

Birdsong Nature Center

January-February 2015

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January

Fri.	Jan. 2	Closed
Sat.	Jan. 3	Re-open
Sat.	Jan. 10	Gopher Tortoise Survey
Thu.	Jan. 15	Invasives Removal Work Day
Sat.	Jan. 17	Winter Birding at Birdsong
Sat.	Jan. 24	Winter Trail Ride

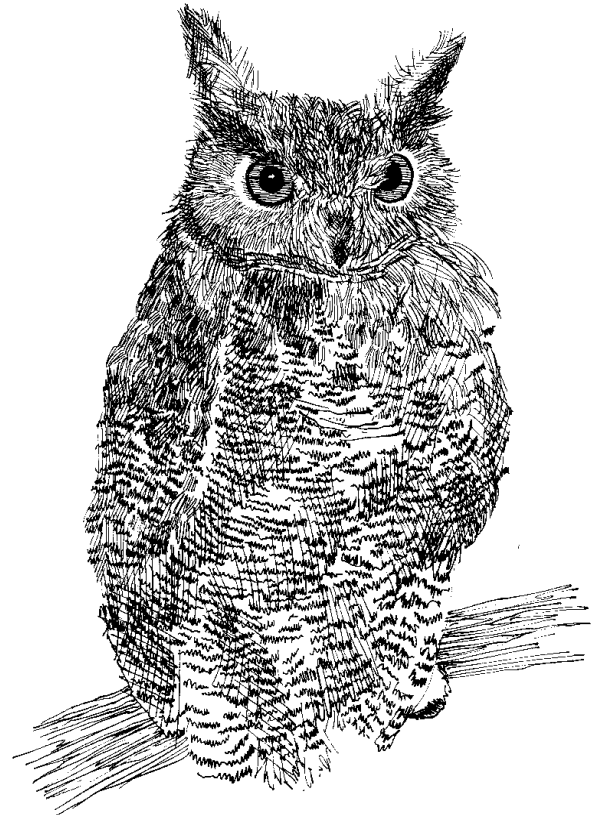
February

Call in early February about field trips to Wolf Creek Trout Lily Preserve

Thu.	Feb. 5	Butterfly Garden Work Day
Sat.	Feb. 7	Take a Child Outside in the Winter!
Fri.	Feb 13 to	Great Backyard Bird Count
Sun.	Feb. 15	Great Backyard Bird Count
Thu.	Feb. 19	Invasives Removal Work Day
Sat.	Feb 21	Gopher Tortoise Survey

Upcoming Events

Sat.	Mar. 7	Red Hills Initiative Field Trips
Fri.	Mar 13	Longleaf Pine Workshop
Sat.	Mar. 21	Old Timey Plant Sale



BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER

WEB SITE: www.birdsongnaturecenter.org

EMAIL: birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org

TWITTER: @BirdsongNatureC

FACEBOOK: Birdsong Nature Center

YOUTUBE: Birdsong Nature Center



BIRD WINDOW AND TRAIL HOURS

Wednesday	9 AM - 5 PM
Friday	9 AM - 5 PM
Saturday	9 AM - 5 PM
Sunday	1 PM - 5 PM

Bird Window and Nature Trails

Welcome to Birdsong! Enjoy the beauty and serenity of the Bird Window and learn to identify resident and visiting birds up close. Walk the Nature Trails to observe wildlife in a variety of habitats and enjoy the sounds of nature at the Listening Place. Before you leave, you may want to visit the Chickadee Corner Gift Shop. We hope you enjoy your stay!

All visitors please sign in at the Registration Center. Trail maps are provided. Pets, trash and fires are not permitted.

Registration

Please register for all programs by calling or emailing: (229) 377-4408, 1 (800) 953-BIRD, Birdsong Office
Fax line (229)-377-8723, or birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org

Dear Birdsong Members,

We feel it is important to let you know that in the interests of sustaining the long-term financial stability of the Nature Center our Board of Directors has begun giving serious consideration to increasing membership dues sometime in the coming months. We will let you know more about this in future communications - we have not yet determined all of the details. While we do not foresee a major increase in membership dues, we do understand that this is an important consideration for our members and we do not take this step lightly.

As you may know already, Birdsong is a privately supported non-profit organization, founded in 1986, and receives no public funding for operations. While membership dues form an important part of income needed to operate the Center, those fees have not changed since they were established at our founding in 1986! Meantime, costs of operating have increased dramatically, as you can well imagine from your own personal experience.

We will let you know more about membership dues in coming months. Please know that at the heart of this and other fundraising efforts, our goal, though not simply attained, can be simply stated: to maintain this unique, beautiful place for future and current generations alike. It is our fondest wish that Birdsong continue to be a great value to its members, and the irreplaceable asset to our community that it has become.

As the New Year approaches, on behalf of Birdsong's Board, I offer our sincere thanks to all of you - our loyal members, generous donors, dedicated volunteers and staff. Birdsong is here today because of all that you do, and you are equally irreplaceable. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Joe Peresich
Board President



BIRDSONG'S OLD TIMEY PLANT SALE
Saturday, March 15, 2014, 9AM to 1 PM
Please join us for the Old Timey Plant Sale in March!
Call 229-377-4408, 1-800-953-2473 or email:
birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org

For more information, see our website: www.birdsongnaturecenter.org

SPRING-FLOWERING TREES

One early harbinger of spring glows like a torch in yards all over Tallahassee, the Taiwan cherry tree, often in bloom by mid February. Unfortunately, it's heartbreak time: we cannot love this tree anymore. It is now considered an invasive exotic, and environmentally responsible nurseries won't sell it.

Breaking up is hard to do, but there are a lot of other pretty faces out there, with nicer personalities. You can check them all out at Birdsong's Old-Timey Plant Sale on Saturday March 21. Here are just a few of the small, charming, spring-blooming trees that can quickly help you get over Taiwan cherry.

The old native favorite Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) blooms as early as the Taiwan cherry and has the same graceful form. Its rose pink flowers come before the leaves, making it a bright show in the bleak late winter landscape. Redbud is a fast grower, and will be a good-sized tree in five years.

Where the magenta flowered Redbud might be considered by some to be a little on the gaudy side, another small tree, the Silverbell (*Halesia diptera*) is elegantly graceful. Its delicate silvery bell-shaped flowers dangle from the tips of the branches. It blooms a little later than Redbud in the spring.

Fringe Tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) will slowly grow to be a 20-foot tall tree, but even when it is still a bush it will be covered with its pale flower panicles, adding a light element to the varying greens of emerging mid-spring foliage. Fringe Tree's flowers are the color of coleslaw made with a young cabbage and lots of mayonnaise, but the fragrance is like vanilla. When the flowers are finished the Fringe Tree disappears into all the other greens of summer, but it steps out again in the fall with its big yellow leaves.

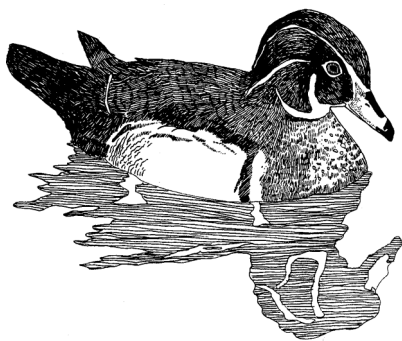
A very unusual tree with many striking features is the Ashe Magnolia (*Magnolia ashei*). This tree has everything! Its branches swoop out from the trunk and then curve up like antlers, with a silvery pointed bud on every stem, giving it a starkly graceful winter form. In early spring these buds open to huge leaves, then the flowers come. These are the biggest flowers you've ever seen -- one foot across, and very fragrant. They cover the tree in mid spring. Ashe Magnolia is rare in nature, and is endemic only to the Florida panhandle. But it is easy and fast to grow. You will be rewarded early by the spectacular flowers as the tree begins to bloom at a young age.

The handsome bright red candelabra-like blooms of the Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*) emerge just in time in spring to give a nectar meal to the returning hummingbirds. Its rich green, deeply veined palmate leaves give it a robust summer shape and in the fall the interesting shiny brown seeds split out of their furry cover like a deer's antlers in velvet. Even in the dead of winter the Red Buckeye can cheer you up with its big fat leaf buds at each branch tip, full of the promise of spring.

All these spring-flowering trees are not only beautiful to look at; they enrich their environment by providing food for the native creatures they share it with. Unlike that cold-as-a-statue Taiwan cherry, these are generous, giving trees. Think of a beautiful woman who can also shuck oysters, sail a boat, run a small business, and teach a child to read. Plant one of these trees in your yard and everyone will be happy.

These trees are all listed in the catalog of "Good Doers" in Gil Nelson's book Best Native Plants for Southern Gardens. They are easy to grow and sure to please.

- June Bailey White
Plant Sale Chair



WINTER BIRDING AT BIRDSONG

Saturday, January 17

8AM to 11 or so

Enjoy a leisurely morning of winter birding with Marvin Collins. We will visit a variety of excellent birding habitat including open oldfield, pine woods, swamp and mixed hardwoods. The hike will wrap up with a visit to the Bird Window, which is typically a very busy place in the winter months. Dress for the weather and be prepared for hiking three or four miles. Bring binoculars, water and a snack.

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE. Call or email to let us know you are coming by 4PM Friday, January 16th.

\$4 Friends, \$8 non-members.

TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE IN THE WINTERTIME!

Saturday, February 7

9:30-11:30AM

Bring your favorite child to Birdsong and let them lead you on a natural adventure in the winter woods with Sandra Sallee. Give an ongoing gift to your child: an appreciation of nature, a better understanding of the where they live, and use of all their senses. We will walk the trails to search for evidence of animal homes, sign, and winter behavior. Enjoy the fresh air, some exercise, and time with your child in the great outdoors. We will collect natural materials along the way and create a craft upon returning to the Barn.

\$3 Friends, \$5 nonmembers, children half-price. RESERVATIONS PLEASE by Friday February 6th, so we know how many to prepare for. Includes a handout and resource list for year-round outdoor activities with children.

WINTER MORNING TRAIL RIDE

Saturday, January 24

10:00AM - Noon

Join Executive Director Kathleen Brady for a leisurely winter morning trail ride. We will make a number of stops to discuss Birdsong's ecology, land management and history, including places such as the Star Pasture, Farm Pond, the Listening Place, and others. We will point out gopher tortoise burrows, and look for birds and signs of wildlife.

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE. Please call by noon on Friday, January 23rd to reserve a space. We will be taking the truck and trailer and there is room for 12 people. Be prepared to be outdoors for several hours; dress for the weather and bring binoculars.

\$6 Friends, \$10 nonmembers, children half-price.

INVASIVES REMOVAL WORK DAYS

Thursdays, 9:30AM to Noon

January 15 and February 19

Join us this winter to clear out non-native invasive plant species from Birdsong's building and garden sites. We will be removing large old *Ligustrum* or privet, tallow trees, camphor trees, and mid-sized shrubs including all of the above as well as cherry laurel, *Lantana*, *Nandina*, and *Ardisia*.

This is part of a property-wide effort this year to remove invasives and control their spread. The old home and barn site is a nursery for many of these now unwanted species, so your presence at these workdays will help reduce this problem over the entire property and give us the opportunity to then plant desirable and regionally appropriate natives. Please call or email to let us know you will be coming: birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org, or 1(800)953-2473. Dress for the weather, bring chain saws, bow saws, loppers, clippers, shovels and work gloves. Water and a snack provided.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

December 10, 2014

Weather It is a beautiful, cold, crisp day with not a cloud in the sky. Winter has begun, even though the solstice is a few weeks away. The temperature has been up and down, with several weeks of warm humid weather culminating in a long-lasting rain event after Thanksgiving. A dry cold front is passing through this week, with bright windy days like this one, making it really feel like winter.

Fall Birdsong has been a colorful place for the past two months, with hardwood trees displaying the full spectrum of fall leaf color and with trees and shrubs loaded with berries and fruit. In October it didn't look like we would get much color this year, but then came the freezes and what followed has really been beautiful. It peaked over the Thanksgiving weekend. It is always amazing to be reminded of how many big beautiful hardwood trees we have across the entire property, and at this time of year we get to see each one with its individual coloring. The variety and range of shades has been so pleasing, from the gold of hickories to the peach and red of sourwoods, the orange of cherries, the mix of bronze and brown of oaks, the intense red of maples and black gums, to the purple of sweet gum. As beautiful as these all are on a sunny day, the landscape can be even more striking on a foggy morning of an overcast day; the leaves appear to be lit from within, and the colors are vivid and intense. A walk in the woods when this is happening is an all-encompassing sensory experience, with the sound of fallen leaves underfoot, a breeze in the branches, the scent of damp leaves and pine needles, and the tapestry of color unfolding along every trail. Not to be missed!

Screech Owl In late October, Bob Dunn, a visitor from Tallahassee, mentioned that he had seen a Screech Owl roosting in broad daylight in a pine tree near the parking area the week before. He happened to see it when getting into his car to leave and had tried to get a photo. I thought that was wonderful – we seldom see or hear them so a sighting is a big deal, especially so close to where people are moving around. Ten minutes later, Bob came back and said, “He’s there right now”, and we went out and looked, and there it was, a small gray-form Screech Owl, perched on a curving longleaf pine bough about 25 feet above the ground near the picnic tables. The little owl was apparently sleeping, with his eyes shut and face tucked down toward his breast, but “ears” visible. He (for ease in discussing this) was quite puffed up. It was a cold day, we’d had a frost the night before, and he was located in a sunny spot. Bob and his guests got a few pictures before leaving, and I checked on the owl a number of times before I went home that night and he was still there. He apparently liked that spot very much and was seen there several times over the following week, always on the same branch. He was there on the afternoon of November 15th when Marvin and I led a Dusk Woods Walk, and off and on over the following weeks. A lot of us have gotten to see him frequently, including a number of our volunteers. Nancy

Thomas got some very nice photos of him, which will be posted on our Facebook and Twitter sites. The Candelario-Albritton families were here on November 28th for their monthly workday and did some invasives removal for several hours right underneath him in the longleaf pine area. At first he drew himself up and got very narrow with his ears straight up and eyes open, from a distance looking like a longleaf pine cone, but then after a while, he settled back down and puffed up, closed his eyes and did not budge the rest of the day. A few days later, the weather warmed up and the little owl was nowhere to be found. Then the latest cold front came through this past Tuesday, and there he was again and has been ever since, on his perch in exactly the same place during daylight hours. Apparently he loves to roost during the day in a sunny place when the weather is cold. If it is a warm day, he goes off elsewhere out of the sun. It has been wonderful to see him there every day, apparently unperturbed by our nearby activities. It will be interesting to see how long this goes on. If you have a camera with a good zoom feature, you may get an excellent photo – he is in full view, unobstructed by leaves or branches.

The Bird Window This is the time of year, from about late October to early January, when birds do not appear to need what we offer at the Bird Window. We get first-time visitors coming out who say, “We were told that the Bird Window is a great place for watching birds; where are they?” For one thing, our resident birds have successfully finished nesting and have gotten all their offspring out fending for themselves, so they do not need us for that reason. We think they are out on all the wonderful wild food sources available now; there are berries, fruit, nuts, grass and other seeds in huge supply. It is fall harvest time, and there is plenty for all. Yaupon Holly is particularly stunning right now, branches laden with bright red berries. The persimmons, pears, and American beautyberry are being enjoyed by raccoons, foxes, and coyotes, as we can tell by their scat. On the morning of the Off the Beaten Trail walk we saw a huge flock of Robins arrive in the Mill Field woods where they promptly descended on the beautyberries that make up most of the understory there. Many of the winter visitors arriving now do not need the Bird Window either; for example Meadowlarks, or Fieldlarks, as Chuck insists they be called (because southern fields are fields, not meadows) remain in the open grassy Gin House Field habitat for the duration of their time here. Currently there is a flock of eight of them. We have had Phoebes calling all over the place, more abundant than I’ve seen before; one will occasionally visit the Window, but infrequently. We are starting to see flocks of Chipping Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers, and soon more migrants and winter residents will arrive in great numbers and eventually become a presence at the Bird Window. Some sightings since mid-October include Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Red-eyed Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Chipping Sparrow, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ground Dove, and in late October three frogs in the pool!

Northern Harrier A Northern Harrier has taken up hunting in the Gin House Field in the last few days. Watching a Harrier hunt may be one of the most intriguing sights you ever get to see. It is a large hawk, with a distinctive white rump patch, long tail, and an even more distinctive flying style. Ours is a female, known by her brown plumage and russet undercarriage. Males are pale gray and light underneath. She cruises slowly across the field from one end to the other, flying just above the top of the winter-form broomsedge, with a lilting, elegant wingbeat. This hawk has very large long wings, and moves so slowly you get to see all aspects of the motion involved. The Harrier watches the ground as it cruises along, making corrections to its course slowly and easily with its big wings. When it sees something of interest down in the grass, it will brake and turn and you can see the feathers of the wings engage, you can see the individual tail feathers spread and its entire body rotates, as it keeps its head level with its eyes on the prize. It is a wonderful sight and I hope that this bird remains with us for a while, so you get to observe this yourself.

We hope you will come out soon and enjoy Birdsong in the wintertime. The weather lets us stay out as long as we want, the woods are open and inviting, the leaves underfoot remind us of our childhood, and the broomsedge is that deep peach color seen only this time of year. Wildlife is out and on the move: the deer are leaving scrapes; the raccoons, fox, bobcat and coyote are leaving scat and tracks; gobblers are moving in groups; and there are mixed flocks of wintertime birds appearing across the entire property. You might even see a Screech Owl.

-KDB

GOPHER TORTOISE SURVEY

Saturday January 10

Saturday, February 21

9:30 to 11:30AM

We would be pleased to have your help with an ongoing project at Birdsong. We plan to survey the property and locate as many gopher tortoise burrows as possible over the next year. This is all part of an effort to understand more about our resident gopher tortoise population and to learn how to enhance gopher tortoise habitat at Birdsong. We will head out to a given area with our group, line up, spread out and walk a transect looking for burrows. We hope to cover a lot of territory this way. Whether we find burrows or not, it is a great way to get out in the woods and really get to know the property. Wear long pants and boots for protection walking through brush.

No charge, but RESERVATIONS, PLEASE. Group size limited to 12 people. Please call or email to reserve your space by 5PM on Friday, January 9th or February 20th.

18th ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Friday through Sunday at Birdsong

February 13 – 15

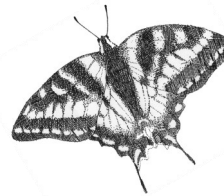
Self-guided or join a group led by Nancy Thomas

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), one of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Citizen Science projects, will be held February 13-16, 2015. Please have a look at the GBBC event description on their web page at www.birdsource.org for detailed instructions to create a free GBBC account for entering your observations. You are invited to count birds at bird feeders, in your yard, local parks or other outdoor locations, and then report your findings online at www.birdcount.org or at eBird.

Guided GBBCs will be offered on Friday, February 13th and Saturday, February 14th from 8:30am to noon, led by Nancy Ann Thomas. If you are interested, please call Birdsong to sign up and plan to meet Nancy in the parking lot at 8am.

If you prefer doing your own survey, come out and observe birds anywhere at Birdsong, including the Bird Window, for a minimum of 15 minutes and up to as long as you want, on any or all days of the bird count, and as many times as you want. (Birdsong is open 9 – 5, Friday and Saturday and 1 – 5 on Sunday, closed on Monday.) You can turn in your own results online at www.birdcount.org or pick up a tally sheet at the registration desk, go bird watching, fill the sheet out and leave it here at Birdsong and we will submit your results.

This is a chance for you to participate in what is now a worldwide citizen science bird count and you can help us by listing observations from Birdsong!



BUTTERFLY GARDEN

WORK DAY

February 5

9:30AM to Noon

Our Butterfly Garden volunteers usually meet on the first Thursday of the month to tend our beautiful Butterfly Garden. Please note the change to the January schedule, as January 1 is a holiday. Please call Donna Legare at (850)386-1148 or the Birdsong office at (229)377-4408 for more information.

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:



Program Volunteers

Sandra Sallee, for leading *Take A Child Outside for the Holidays!*
Marvin Collins, for co-leading *Explore Birdsong at Dusk*

Special Financial Gifts

The Jasper and Marthalene Davis Foundation

Memorial Gifts

In memory of Vincent Brady, from Elizabeth Fraleigh O’Toole, Randy and Marilyn Rhea, and Barbara White
In memory of Pat McTarsney, from Tara Boyter
In memory of Nan Singletary, from Harriet Hawkins

Special Thanks To:

Special thanks and congratulations to Allan Hernandez, who is now an Eagle Scout. For his Eagle project Allan designed, built, and donated three portable wooden bridges to enable visitors to walk across our Farm Pond spillway and for passage over the west spillway drain on the main trail near the cabin when these areas are under water due to flood events. We appreciate Allan’s excellent work and wish him well in all his future endeavors. Thank you, Allan.
Nancy Ann Thomas, our dedicated Friday Bird Window volunteer, for making another batch of suet cakes, her photos of the Screech Owl, helping visitors and taking such good care of the birds and the Bird Window. We appreciate all Nancy does!
Alan Strowd, for volunteering at the Bird Window every other Saturday. We also offer special thanks for his work on development of the 2015 budget.
The Candelario and Albritton families, our home school group from Valdosta, and the Albritton family guests, for their ongoing volunteering at Birdsong, this month for clearing out brush from the blueberry patch and longleaf grove, and cutting back Lantana. Thank you, Beth, for her kindness to the Birdsong staff.
Betty Ashler, for being a wonderful host and guide to the Dickey family from Texas on their recent visit. It was delightful to meet Dr. William Dickey and his family and friends on his return to see his childhood home.
Journey Robinson, for her photos of the Screech Owl.
Joe Peresich, for keeping our Facebook page and YouTube pages looking very nice, and for ongoing website management.
Tami Tomasello, for being our social media coordinator and managing our Twitter site so beautifully!
Butterfly Garden volunteers Donna Legare, Bob Bearss, Beth Grant, Myles Black, Yvonne Stinson, and Chris Alexander for keeping the Butterfly Garden beautiful!
Jay Bush, for ongoing improvements to the fire truck.
Donna Legare, for her traditional gift of a fragrant Fraser fir wreath for the porch.
Kathleen Reid Scott, for the live wreath for the office.

The 2014 Annual Appeal

There have been 58 generous gifts to the 2014 Annual Appeal. We offer our sincere thanks to each and everyone of you. A report on the campaign will appear in a later newsletter. Thank you.

Birdsong Nature Center Board of Directors 2014-2015	
President	Joe Peresich
Secretary	Margie McInnes
Treasurer	Bill Preston
Directors	
Jim Antista	Dale Aldridge
Woody Search	Joe Newborn
Brenda Coy	Jack Weiss

BIRDSONG’S CORPORATE SPONSORS
May Nursery
Monrovia Nursery
Native Nurseries
O’Toole’s Herb Farm
Trillium Gardens
The Great Bicycle Shop
Two Strong Women
Wild Birds Unlimited
Corporation Service Company
Deerwood, LLC
Cairo Family Medical Center

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

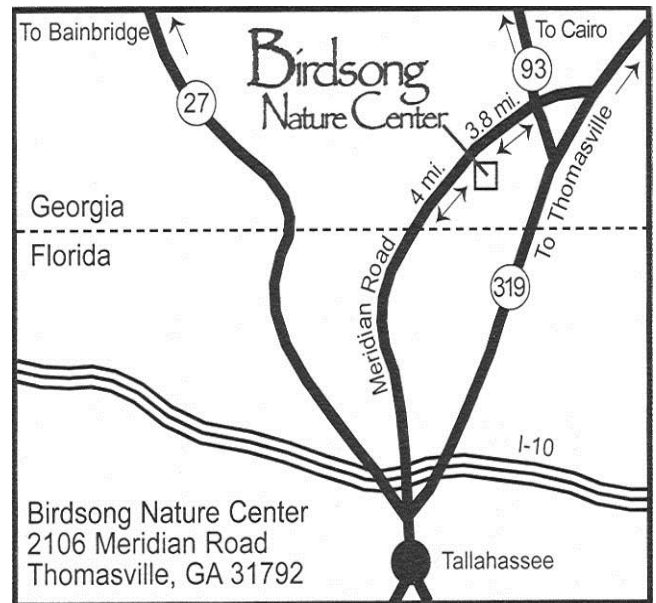
Tallahassee

Robert and Jeanne O'Reilly
Yan Yan Hu
Jim and Betty Joanos
Wayne Logan

Other Areas:

Andrea and Ben Murr
Journey Robinson
Terry and Patricia Akridge
Brian and Monica Oliver
Steve McGatha
Mark Stephens

Thomasville, GA
Cairo, GA
Cairo, GA
Brinson, GA
Thomasville, GA
Fort Myers, FL



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 Shell gas station onto Meridian Road, approximately 5 miles from Shell 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
PAID
TALLAHASSEE, FL
Permit No. 660

Birdsong Nature Center
2106 Meridian Road
Thomasville, GA 31792
Address Service Requested