

Birdsong Nature Center

March-April 2024

TRAILS AND BIRD WINDOW OPEN WEDNESDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS

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

Sundays 1 to 5

March

| | | |
|--------|---------|--|
| Sat. | Mar. 2 | Free Family Day |
| Thurs. | Mar. 7 | Butterfly Garden Workday |
| Sat. | Mar. 9 | Birdsong Spring Plant Sale at Metcalfe Spring Market |
| Thurs. | Mar. 14 | Land Management Workday |
| Sat. | Mar. 16 | Spring Birding Walk |
| Sat. | Mar. 23 | Spring Plant Sale at Birdsong |
| Sat. | Mar. 23 | “Feathered Friends” Quilt Raffle |
| Thurs. | Mar. 28 | Land Management Workday |

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER
WEB SITE: www.birdsongnaturecenter.org
EMAIL: birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org
TWITTER: @BirdsongNatureC
FACEBOOK: Birdsong Nature Center
YOUTUBE: Birdsong Nature Center
PHONE: 229-377-4408

April

| | | |
|--------|---------|---|
| Thurs. | Apr. 4 | Butterfly Garden Workday |
| Sat. | Apr. 6 | Ecological Landscaping/Gardening Tour |
| Sat. | Apr. 6 | Free Family Day |
| Thurs. | Apr. 11 | Land Management Workday |
| Sat. | Apr. 13 | Spring Birding Walk |
| Thurs. | Apr. 25 | Land Management Workday |
| Sat. | Apr. 27 | Take a Child Outside in the Springtime! |

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

Dear Friends,

Please put these dates on your calendar and join us for Birdsong's upcoming Spring Plant Sales! On March 9th, 9am-3pm, the Plant Sale travels to Metcalfe, GA, where we will participate in the *Metcalfe Spring Market*. Then, on March 23rd, 9am-1pm, the Plant Sale returns to Birdsong. As Plant Sale Chair June White mentioned in our previous newsletter, among many notable selections we'll have Pentas, Salvias, and noninvasive *Clerodendrum ugandense*, its blue and white flowers resembling butterflies. We will also have an excellent collection of native perennials, shrubs, and trees including lots of wild azaleas. We hope you will join us at one or both of Birdsong's Spring Plant Sale days.

It was great to see the many people who attended Tall Timbers' *Red Hills Fire Festival* in early February, and we want to thank all who stopped by Birdsong's booth at the event. We especially appreciated the awesome parents and children who participated in our Bird Migration Game. Oscar-caliber theatrics and high drama abounded in this fun educational game where participants enact avian behavioral responses to challenges encountered during migrations. Thank you to all the fine young actors who so excellently played their roles! And thank you to Tall Timbers for hosting Fire Festival, an exceptional educational and fun community event.

To our many dedicated members, donors, and volunteers who keep Birdsong thriving and available for all to enjoy – we deeply appreciate all that you do for Birdsong. Please know that your contributions and support make such a big difference, and we could never thank you enough.

Sincerely,
Joe Peresich, President
Birdsong Board of Directors

BIRDSONG'S SPRING PLANT SALES

Saturday, March 9 at the Metcalfe Spring Market from 9am to 3pm
Saturday, March 23 at Birdsong from 9am to 1pm

Plant sale time is here again! This is our 17th year. We hope you'll be able to come to our sale at the Metcalfe Spring Market on March 9 and the sale at Birdsong on March 23.

Many of the plants we sell come from Superior Trees, a native plant wholesale nursery in Lee, Florida. But most fun for us are the plants we receive as donations from local gardeners — plants with fascinating stories. Two years ago, we were given dozens of Swamp Chestnut Oak saplings from a huge Tallahassee tree that blew down in a storm. Last year we got Bald Cypress seedlings that our donor grew in red Solo cups from seeds she purloined from the landscaped grounds of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. Last spring a lady gave us starts of a begonia whose parent plant was grown by a friend's great-grandmother. We have sold the Crinum lily "Gonzales", named for an historic area north of Pensacola where it was discovered, and Daylilies hand pollinated during the Second World War by a botanist visitor at Birdsong.

We love hearing about your gardens, and we need plant donors! Perhaps our most gratifying donations are plants you've given us that have increased from a single plant bought at one of our sales. Will you let us know if you have plants you'd like to contribute? You can give us plants at any time. We will care for them until the next sale.

For more information, contact us at Birdsong: birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org or call 229-377-4408.

- June White
Plant Sale Chair

NOW HIRING BACKUP GREETING SUPPORT

We are interested in hiring support to provide backup for our Wednesday and weekend greeters and give them more scheduling flexibility. Currently, our two Greeters, Lynette Joye Hitt and Sherry Nichols, share greeting duties on the days and hours we are open: Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday 9 to 5, and Sunday 1 to 5. We are interested in hiring additional support so that when our current staff needs to take time off, we will have backup. Hours for the position may be highly variable; at this time, we can't predict when help will be needed, but it would be for half-day or full-day time periods during the above work hours.

The position pays \$10 per hour. An ideal candidate would enjoy meeting and working with people; is available during Birdsong hours; likes an outdoor work setting; is comfortable making financial transactions; has experience with or could learn to use Square for processing credit card payments; is physically able to feed the birds, tidy the restrooms, water plants, and manage other light duties. Training will be provided for all aspects of the position.

Please contact Kathleen Brady, Executive Director, at (229)377-4408 if you have questions or wish to apply. We will want to learn about your work history and any applicable experience you may have had. Three work and personal references will be required.

"FEATHERED FRIENDS" QUILT

A fundraising raffle
Drawing on Saturday, March 23rd, at 1pm
Need not be present to win
\$5 per ticket

Our dear friend and talented volunteer Faith Hazelip has donated a beautiful quilt to Birdsong. She would like to see it used to raise funds for the Center. We will raffle it off at the second Birdsong Plant Sale on Saturday, March 23rd at 1 pm. Raffle tickets are available and the quilt can be seen at the Birdsong greeting station from now until March 23rd. The quilt is throw-sized, at 54 x 78 inches. It is very colorful and has a central panel displaying images of four local songbirds - Carolina Chickadee, American Robin, Common Yellowthroat, and Eastern Bluebird – in a repeating pattern, all surrounded by a pale green and gold patterned border. It is beautiful and would make a lovely springtime gift for someone special, perhaps your favorite bird enthusiast!

For more information and raffle rules call (229) 377-4408.

NEW TRACTOR UPDATE

We have purchased the new tractor and it will arrive next week! Thanks to all of you who donated to the New Tractor appeal, we received the total needed amount right at the end of the year. Our land manager, Alan Parker, did extensive research on tractors similar in power and capability to our old John Deere 3010 and visited the local south Georgia dealerships. There was some difficulty in finding exactly what we wanted – most tractors are now sold with a cab for the comfort of the operator (including air conditioning, music, and entertainment options!) but we did not want one of those because it would interfere with the work Alan does when we burn – operating the water tank and going off-road into the woods to put out trees that are on fire.

The Tallahassee AgPro dealer was able to locate the tractor we wanted: a 2024 5067E John Deere, open operator station, no diesel re-gen particulate filter; with a front loader, grapple, and third function (to manage the grapple attachment), and a good warranty plan. The total cost was \$62,407.17, which included an 8% non-profit discount. The money that you, our members and donors raised totaled \$62,700.92, so we have \$293.75 left to spend on fuel!

Our staff and volunteer burn crew are very excited and can't wait to see the new tractor in action. We are ready to get burning as soon as possible. When the tractor arrives, we'll do a Facebook post and share photos of our new workhorse-to-be. Thank you very much to all who donated – because of you we now have a reliable, powerful machine and can get our burning done. This is a game-changer. The attachments will also give us a lot more capacity to do all kinds of land management repairs and projects. Thank you!



LAND MANAGEMENT WORKDAYS **Thursdays: March 14 and 28, April 11 and 25** **9am to noon**

We have lots of land management projects to work on this spring and could really use your help. Many of these projects are in support of our burn program. If you enjoy working outdoors with good-natured companions, we have opportunities for you. Alan Parker, our land and site expert, will take us out to work on projects such as raking and clearing around trees and snags prior to burning; removing unwanted shortleaf saplings, sweet gums and other hardwoods from the longleaf pine site; and clearing the trails and fire lanes of any fallen trees and overhanging limbs.

Be prepared for the weather and bring work gloves. If you have a favorite pair of loppers, a saw, or other tools, you are welcome to bring them, but we do have tools on site. There will be water and a snack on the truck; bring a sandwich if you want to have lunch together and we'll provide drinks and dessert.

Please let us know you are coming so we can prepare for lunch and/or contact us for more information: call 229-377-4408 or email kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org.

BIRDSONG BUTTERFLY GARDEN
Volunteer Workdays
First Thursdays, March 7 and April 4
9 to 11 AM

Spring is famously a time of renewal. New growth emerges from established plants, seeds sprout, and leaf and flower buds swell and open. Before the heat sets in, spring is also a good time to add new plants and tackle other maintenance and beautification projects that improve conditions for pollinators and the visitors who come to see them. In March, the butterfly gardeners will spread compost, lay new sod in areas left bare by sod webworm damage, and plant concentrated patches of diverse and colorful wildflowers. Purple Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan, Coreopsis and Gaillardia are a few of the species that will be added.

Come join us this spring! Volunteers are always welcome on the first Thursday of every month to plant, weed, chat, and enjoy this quiet corner of Birdsong. No gardening experience is necessary, just a desire to work alongside friendly folks and pick up a wealth of plant and pollinator knowledge at the same time.

The next workday is Thursday, March 7, from 9-11 am. Contact Donna Legare (dlegare@comcast.net) if you have any questions.

-Ann Morrow
Butterfly Garden Volunteer

ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPING: GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Field Trip and Native Plant Tour
Saturday, April 6, 2024, 9am – 12:30pm

\$15 per person. All funds support Birdsong Nature Center's Butterfly/Pollinator Garden

The tour begins at Native Nurseries, where we will form carpools. Come early, at 8:45, if you would like to see their Secret Garden, where the mountain laurel should be in full bloom. We will divide into two groups. One group will visit the yard of Ann and Don Morrow, which provides an excellent example of how to create and manage a healthy urban forest. They have seen 88 species of birds in their yard and have heard or seen another 34 species fly over the property.

The other group will go to the home of the retired co-founders of Native Nurseries, Donna Legare and Jody Walthall, to see how their yard has changed over 30 years of planting native plants. Their typical in-town suburban home featured 100% non-native landscape plants other than the large trees when purchased in the early 1990s. They will discuss how to manage a mostly native yard for wildlife, while making it attractive to neighbors as well.

The two groups will then switch yards so that everyone will tour both yards. The two groups will then reconvene as one group at the home of Jim Stevenson and Tara Tanaka, which features a 45-acre swamp with an active wood stork rookery – so bring your binoculars. They have managed the property through the planting of a diversity of native trees and shrubs. The backyard is designed to enhance the view of the swamp for wildlife observations while providing food and cover for birds and other wildlife. A light snack will be served at Jim and Tara's as we regroup. We should return to Native Nurseries by 12:30pm.

Group size is limited, and reservations are required. **Please call or text Donna Legare at 850 386-1148.** Payment needs to be made by check (made out to Birdsong Nature Center) or cash and mailed or dropped off at Native Nurseries, 1661 Centerville Rd., Tallahassee, FL 32308.

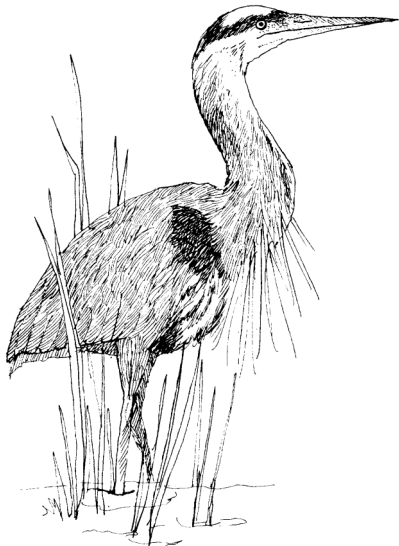
SPRING BIRD WALKS

Saturday, March 16 and Saturday, April 13
8:00am to 11:00am

Spring Migration at Birdsong is an exciting time to enjoy birds. Several bird species will stop by to rest and refuel as they continue to their breeding grounds to the boreal forests and tundras of Canada and Alaska. We'll be looking for migrating warblers, vireos, grosbeaks, and hopefully see Indigo Buntings and Chimney Swifts. We'll also be on the lookout for year-round birds, such as Cardinals, Carolina Wrens, Eastern Towhees, Woodpeckers, and some of our frequent visitors at Farm Pond like Wood Ducks, Great Egrets, and Belted Kingfishers.

The walk will be led by Adam George, a naturalist, guide, and certified Master Birder with Birds Georgia. Please save your space and RSVP by emailing birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org or calling 1 (229) 377-4408 by noon on the Friday before the walk. The maximum number of participants for these walks is capped at 15. Please bring binoculars if you have them and be prepared for hiking through the fields and woods around Birdsong. Wear muted colors.

\$8 members, \$10 non-members. **RESERVATIONS REQUIRED**



FREE FAMILY DAYS **First Saturdays: March 2 and April 6**

On first Saturdays of the month admission is free and we 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, get to know the property, and visit the Bird Window and Butterfly Garden.

Admission: free

TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE **In the Springtime!**

Saturday, April 27
9:30 – Noon

Celebrate our recent Earth Day (April 22) and the wonders of springtime with your favorite child or children. Leaders Sandra Sallee and Carolyn Cohen will take you on a natural adventure in the woods at Birdsong. To honor this special time of year, give an ongoing gift to your child: an appreciation of the Earth, our home; a better understanding of where they live; and the use of all their senses at this lively time of year. Walk the trails and search for evidence of animal homes, signs of their presence, and springtime behavior. The birds will be singing and feeding babies! Enjoy the fresh air, some exercise, and explore nature with your child in the great outdoors. After the walk Sandra and Carolyn will help your child make several natural crafts they can keep and enjoy.

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE. Call or email by Friday, April 26th to reserve your space.

\$5 Friends, \$7 nonmembers, children half-price. Includes a handout and resource list for year-round activities with children.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

February 16, 2024

Weather We have had some good cold weather this winter, along with the odd series of warm days here and there. Of note was the extended cold spell of about a month ago, when the temperature went down in the 20's every night for a 5-day period. This is unusually cold for us, and along with everyone else, we went through the extensive process of protecting things as best we could, by turning off and draining all the waterlines to the old outbuildings and houses. We were very fortunate and came out of it with no damage to our ancient pipes and outdoor faucets and restroom.

We've also had some nice extended rainstorms come through: one brought 2.9 inches of rain in January, and one brought 2.7 inches in February with a total of 7.24 inches of rain since January 1st. We are pleased to have the soaking rains; the water levels will be good for spring budding and blooming.

Signs of Spring We passed Imbolc on February 1st, the half-way mark between the winter solstice and spring equinox. Typically, we start to see early signs of spring after this. For the past few weeks here at Bird-song, we have noticed that the local songbirds have started to sing and the males are showing up in bright courtship colors. The wild azalea in front of Lynn's office, always the first one to bloom, is now fully open and attracting bees on a warm afternoon – but only the buds at the very top of the shrub opened. We hope the rest did not freeze.

Walking on the trails in wooded areas, you may notice a few bright yellow blossoms on the ground. These are the spent flowers of Carolina Jessamine, a native vine that is the first thing we see blooming in the woods. If you look up, you'll see garlands of vines winding along branches, dotted with cheerful yellow flowers.

In the middle of the trails, you will also see Quaker Ladies, a small, spreading plant related to bluets. It has tiny white flowers with four petal-like lobes, making the flower look square, apparently reminiscent of the white collars on dresses worn by Quaker ladies. Also found in the middle of the trails are the earliest tiny purple violets, sometimes tucked in with their Quaker Lady friends. Southern red maples scattered along the sloughs and drains are in bloom, looking like a deep red mist from a distance.

Purple Martins Another sign of spring: we saw our first Purple Martin on Thursday, February 15th! A beautiful male came sailing by, calling vigorously and soaring over the house. He kept moving, didn't settle in, but the following day there were two, a male and female, perched on the crossbars and investigating the gourds, chortling and calling.

With all the rainy weather predicted late last week, we weren't sure we'd be able to have our Spring Birding Hike. We finally decided to go ahead and try it, so an intrepid group went out with Adam George early on Saturday to see what birds we could find on a drizzly gray morning. We had a few good sightings from the parking area down toward the barn and were talking about the Martins having shown up the two days before. We stood directly under the gourds chatting about Martins when one of our birders said "Look!" The male was calmly gazing down on us from the doorway of the gourd, just a few feet above our heads. The Martins had been sleeping in on a rainy day – it wasn't until we came back from the walk a couple of hours later, that both birds flew out of that gourd...it was a good morning to stay in! We were pleased they had spent the night.

Land Management Alan Parker and our land management volunteers have been hard at work doing projects and getting ready for burning. They spent one workday removing encroaching shortleaf pine trees from the House Pasture, which we are trying to keep as a field. The volunteers have also been preparing the northwest and northeast corners of the property for burning: removing branches from the firelane so Alan can harrow, and raking around snags throughout the woods. This will make our burning go much faster, as well as protect these good wildlife habitat trees.

The New Tractor We are expecting to have the new tractor on site by the end of next week, so once Alan has had a chance to drive it and get comfortable with the new equipment, we will get burning! Our staff and crew can't wait – we have a lot of catching up to do, but now we can look forward to getting out in the woods and starting a fire without worrying about whether the tractor will make it through the day or not. Once again, thank you to everyone who supported the purchase of the new tractor, and we will keep you posted on our progress!

The Tiny Bats For the third year, we have found a tiny bat roosting in the Barn over the winter. The first year, we clearly had a couple, male and female, who could be identified by their individual habits and behavior. She had very distinctive coloring and behavior, was very active, loved to have her "arms" stretched out, did a lot of feeling around and grooming, and would playfully poke and shove her companion around now and then. The male was more reserved, darker in color, and generally kept a very still posture with his wings folded, noticeably different from his active companion. Late in the season that year, we even witnessed them mating, so our assumptions about who was who were confirmed. Last winter, only the little female was present from early January to late March.

She was her former busy self, wings stretched out most of the time, moving around. We wondered what had happened to her mate. We didn't see another bat with her all season. In December, we found the little female snuggled up with a companion in their usual roosting location. We weren't sure if it was the same male as the first year, but this little bat looked very much like him and generally remained very still, wings folded, while she was stretched out and busy. In early January, through the 12th, we checked on the bats and found only the little female. After that, no bats at all were seen until January 30, and then only the male was present. Ever since, up until today, he has been by himself every time, wings folded, elbows out, very still. We feel a little heartbroken, to think that perhaps the female is gone. She had quite the personality and taught us a lot about bats. We will be watching to see what happens over the next month with the one remaining. He is very patient with us when we visit, like they all have been. It is dark in there and we only spend a few moments to take photos and record the bat's presence, but he mostly ignores us. Lately he has started vibrating when we check on him. This is something we witnessed the first year in both bats. We'll let you know what we observe. We really miss that little female and can't help but wish she'd show up again.

I keep calling them "little". These are Eastern Pipistrelle bats, our smallest southeastern species, and they measure about 1.5 inches in length hanging upside down from their perch on the ceiling. From the back, they have soft, short, grey fur, often not well-groomed, looking a little bed-headed, and they resemble a plump mouse in shape and size.

Beavers Our energetic, on-site ecological engineers have been busy – in a new place! Beavers have not been active for several years at Big Bay Dam spillway, until last week. There must be a new family in the Bay, and they have piled up sticks and lilies and mud in a beautiful horseshoe at the cement spillway and raised the water level of the 30-acre Swamp an entire foot! We really don't mind, as this can help us with one aspect of our burning this year, by keeping fire from crossing an area near the wild azalea garden. A less fortunate beaver-related find at the Upper Pond is a new breach in the Upper Pond Dam. This does not appear to be due to recent burrowing but may have happened along a weakness from repair work we did in the same area many years ago. We love our beavers, but maintaining this friendship is work!

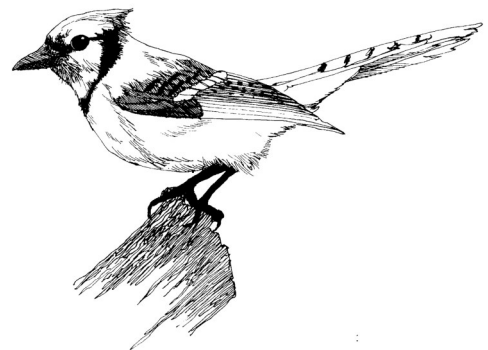
The Bird Window Things have been lively at the Bird Window this winter. Our local residents are ready and waiting for Lynn when it is bird feeding time first thing in the morning. When the weather is cold like this and the birds are busy and hungry, we will feed several times a day. When our co-founder Betty was still here

living in the house the Bird Window was also her reading room. Throughout the day she kept an eye on the birds and would feed up to seven times a day.

As we've mentioned before, over the last four or five years we've seen a distinct change in our winter bird visitors. No longer do we have the crowds of American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, and Yellow-rumped Warblers that were common all winter long. We get excited to see one or two of those at this point. Nevertheless, we do get a lot of wonderful birds and here is a list of our more common locals that have been recorded frequently since the first of the year: Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, Blue Jay, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Crow, Northern Mockingbird, and Black Vulture. We have also seen a lot of nice winter residents and occasional visitors: Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Pine Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. We've been pleased to have up to four White-throated Sparrows visiting regularly. Our most unusual visitor has been an Ovenbird that was seen at the Window for several days in a row. We also have a teenaged raccoon that has gotten way too comfortable eating in the trough at the Window. He or she comes in every day, which is delightful for our human visitors, but he is an eating machine, and our birds need their seed!

We are on the verge of spring and a major change of seasons, so we urge you to come out and enjoy the woods in winter while you can. With few leaves on the trees, you can see far into the forest and see each individual tree. It is also a little easier to find birds up in the trees, and the views are wide and restful. There is nothing like a cold sunny morning at Birdsong where you can walk through the woods into the open Gin House Field and experience a sea of broomsedge under the clear blue winter sky.

-KDB



NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville
Kristin Travis
John Sons, Jr.

Tallahassee
Mark Tancig
Laurie Roughton
Christopher Akins
Suzanne Van Wyk
Jeff Meli
Julie Wammack

Other
Emelie & Jay Thomas Moultrie, GA
Hallie Hagood Havana, FL

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In Memory of Dawn Davis Hancock:
Valerie Rodden

In memory of Betty "B" Fraleigh O'Toole:
Alex and Jane Hinson

In loving memory of my Uncle Tracy and Aunt Judy Harrington:
Cheryl Burnett

In memory of Betty Jinright:
Barbara Jinright Collins

In loving memory of Elaine and George Acker:
Nancy Kranich

In honor of my sister, Kristine Dougherty:
Richard Anderson

In memory of Bob Bearss:
Kathleen Brady

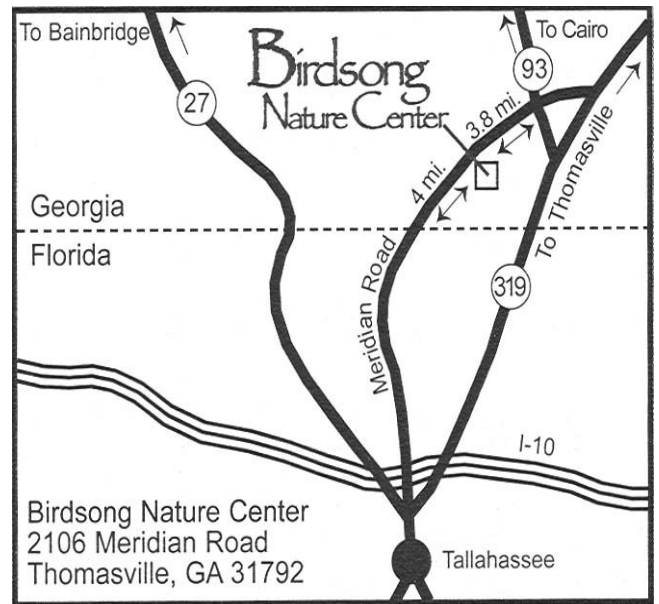
In memory of my sister, Jennifer Antista Gardner who passed away December 6, 2023 at age 64:
James and Marsha Antista

Special Financial Gifts:

Bill Everitt and Amelia Fusaro
The entire Candelario Family
John Thomas
Jane Elder & Ken Bernhard
The Riess Family
Stephanie Clapp
Nancy Barber
Sheff Wright
Julie Moore
Edward Eikman Family
Mark & Susan Baldino
Briarcliff Garden Club
Cheryl Burnett & Roland White
Mark Phillips & Jan Bordelon
Linda & Stewart Fleming
Apple Lane Foundation
Community Foundation of South GA, Inc.
 Ellery and Robin Sedgwick Fund
The George E. Crouch Foundation

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| Birdsong Nature Center Board of Directors 2023-2024 | |
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DIRECTIONS:

From Tallahassee: Meridian Road north, 4 miles past FL/ GA border 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".

NON-PROFIT
 ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE
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*Birdsong Nature Center
 2106 Meridian Road
 Thomasville, GA 31792
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