

Birdsong Nature Center

September - October 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.

September

Reopen September 5th

Saturdays and Sundays only, trails open
Free Family Day on September 5th

October

Saturdays and Sundays only, trails open
Free Family Day on Saturday, October 3rd

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 August 15 we expect the trails to be open on weekends only in September and October, hours above.

Dear Friends,

For countless businesses and organizations, especially small non-profits like Birdsong, the Covid-19 pandemic has wrought significant financial challenges to overcome. In response to the serious public health concern, major fundraising events and typical revenue-producing programming at the Nature Center have effectively been curtailed since March 2020. This cessation was due not only to publicly mandated cancellations, but also to an abundance of caution on our part in keeping visitors and staff at Birdsong as safe as possible. To address head-on the significant financial impact the pandemic has had on the Nature Center we are mounting a virtual and mail-in campaign to help raise much needed recovery funds for Birdsong. We recently US-mailed a *Summer Appeal 2020* letter to current and recent members and supporters which details Birdsong's status in this time of Covid. A link to that letter is on our web site Home page, www.birdsongnaturecenter.org. We hope that you will peruse the letter to gain insight into the effect the pandemic has had on Birdsong's operation, and if you can, please help in the Nature Center's financial recovery efforts by making a greatly appreciated donation to the Summer Appeal 2020.

To donate online please see the [Summer Appeal 2020 Donations](#) link on our Home page.

For those who have already given, we thank you for your kindness and generosity. Please know that your gift is making a big difference and is deeply appreciated.

Our sincere thanks for your generous support of Birdsong Nature Center. Please keep safe.

With warmest regards,
Joe Peresich, Board President

Summer Appeal 2020 Letter: [www.birdsongnaturecenter.org/Summer Appeal 2020.html](http://www.birdsongnaturecenter.org/Summer%20Appeal%202020.html)

FALL PLANTING

It's a natural urge to get out in the garden and plant in the Spring. But our usually dry month of May and the brutal summer heat that follows are hard on new plantings. In our area the Fall of the year is a much better time to plant trees, shrubs, and many perennials. The late Fall, Winter, and early Spring rainy season is what they need to get their roots established. The few Winter cold snaps won't hurt most plants. (Be sure to keep new plantings watered through the dry weeks of early Fall, however.)

Birdsong has some great perennials, trees, and shrubs ready to plant this Fall. They will be for sale on weekends at the Nature Center starting September 5th. We have too many to list, but here are a few that are looking extra good now.

Pussy Willow -- These are well-grown plants already forming the catkins that will be so showy in late winter.

Boxwoods -- We have dozens of nicely shaped Wintergreen boxwoods, enough to make a hedge maze.

Blue Ginger -- A very unusual plant with true blue flowers.

Four O'Clocks -- Ours are the more unusual and fragrant white-flowered Four O'Clocks.

Turmeric -- These plants are healthy and vigorous. They could be grown just for the ornamental foliage alone, even without considering the health benefits.

Galangal Ginger -- An essential ingredient in Asian curry dishes as well a handsome plant.

Gardenia -- We have two varieties, an old heirloom from an Attapulcus Georgia farm, and the modern ever-blooming August Beauty.

Hydrangea "Fuji Waterfall" -- These are very healthy plants.

Christopher Lily -- This is an amazingly beautiful and fragrant crinum.

Iris hexagona -- A sweet small iris, a reliable bloomer with true-blue flowers that open in May.

Cardinal Guard -- Healthy deep green plants, blooming now.

Persicaria "Brush Strokes" -- Grown for its handsome foliage. Each green leaf is "painted" with a chevron of darker green in the center.

Begonia "Green Velvet" -- Incredibly beautiful foliage, deep rich green with lime green accents and a texture like moleskin. Probably best as a potted plant.

Southern Magnolia trees -- Now is the perfect time to plant these handsome, perfectly shaped big trees. They are nearly 10 feet tall. You will not have to wait for them to be a presence in your landscape. We have three varieties, Bracken's Brown Beauty, D. D. Blanchard, and Little Gem. Birdsong can deliver these – call or email for more information.

Here are a few additional natives we have available: **Passion Vine, Cross Vine, Southern Wood Fern, Cardinal Flower, Native Pink Swamp Milkweed, Coral Honeysuckle, and Lizard Tail.**

- June White
Plant Sale Chair



SUMMER APPEAL 2020

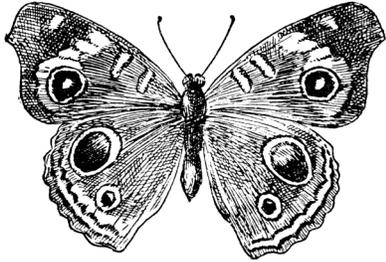
Thank you!

To all our friends who have responded so generously to the Summer Appeal: thank you. We have been deeply touched by your heartfelt gifts. We wish you the best of health and happiness as the summer winds down. We'll be in touch in September. *Thank you.*

FREE FAMILY DAYS

First Saturdays: September 5, October 3

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. This is a nice chance for first-time visitors to enjoy the trails and get to know the property. **Admission: free**



IN MEMORY OF SHARON CHASTAIN

We are sorry to report that a dear friend of Birdsong, Sharon Chastain, has passed away. Sharon was very involved in the early days as a volunteer when Birdsong incorporated, the mid-1980's. She and her husband owned and ran the beautiful Oak Grove Nurseries in Thomasville for many years. Her children would like to put a bench out on the trails to honor Sharon's memory. If you would like to contribute, donations can be sent to Birdsong at 2106 Meridian Road, Thomasville, GA 31792 or at our website donations page at www.birdsongnaturecenter.org.

NABA Hairstreak Chapter, annual field trip Saturday, July 11, 2020 List of 25 butterflies and 8 odonates Recorded by David Harder

Pipevine Swallowtail
Giant Swallowtail
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
Palamedes Swallowtail
Little Yellow
Red-banded Hairstreak
Gulf Fritillary
Zebra Heliconian
Pearl Crescent
Common Buckeye
Gemmed Satyr
Carolina Satyr
Silver-spotted Skipper
Long-tailed Skipper
Hoary Edge
Southern Cloudywing
Horace's Duskywing
Zarucco Duskywing
Clouded Skipper
Fiery Skipper
Whirlabout
Broken-Dash
Little Glassywing
Zabulon Skipper
Dun Skipper

Lilypad Forktail
Slaty Skimmer
Golden-winged Skimmer
Banded Pennant
Eastern Pondhawk
Little Blue Dragonlet
Blue Dasher
Carolina Saddlebags

VOTER REGISTRATION

Are you registered to vote? Please see this link for helpful information about registration: www.vote.org. This site can help you check on your registration, get you registered, help with voting by mail, help you find your polling place and much more. It also has a link to information about voting during Covid-19. Please register and vote!

July 30, 2020
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

Life goes on for the wildlife of our fields and forests... we, however, remain in our covid holding pattern for now and the foreseeable future. We hope that all our Birdsong friends are healthy and safe and finding a way to remain hopeful as we look ahead to the rest of this summer.

Weather We are well into that time of year when the heat and humidity dominate everything we do. Dog days. It has been sweltering for weeks now. We've had lots of rain showers in the past two months, with two major downpours of 3 plus inches, but our small ponds and drains are dry – there is a big rain deficit here. And that is with 4.84 inches of rain in June and 7.12 inches in July.

The vegetation is responding with wild green abandon – this happens every summer, even when we've gotten a good hot burn season in – we look around the property and it looks like we didn't burn at all, things are so luxuriant. It appears to be beneficial for our wildlife: the Bluebirds have had a great nesting season, there are bees and wasps everywhere, and squadrons of dragonflies are roaming above the open fields. We have really enjoyed seeing lots more Zebra Longwings than most years, and much earlier too.

Purple Martins For the first martin nesting season that I can recall, going back 35 years now, our Purple Martins chose not to raise a second brood. By mid-June our ten pairs of adults had each successfully reared and fledged 3 to 4 babies each. This season's birds were clearly experienced parents, they arrived early and wasted no time getting sorted out, gourds selected, nests built, eggs laid. They had the benefit of excellent weather from March to May, not too hot, enough rain except for one dry spell, and lots of insects to feed their young. Fledging started with the customary fanfare – when it was time for babies to leave all the parents of the colony would loudly coax babies from the gourds – you could tell from all the way up at the office that it was a fledging day. Once all the babies were out and learning to fly and feed, the birds still spent time nearby for at least part of the day, and then off they'd all go, apparently showing the new fledglings how to be a Martin. There were also days when lots of neighboring Martins would visit our colony. There'd be 20 or more adult birds present at a time, including more than 10 males, who are easy to identify, so we knew there were additional birds stopping by.

The weather started heating up in early June, so once all the babies were out, I began to hope that they would do things differently this year and refrain from starting a second brood. In all years past, that last brood has had a rough time of it – it gets so incredibly hot on those little babies stuck up there in the gourds in full sun, waiting on parents to come back with a dragonfly. For those of us observing, this is when we get anxious and dread finding the little ones on the ground, having bailed out because of the heat but unable to fly. This is when we hook up the sprinkler rig to send a light cooling shower down over the gourds for an hour or so in the worst heat of the day. This remedy has been very successful in the past. So we

watched carefully for any sign of nesting and after about two more weeks of birds coming and going, there was not any nesting activity. Then, one day in the last week of June – they were gone. All of them. And that was that. A totally different pattern than we've ever seen before. Usually the birds that manage to fledge that last batch of babies all leave on or just before the fourth of July, like they did last year. This year, they were all gone by June 25th.

I would love to know what made them decide not to pursue that next brood. Could they tell how hot it was going to get? Were they parents who had struggled to feed a second brood, or who had lost a brood to the heat? Is this a larger response to changes in the climate? We don't have answers, but I'm glad they made that decision and gathered up their many beautiful progeny and headed off to the coast.

The Pear Tree There is an old pear tree near the Barn. Many of you may be very familiar with it. It produces what Betty Komarek used to call "sand pears", round, rough-skinned pears that are crisp when ripe and are full of gritty scleried cells. This tree bloomed extremely early this year, three weeks earlier than usual. We weren't sure what that would mean as far its fruit, but we need not have been concerned because the pear tree has produced an enormous crop of good-sized pears this summer. These pears are well-loved by our wildlife: we find half-eaten pears 50 yards away, and raccoon and coyote scat full of pear skin way out on the property, far from the source. Right now, the tree is surrounded by fallen pears, many partly eaten (by pear-lovers with different sized teeth!), attracting a nice array of wasps and bees. I try to visit the tree several times a week, just to observe who is coming to enjoy a pear! Over the years I have seen Pileated Woodpeckers hanging upside down, hammering away on a pear, flapping wildly away hollering at being disturbed. I once found an entire family of four raccoons up high in the tree, some roaming and some settled in and munching on a pear. This year the stars of the show have been the Red-bellied Woodpeckers. Every time I visit there are at least three or four birds present. They will swoop in and startle off their friends and choose the pear they want. They grip the side of the round pear with their zygodactyl feet, their tail curved all the way under it for leverage and then drill away at the top of the pear, taking bites, and creating a substantial divot near the stem. Then they go find another one! This is usually accompanied by a fair bit of yelling and chasing each other around. There is usually a gray-headed baby there along with some adults, learning the ropes. Red-headed Woodpeckers are also coming in to enjoy a pear from time to time but they have to put up with the assertive Red-bellieds who feel a lot of ownership and try to run them off.

The assertive Red-bellieds who feel a lot of ownership and try to run them off.

Although not interested in the pears, the Bluebirds are using the lower branches of the pear tree to teach their newly fledged babies, recently out of the nest box, how to hunt. Deer love to eat the leaves off many of the convenient lower branches of this tree, so these exposed slender limbs just a few feet off the ground make great perching sites. From this vantage point, a parent can show a young bird how to spot a bug in the grass, drop down and capture it, wrestle with it a bit, bash it around, and then fly back up to a branch with its catch. There is a family of Bluebirds with two babies who in the past few weeks are getting really good at capturing their own lunch. They have been really fun to watch. These speckled and vaguely blue tykes are thrilled that Alan has mowed a nice circle around the tree – the low-cut grass makes it easy to spot and capture a bug!

Also fun to watch, and a total surprise, are the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. They are very appreciative of all the hard work that the Red-bellieds have done in this pear tree. I had never witnessed this before: a few days ago, watching the woodpeckers really nailing those pears, along came a tiny Ruby-throat, made a few passes here and there around the tree, then settled in right where a Red-bellied had been working, held on to the side of the pear, and began feeding in the hole just opened by the woodpecker. This was a first for me! I have to assume that the freshly opened pear was producing some juice that the hummingbird could enjoy. After a lengthy snack, the hummingbird flew to a nearby twig and rested, seeming very satisfied. The next day, there were two hummingbirds, bickering a little, and one of them chose a pear where a woodpecker had been busy and hovered over the hole to feed. So: hummingbirds enjoying pears has been a revelation.

Other creatures relishing the pear tree and its fruit are Red-spotted Purple Butterflies, American Crows, possums, raccoons, and lots of interesting bees and wasps. The old pear tree has given us yet another enlightening season.

Butterfly Pea This is the best Butterfly Pea summer ever! Some fortunate combination of factors has come together to allow the Spurred Butterfly Pea to put on a show. It will grow out in the sun – I found one in the middle of the Gin House Field all by itself, but in shady dappled woods all over Birdsong you can find this lovely lavender flower in impressive numbers right now. The blossoms grow along a trailing vine that climbs over other plants on the forest floor, pale purple in color, some tending to pink. (There are not many words to describe “purple” - mostly flower names.) The flowers are round in shape, with wide petals that to those who name plants look like butterfly wings. Others might say the flower resembles the feminine anatomy. Butterfly Pea is pollinated primarily by bees and it serves as a plant host for the Long-tailed Skipper and Northern Cloudywing. You can find a patch of these flowers if you head straight south on the trail past the pear tree and down to the drain by the Wild Azaleas. On your left is an open pine woods and these lovely lilac-colored flowers are scattered as far as

the eye can see. This is an unusual phenomenon – I’ve never seen this many Butterfly Peas before! Bring your camera – these flowers are very attractive and extremely photogenic. Come in the morning; the flowers fade and wilt as the day progresses, kind of like us.

If you get a chance to come out, the bench by the Pump House is in the shade until 12:30 or so. From that vantage point you can hear the Bobwhites calling, watch Bluebirds training young, see the Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers en route to the pear tree and back, and watch the Kingbird asserting his dominance from the top of the martin pole. Alan even saw a Mississippi Kite perching high in the nearby pecan tree one morning this week. It stayed for about an hour and a half. This was unusual, so perhaps it was taking a time out from its migration.

Our lives have changed a lot due to covid and things are very uncertain, but we can always rely on nature for reassurance. Even during difficult times there is beauty to be found, and something interesting to capture our attention. We wish you all the very best and hope Birdsong can offer you some support until we get to a better place.

KDB



**BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER
 COVID-19 Re-Opening Plan, Phase 1
 TRAILS OPEN, WEEKENDS ONLY, SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER**

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 October we will revisit this schedule and report on any changes.

Hours of operation: The trails will be open *on weekends only* starting September 5
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.

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 Native Nureries
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 2019- 2020**

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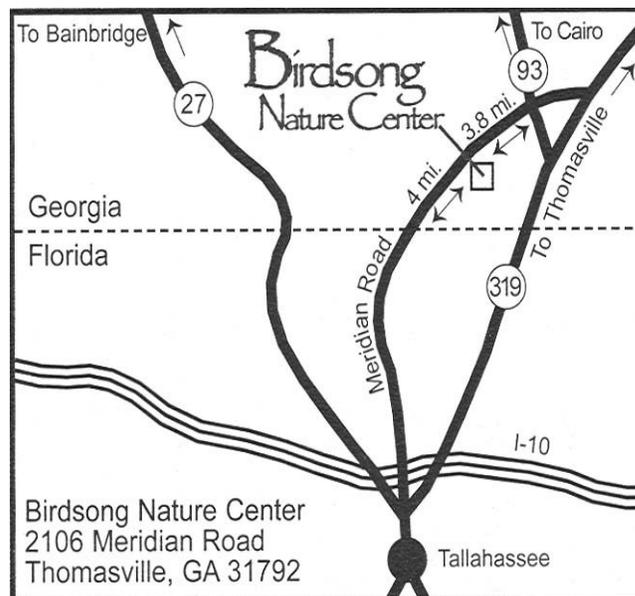
NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Thomas and Catherine Reid
Kathy Worthman

Tallahassee

Charles Robshaaw



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