

Birdsong Nature Center

July - August 2020

TRAILS OPEN WEEKENDS ONLY; HOUSE AND BIRD WINDOW REMAIN CLOSED.

*Hours: Saturdays 9 to 5
Sundays 1 to 5*

Please see our website at www.birdsongnaturecenter.org in advance of your visit for our COVID safety protocol requirements and to confirm the hours of operation below. These hours may change due to COVID concerns.

July

Saturdays and Sundays only, trails open
Open on July 4th, Independence Day
Free Family Day on Saturday, July 4th

August

Saturdays and Sundays, only, trails open through August 15
Free Family Day on Saturday, August 1
Center closed on Sunday August 16 – September 5

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

Please check our website www.birdsongnaturecenter.org at the end of every month for information about the following month's open/closed status and hours of operation. As of June 18 we expect the trails to be open on weekends only in July and early August, dates above.

Please note, The Center will be closed for the last two weeks in August for the annual summer break starting Sunday August 16 and trails will re-open on Saturday, September 5.

Dear Friends,

When Birdsong temporarily closed on March 25th due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we truly had no idea how long the closure might last. A month? Maybe two? That seemed unthinkable at the time. As it turned out, the closure endured for over eleven weeks. Birdsong began a phased reopening on Saturday, June 13th, 2020. The Center's shutdown, of course, came on the heels of having to cancel the Old-Timey Plant Sale just a week earlier due to the pandemic. While the past 11 weeks have been strange times for Birdsong members, volunteers, and staff, we realize that our challenging experience is just a tiny fraction of an even more difficult one shared by so many across the US and the world. We feel extremely fortunate that we can begin our first steps to reopening. Must certainly, we want to proceed in a manner that is as safe as possible for our visitors and staff. We recommend you see our website for Birdsong's reopening safety protocols and more scheduling details are provided in this Newsletter (above). Birdsong's Board will be reevaluating our phased reopening and safety protocols as the weeks progress, and we will update as needed. Presently, it appears we will continue having trails open on weekends through the month of July. But please check our website from time to time for changes.

As always, thank you so much for your support of Birdsong, and for your patience as we navigate these challenging public safety issues. We look forward to our friends and visitors enjoying a safe and rewarding experience on the trails at Birdsong. Until next time, our warmest wishes to our awesome members, volunteers, donors and visitors – please take good care and keep safe.

Sincerely,

Joe Peresich

Board President

THE 2020 OLD-TIMEY PLANT SALE
A Plant Sale in the time of COVID

Birdsong's 14th annual Old-Timey Plant Sale didn't happen this year. In early March we thought we were all prepared to go forward in a safe way. Our trusty carpenters had installed two outdoor sinks for hand washing, we had gallons of hand sanitizer, and lots of room to spread out. But the very week of the sale we became alarmed at the rate of increase of the virus and made the difficult decision to call it off. It was a very disheartening experience. A lot of joyful energy goes into putting on the sale, but there was no joy in the work of stopping it.

Luckily we were able to cancel our order from Superior Tree Nursery. But our plant donors still had hundreds of plants they had lovingly tended and groomed for months. Our gardening friend Kristine Dougherty took \$400 worth of plants home and sold them to her neighbors when they held their daily neighborhood outdoor socially-distant happy hour. Gunilla Trull and Ute Shorn sold plants with an ingenious no-contact method from their yards and driveways on the honor system, requesting that people mail checks to Birdsong, which brought in over \$550. Another friend, Debbie Edgil, sold dozens of jars of marmalade she had made from local citrus and donated over \$600 in marmalade money to Birdsong, as well as selling plants remotely from her driveway. We offered private sales by individual appointment here at Birdsong for our Preview Party donors who had paid for the opportunity to attend the party and buy plants – they all insisted we keep the fee they paid as a donation to support the sale. These shoppers came one at a time and bought a lot of plants. So even with no glorious spring day sale, our faithful volunteers and donors saved us. Though Birdsong had substantial bills for advertising and a whopping restocking fee from Superior Tree Nursery we have managed to come out of this difficult time with a small profit. We thank you once again, Plant Sale Workers.

June White
Plant Sale Chair

Before we came to the painful conclusion that the sale had to be canceled, we had to figure out what to do with all the remaining plants already received from Mr. Ernest Koone, our wonderful wild azalea grower from north Georgia; from all our individual plant donors; and from June's collection of plants that she acquires and divides and nurtures all year long in preparation for the sale. We were very concerned about people from the general public not getting the message that the sale had been canceled, and because this sale now attracts well over 1000 customers in one morning, we felt we had to be prepared for the possibility of people arriving that day. We also knew we had to take care of all those plants, so they needed to be arranged to they could be watered for an indefinite time.

We called upon our intrepid Plant Sale volunteers, including several board members, and set up a work day to move all the plants to a special area behind the restrooms south of the Butterfly Garden. June designed a beautiful space where plants were arranged and grouped and then labeled and priced. Our volunteers arrived, moved plants into position, set up the sprinklers, figured out a way for customers to check out safely and, as usual, made the entire messy, awkward, difficult thing fun and easy, even while adhering to social distancing. Alan Parker and June White then provided us a marvelous Brunswick Stew lunch! Birdsong is so fortunate to have all these special people as volunteers. Many of them came back on the day of the sale to help in case of a crowd and fortunately most people had gotten the word, so it was not stressful at all and we did sell a few plants.

Thank you very much, to everyone who helped us through that disappointing week. Please see the list below for all who came out. We also thank the many people who are not named, but helped grow plants, and were signed up to volunteer for the sale. A special thanks goes to Dan Miller, who sat with June and myself and talked everything out as we made the final decision to cancel. Dan also played a special role in getting our wild azaleas ordered and brought here from north Georgia, and in placing and then canceling the Superior Tree order.

We also want to thank our Corporate Sponsors who all, without hesitation, told us to keep their sponsorship gift as a donation, in spite of the cancellation. Please see the names of these businesses below and please use their services whenever possible. We want to give them as much credit and as many business referrals as possible. We truly appreciate their kindness and support.

We could go on endlessly with thanks and appreciation for all the individuals who helped us throughout the year, getting ready as usual for the best plant sale ever... the food, the signs, the Party, the set-up, the deputies, the growers, the parkers, etc. Please know that we appreciated all your support. Meanwhile, we hope everyone is taking good care of

Mike Miller
Laninda Sande
Jan Blue
Dan Miller
Joe Peresich
Scott Ball
Margaret Tyson

Jim Antista
Michael Duggar
Buddy Holshouser
Sandra Sallee
Stanton Beazley
Bob Bearss
Alan Parker

Robert Allen
Kris Dougherty
Ben White
Lisa Reeves
Carolyn Cohen
Lynette Joye Hitt
Barbara White
Mary Janik

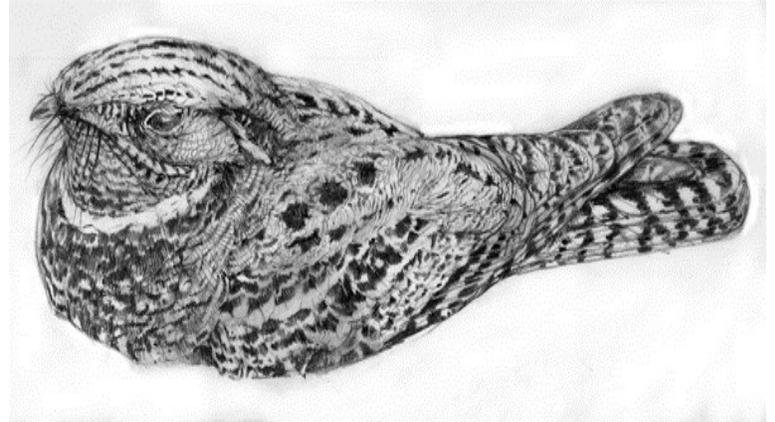
Birdsong Nature Center thanks our

2020 OLD-TIMEY PLANT SALE SPONSORS

Carroll and Company, CPAs
Hopping Green & Sams, P. A.
TNB Financial Service
Armstrong Tree Service
Import Authority
Chelsea Salon & Spa
Graco Fertilizer Company
Monrovia
Seminole Alterations
Target Print & Mail
John and Margret Brinson

FREE FAMILY DAYS
First Saturdays: July 4, August 1

We had set this opportunity up before COVID, but want to extend it to visitors in July and August, providing we are open. On first Saturdays admission will be 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. **Admission: free**



BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

Memorial Gifts

Lane and Susan Green, in memory of B O'Toole
Geo. D. Warthen Bank, in memory Vivian Herring

Special Financial Gifts:

Duane and Lynn Brown
Anonymous Stimulus Donation
John S Yow
Jeffrey Mandel
Phillip and Jane Parsons
Carolyn Cohen
Scott and Barbara Sibila
Tommy and Kim Verran

Special Gifts

“Birdsong Bathing Beauties” photo collection from BobDunn
Jo and Steve Ostrov for a gift to add a new trailside bench

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

June 13, 2020

Today we re-opened Birdsong's trails; the Center has been closed for about two and a half months. Back in March the arrival of the pandemic was shocking and disturbing enough, but now, months later, after weeks of deeply painful turmoil across the country and the world and yet more terrible COVID data, it can be hard to find any respite or comfort in daily life. We hope that Birdsong can offer you a place to go where you can connect to something real and living and beautiful, where you can walk among the trees and listen to the birds and insects and know that nature, in all its wildness and unpredictability, can offer you some stability and relief.

After closing the Center, staff continued to work and maintain basic organizational operations and stewardship of the land as best we could without volunteers. Mirhi and I were alternating days here and at home so there would be someone present each work day, while Alan maintained his regular schedule. Therefore there have been very few people on the property. We have a few observations to share that we think are related to having much less human activity here on the property.

Black Bear On April 18th, I got a call at home; Alan had found some very unusual scat in the middle of the driveway in front of the restrooms. One of the key features he described was the sheer amount – it was much bigger than any coyote scat he'd ever seen. I asked him to please send a photo and was surprised – I too have never seen scat like that before. It was too much and too big for coyote, our largest local mammal. Sparing you the details of the content and appearance, I looked up bear scat on line. There are a number of different styles, shall we say, but there it was – it looks like we had a black bear visiting Birdsong while no people were around. Right at the buildings!

A few years ago a friend of Chuck's reported seeing a mama black bear and two cubs crossing 319 from east to west, north of the entrance to Mandalay Plantation. This was big news, black bear sightings are rare around here, so over the following months we kept our eyes open for any indications of black bear presence on Birdsong but never saw a thing. The week before Alan's recent find, several nearby plantations had been conducting timber cuts – one of them was on Mandalay, our neighbor to the east. From the Birdsong office/gardens you can hear the very distinctive sounds of the equipment, not far from our east line at the south corner. This made me wonder if a bear had taken up residence on a large place like Mandalay, perhaps the noise and disruption of a timber cut had caused them to move along. This is all speculation; the point is –

we've never seen evidence of bear before and there it was. Alan and I were vigilant over the next few weeks, looking for any sign anywhere else on the place, but never did see more scat or any tracks. The sample has been kept in the freezer because it was such a rare find and in case of a need for review. (Well wrapped.)

Not having seen any other evidence of bear presence over the last two months we do not feel that there is any threat to people on the property. We are not concerned and do not think that our visitors have anything to worry about. If you see bear sign anywhere, be sure to let us know.

Chuck Will's Widow At the end of May Alan was mowing the lawns around the house and gardens and headed over to the Butterfly Garden. He made a cut along the east wooded perimeter heading north to the corner and right when he got to the crabapple trees, a huge bird flew down to the ground about 15 feet in front of the riding mower. Alan slammed on the brakes. The bird flopped around and limped and dragged its wings and moved a yard or two north before flying back up in a tree. Alan got to observe all this at very close range - it was a Chuck Will's Widow. After a moment or two, she went back to the ground and repeated the performance. Alan backed the lawn tractor out of there and came to tell me about it. We walked back to the site from the entrance of the Butterfly Garden and before we got to the bench by the crab apples, she did it again, clearly leading our attention north. So we edged away and later that day I taped the area off, so no one could inadvertently bother her and we have kept our distance ever since. We assume her nest site is on the ground in the woods right nearby.

Clearly, this Widow had a nest site on the ground very close by and likely had eggs or chicks in it. She put on a performance worthy of any diva. Chuck Will's Widows were quite common at Birdsong 20 years ago; we'd hear them on night walks and star watches quite often. They showed up again about three years ago and it was thrilling to hear that full-throated call at dusk again after so long. The first call we hear is usually in January or February after a board meeting – our board meets monthly (or used to) and it is dark at 7:30 when we wrap up – the birds like the front yard and the woods on the neighboring property all the way down to Chuck's house and into the Squirrel Woods. We've also heard them near the Barn and at Letz Mill. Each year we've heard the calls of up to 5 birds. So we know they are around, but they are quite reclusive and will stop singing and fly away if you get too close, so it was surprise for us to see one in broad daylight making such a dramatic scene. Apparently, this pair chose a site they felt was completely safe and un-visited by people, thanks to Birdsong being closed. It is very tempting to go check on them, but we've restrained ourselves....

If you are unfamiliar with the Chuck Will's Widow's song, go straight to the Cornell Lab site and look it up – it is one of the most evocative, heart-connecting, – unforgettable pieces of natural music you will ever hear. Out on a summer night, when several, or many, of them are calling and that haunting sound is ringing through the woods, you will deeply feel the privilege of being present and you will carry that experience with you forever. Unfortunately, because of habitat loss, our insatiable need from cutting down woods to make room for housing and gas stations this call is becoming more and more a thing of the past. So our Chuck Will's Widows are another precious part of nature we hope to keep providing a home for at Birdsong.

Ladies Tresses Orchids Every year in early summer the Ladies Tresses Orchids appear and we usually comment on them in the newsletter. These are native plants that we really don't see the rest of the year – they grow in the middle of our mowed roads, or that is where we typically see them. They show up as a spiral of tiny pure white orchids winding around the top of a threadlike stem about a foot tall. This emergence coincides annually with the beginning of trail mowing season. We can't allow the trails to be mowed when these little flowers bloom – we have to wait until they seed out and disappear again. This always presents a challenge for Alan, especially this year, when he was working hard to get the property in great shape in time for re-opening: we waited as long as we could, but there were still places where these orchids were in full bloom so some trails could not be mowed.

This bloom also seemed to happen later and longer than usual this year, and it was a banner year for *Spiranthes* – we've never seen so many of these orchids, and in so many places, for so long. Usually we get all excited because there are a few on the Gin House trail and on the Upper Pond Dam and along the south Bay trail. This year they were everywhere! And there were lots of them. Then they started to turn brown and seed out and disappear and we thought things were over, but then a whole new wave of blooming happened, and that went on for two more weeks. Many of the second wave of plants were smaller than the first, even more delicate, if that is possible. I talked to Wilson Baker about this and he explained that there are several species of *Spiranthes* although they are very similar in appearance. I am wondering now if the second wave is a different species and we have just assumed, in years past, that the bloom is over and go ahead and mow, not realizing that perhaps a second wave was coming. At any rate, we kept several trails unmowed to let the remaining flowers seed out. Now they are turning brown and will be gone soon. Alan is glad because now he can mow properly and have all the trails in beautiful shape for our visitors.

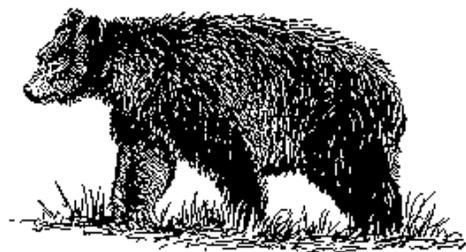
Bobwhite Quail In the three weeks or so prior to opening the trails we started hearing bobwhites calling. Both males and females will make the iconic “Bob white!” call, but

this time of year it is primarily unmated males that call. There is much more calling happening, and in many more places, than in prior years. The difference is noticeable. We assume this is because there has been so little human activity here in the past months. We have really noticed it of course where we spend the most time – around the office and house, where quail rarely hang out. They are in an intense mood, too, calling frequently and loudly! We hear them right behind the Bird Window, along the fence by the office, in the front yard, by the pump house, near the Barn and shed, they are all over the place nearby and we love it! We shall see if having the trails open now will make any difference.

Purple Martins This one has nothing to do with people being present or not – we just provided the housing and the nearby habitat. I am happy to report that we've had a great martin season: they got here early, and started strong with all ten gourds occupied with what appeared to be experienced parents. It has been one of the most vigorous, noisy, and happy martin seasons we've seen in years. Although this is the first time in decades that I have not been checking on the martins almost every day, I have been able to observe that every gourd raised a successful brood of babies and got every last one out and flying. No tragedies this year! Right now it looks like they will not be trying for a second brood, which is an enormous relief to a typically anxious, hovering martin-watcher like me. We are getting into that hot season that can be so hard on baby martins. We have fingers crossed that they will head for the coast soon

We sincerely hope that all of you are staying safe and healthy and managing to maintain some optimism. In the depths of a dismal national and global situation we keep looking for the good that can be forged out of this and for the next steps we can personally take to make things better than before. Birdsong is here for you; the trails are open and we welcome you back to find the relief you need on a walk out in the woods and fields of Birdsong.

-KDB



BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER

COVID-19 Re-Opening Plan, Phase 1

TRAILS OPEN, WEEKENDS ONLY, THREE WEEKENDS IN JUNE, STARTING JUNE 13 June 13-14, 20-21, and 27-28

This is the first stage of a phased re-opening plan starting June 13th, 2020. The trails, Listening Place and restrooms will be open to members and visitors on weekends only using the safety protocols described below. In order to minimize contact, *the House, Bird Window and Gift Shop will remain closed* for now. At the end of June we will revisit this schedule and report on any changes for the month of July.

Hours of operation: The trails will be open *on weekends only* in June, *starting June 13*

Saturdays 9 to 5

Sundays 1 to 5

Please note: *we are not open on weekdays.*

Please help us keep you and all other visitors and staff safe by following these safety protocols:

In advance of arrival: Admission is free to members, so if you are a member please check your bulletin for your expiration date. You can renew online. If payment at the checkpoint is necessary, our Greeter, Lynette Joye Hitt, will take all card information verbally. Please pay with credit or debit cards only (VISA, MC, Discover and American Express). If you need to pay with cash, **exact change is required**; to avoid contact, we will not have change available. Please bring a mask; a mask is required to get through the checkpoint. *Admission fees: members, free; non-member adults \$5, children under 12 \$2.50.*

Strategies for safe check-in: The parking area will be roped off to funnel cars to a checkpoint for registration. Lynette will be set up where she can speak to the driver of each vehicle coming in. Visitors will remain in their cars for check-in and the driver will wear a mask. Lynette will wear a mask and gloves for all interactions and maintain a 6-foot distance. She will record registration and credit card information given verbally by the driver (no exchange of pens, paper, etc.) and can proffer a box containing maps/handouts.

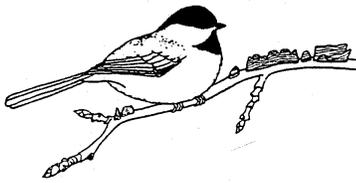
We require that a mask be worn by the driver of the vehicle for the duration of the time they are at the checkpoint. A mask will be provided if the driver does not have their own.

Parking: Vehicles will proceed to the Pecan Grove and park at least one parking space apart. Visitors will then have access to all the trails, the Listening Place, and the restrooms.

Use of the restrooms and Listening Place: We ask that visitors assist us in maintaining safe spaces for themselves and others. Disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be provided at both sites and we ask that visitors **please wipe down all surfaces before and after using the facilities** at both the restrooms and the Listening Place. There is a handwashing station at the bathrooms and one by the Barn. **A maximum of six people is allowed in the Listening Place at one time.** Please wear a mask when other people are in the Listening Place.

On the trails and elsewhere: Visitors are asked to maintain the prescribed six feet of social distance between themselves and any other visitors or staff they encounter anywhere on the property, including the restrooms, and masks should be used when approaching others at close range.

Thank you for your help and understanding as we try to provide our members and visitors with a safe experience. We hope you enjoy a wonderful visit and please let us know how these protocols are working for you. 229-377-4408, birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org.



Birdsong Nature Center

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Date _____

New Renewal

Credit Card Check Cash Paypal

Credit Card Account #

Exp. Date ____/____/____ Amount Authorized \$ _____ Authorization No. _____

Cardholder Signature _____

Name (Please print clearly) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Primary (____) _____ Alt (____) _____ EMAIL _____

Place of Employment: _____ Job Title: _____

Training, experience, interests: _____

How did you learn about Birdsong? From a member of Birdsong, the news media, word of mouth, our newsletter, etc?

Please be specific: _____

I would like to join the Friends of Birdsong in the following category:

- Individual Friend \$30 Bird Window and Nature Trails free during open hours.
Two free one-time guest passes.
Member discount on scheduled programs.
10% discount on items at the Chickadee Corner Gift Shop.
Bimonthly newsletter. Reciprocal general admission at participating nature centers nationwide (call for list).
- Family/Friends \$45 All of the above benefits for each member of the immediate household. Four free one-time guest passes.
- Friends of the Cardinal \$60 Five free one-time guest passes in addition to above.
- Friends of the Chickadee \$100 Six free one-time guest passes in addition to above.
- Business/Corporate Friend \$100-\$1,000 One free one-time guest pass for each \$10 of membership (ie., 25 passes for \$250) and recognition in newsletter. Call for more information.
- Friends of the Hummingbird \$250 Hummingbird feeder in addition to above.
- Friends of the Bluebird \$500 Bluebird nesting box in addition to above.
- Birdsong Naturalist \$1,000 Personal tour of Birdsong with Executive Director and/or Board Chair for up to 6 people. Call for more information.

I do not wish to receive any (above) benefits with my membership and would like the whole amount tax deductible.

I would like to support Birdsong by volunteering to help as follows:

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Window Instructor | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial/legal guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising | <input type="checkbox"/> Serve on Board of Directors | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greeter | (please submit resume) | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift Shop Assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (birds, nature walks, stars, etc.) | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Management | | _____ |

Memberships are renewable one year after the sign-up date. Members can upgrade to a higher category membership by sending the balance within the year. Memberships are deductible in part, depending on the value of goods and services received. Please call for information. Receipts stating the value provided and the deductible amount will be sent to those joining at the \$100 or higher level.

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Katy Tucker
Wiley and Abbey Watt
Catherine St. John

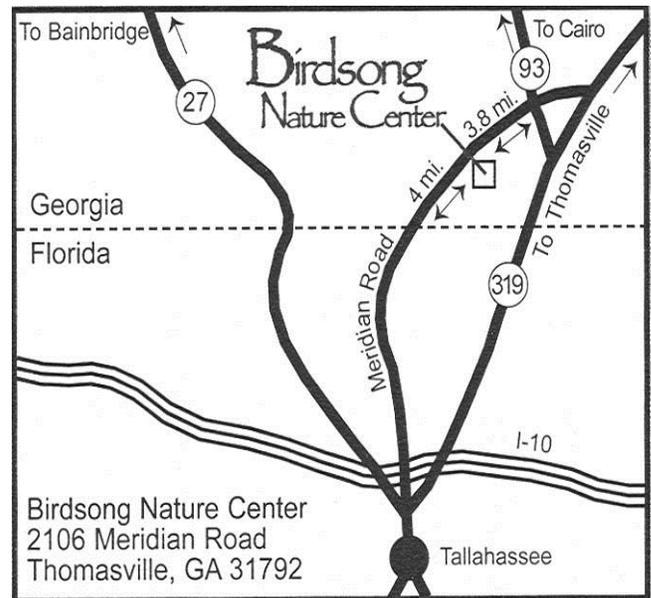
Tallahassee

Grace Maxey
Donna Gateley
Ann VanderMeer
Deana Lee Ponso
Kristin Dowell

Other

Dustin & Christina Pritchett
John Thorntoon

Moultrie, GA
Cairo, GA



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".

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TALLAHASSEE, FL
Permit No. 660

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