if you haven't been out to see it yet, call us – it might still be worth a trip.

The *Agalinis* plant can grow quite tall, from two feet to over head height. It has many long slender stems that support a row of multiple flowers and buds that develop and bloom sequentially. The flowers are very attuned to sunlight. We have learned over the past two weeks, visiting them at different times of day, that the newly budding flowers are capable of closing and reopening the following day, while many older flowers will drop off at the end of a day's cycle. If it is overcast, the flowers take a lot longer to open than on a bright sunny morning. The field becomes more intensely pink as more flowers open from the late morning through mid-afternoon. By 5pm, the field looks much less colorful and many of the flowers seen earlier in the day along the tips of the waving stems have disappeared, with only next day's buds remaining. So the field is at its most splendid from mid-morning to mid-afternoon.

As soon as the flowers open, the pollinators appear in droves and increase in numbers with the progression of sunlight and the heat of the day. False Foxglove is clearly a very desirable nectar plant. There are many different species of bees enthusiastically exploring the flowers, along with lots of different kinds of skippers, including the Long-tailed Skipper. Butterflies are everywhere - the most obvious ones are the pretty, busy, yellow Cloudless Sulphurs, Gulf Fritillaries, and Buckeye Butterflies, for which the *Agalinis* is a host plant. Within a few days of the flowers starting to bloom, we began to find different sizes of Buckeye caterpillars busily feeding on the slender leaves and flowers. You can see these spiky orange, black and white caterpillars silhouetted on the stems.

We assume that a combination of many natural factors are responsible for the phenomenal bloom this year, including the abundance of rain over the entire growing season and our annual introduction of fire. We use prescribed burning on a regular basis to manage this field and credit our burn crew for its part in this year's *Agalinis* extravaganza.

This has been one of the most uplifting natural phenomena we've had at Birdsong for a while. It is almost impossible to describe how beautiful it is. I just wish all of you could experience it in person. To walk out along the central trail through the field heading west and see these lovely pink-flowering plants appear on either side of you, some at shoulder height, and then see that the expanse just continues to grow and then

realize that these plants in full pink bloom extend all the way to the tree line – it is wonderful! You can stand right at the edge of this mass of deep pink and look closely at just one flower and appreciate its individual color and pattern and speckled throat and the unique shapes of its pistil and stamens and then look up to see hundreds of these flowers nearby, then gaze off across the expanse of pink stretching out into the distance – it’s too much for words. Then you can think about what all this natural beauty is providing for pollinators and other wildlife. You get to be in the middle of it...surrounded by thousands of pink flowers waving gently in the breeze, loaded with buzzing bees and flitting butterflies - it will make your day, I promise. It lifts my spirits every time I go out and I hope you will get to enjoy it too.

There is always something fascinating and even spectacular to find out in nature if you look carefully enough, if you listen, if you take the time. Birdsong’s natural charms are often very subtle, but they are there, every day, year-round. This phenomenal display of flowers is really just one of those things, but it happens to be so beautiful and extensive and pink that we can’t help but notice! Sometimes it takes a big splashy event to get our attention, especially in this on-screen life we live. For me, this is a reminder, to look for the small things, the delightful things, the patterns and events that show up all the time, just waiting to be seen and appreciated. Meanwhile, this lovely large-scale event reminds me of how important it is that Birdsong’s land and its organization be properly cared for into the future. I’m so glad our Board is working hard on a conservation easement, so that within a year this place will have legal protections in perpetuity. Our founders’ intent, with thanks to all who care about and support Birdsong, will be realized and Birdsong will be here for future generations who will benefit from experiencing nature in this very personal way. I hope a hundred years from now people will get to wander through a cloud of *Agalinis* in the Gin House Field on a beautiful fall day like this one.

Other Wildflowers and Signs of Fall Other fabulous wildflowers are putting on a show as well. We are seeing a gorgeous display of Blazing Star, or *Liatris*, this year and now the Goldenrod, Narrow-leaved Sunflower, *Pittypopsis*, Blue Curl and many others are starting to burst, all across the property. We are also waiting on another *Agalinis* species to appear in the Squirrel Woods – *Agalinis tenuifolia*, a smaller, more delicate foxglove that has really taken off there in recent years. Bidens Tickseed is everywhere, and the pollinators are in heaven! We’re enjoying all that busy activity too, but now the Tickseed is starting to produce its cleverly designed seeds that catch on our clothing, so we don’t get too close anymore!

This is a great time of year for fruit-loving wildlife – the berries are ripe and colorful! American Beautyberry is displaying its unusual clusters of shiny purple berries along each stem, and two Mockingbirds are defending

and singing over their respective islands of yaupon in full scarlet fruit. They engage in intense territorial disputes off and on all day, chasing each other out of their yaupon shrubs, but then delight us with hours of heartfelt singing about how wonderful life is and how great it is to be a Mockingbird in charge of this many berries. The pear tree is still a gathering place for deer, crows, raccoons, and woodpeckers!

Grasses are also coming into their most beautiful stage – they are in bloom and displaying their metallic bronze, gold, and purple seed heads throughout the woods and fields. The tall plume grasses are among the most impressive and will soon be at their peak. Seeing an array of these stately grasses in full bloom in the woods, backlit in the morning light, is one of the many pleasures of fall.

The Butterfly Garden, managed by our team of dedicated volunteers, is gorgeous right now – even more beautiful and with more flowers blooming than in the summer this year. Fireweed, Ironweed, and *Echinacea* are bright and beautiful. We are finally seeing quite a few Zebra Longwing butterflies – they have discovered the passionvine in pots behind the outdoor restroom and Lynette has seen several caterpillars busy eating.

Birds The fall migration is happening, and we’d love for you to come out and help us observe and record the presence of visiting migrants. Lynn Brown and her husband Duane, on a recent weekend walk, counted 49 different species, including Chestnut-sided Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows, and many more. Their two most interesting sightings were that of a Loggerhead Shrike, seen out in the Gin House Field, and two Acadian Flycatchers talking back and forth by the Barn. Lots of Summer and Scarlet Tanagers also put on a performance by the back garden gate. You can find Lynn and Duane’s sightings posted on eBird.

Lynn took some nice photographs while bird-watching around the property and we recently posted them on Facebook, on October 8th. Visit www.facebook.com/BirdsongNatureCenter/. You will see her portraits of male and female Summer Tanagers, a fall male Scarlet Tanager, a female American Redstart, and a Gray-cheeked Thrush. We also included her photo of the Loggerhead Shrike mentioned above.

If you are not on our email list and would like to receive notifications about wildlife sightings and wildflower blooms and other current natural events at Birdsong, please send us a note at birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org and we will get you on that list. We also recommend that you visit our site on Facebook (see link above), as we are posting more information and photos there as well. We want to keep you up to date on natural events so you can come out and enjoy what is happening at Birdsong!

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

A Special Gift in Honor of Dr. Don Hill:
Kandace, Rebecca, and Donald Matthew Hill

In Celebration of Ann and Don Morrow:
The Annino Family

In Honor of Kandy Hill:
Don Massenzio
Stephen Leignadier Liner
Linda Riddle
Elaine Grace Dwire Branjord
Joe Peresich

In Memory of Mirhi Childs:
Beth Grant

In Memory of Mary Fannin:
Joe Peresich

In Memory of Lane Green:
Patrice Gillette
Vicki Wimberly
Henrietta and Ebe Walter
Holly Wolf
James O. Cook and Brenda A. Abstein
Joan Park
Gloria Swanson
Jared Deason
Dana Bryan and Gwendolyn Waldorf
Nancy Bell
Nancy, Pat, Sue, and Cathy Westfall
Susan Green
Beth Grant

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville
Sharon Kindred

Tallahassee
James Cospser
John Huffaker

Other
Ruth Davis Tuscaloosa, AL
Nancy and Damian Smith Crawfordville, FL



**Birdsong Nature Center
Board of Directors
2020-2021**

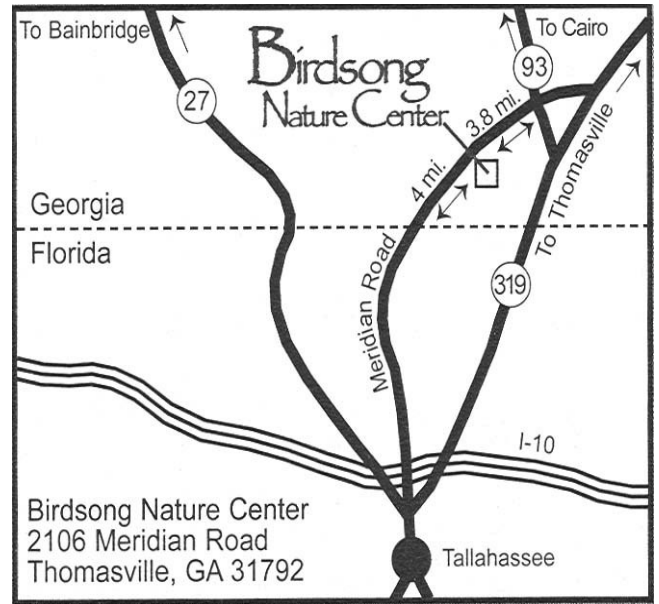
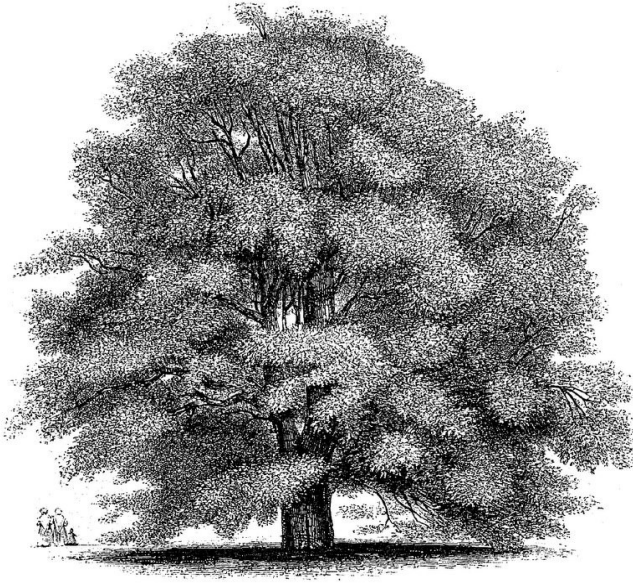
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DIRECTIONS:

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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