

Birdsong Nature Center

January-February 2021

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

Hours: Saturdays 9 to 5

Sundays 1 to 5

January

Closed December 20th- January 8th

Reopen - Saturday, January 9th

Saturdays and Sundays only, trails open

Free Family Day on January 9th

February

Saturdays and Sundays only, trails open

Free Family Day on February 6th

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

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

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

Dear Friends,

A year ago, we were mentioning in the newsletter an important approaching event to remember: Birdsong's 2020 Old-Timey Plant Sale. As you know, the 2020 Plant Sale had to be canceled just a week before it was scheduled due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Unfortunately, we will also have to abandon the idea of offering a 2021 Plant Sale this March as we cannot predict at this moment a safe environment to host such a highly attended event. *So, we are sorry to say, no Old-Timey Plant Sale is planned for March 2021.* We are considering some alternative Plant Sale ideas, though, and we hope to share those with you a little later in the year. Do mark your calendar for *March 18th, 2022* – the third Saturday in March 2022 – for a *better-than-ever 2022 Birdsong Old-Timey Plant Sale!*

As this challenging year draws to a close, we want to say a sincere “thank you” to all of you – our wonderful members, volunteers, donors, trail visitors and followers – for having supported Birdsong so thoughtfully and generously, especially over these past 10 months. Your support has made a huge difference as we have navigated our way through this public health crisis. All of us at Birdsong – our staff, volunteers, and Board - look forward to the day when we can all resume our normal, pre-pandemic lives and invite good friends like you back to traditional activities at Birdsong once again.

Warmest wishes for a happy and healthy year in 2021. Please visit Birdsong's trails soon and, as always, be sure to let us know of interesting encounters along the way!

Sincerely,

Joe Peresich
President, Board of Directors

NO OLD-TIMEY PLANT SALE THIS MARCH

Due to the continuing impact of Covid, Plant Sale Chair June White and key staff and volunteers have decided not to hold an Old-Timey Plant Sale in March of 2021. The Sale we know and love is a huge undertaking that involves mobilizing several hundred volunteers, acquiring/purchasing a tremendous number of plants, and spending a substantial amount of money on advertising. The Covid situation is not sufficiently resolved for us to feel confident in going forward under current circumstances. So we will hold off and plan for an authentic Old-Timey Plant Sale in 2022. Meanwhile, we are looking into other ways to provide plants for you, including the possibility of a series of mini-sales in the spring. If you want to be notified, please confirm that we have your email address on file by emailing us at birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org. Thank you.



SWEET PEAS FOR SALE

One of the world's most beloved flowers is the sweet pea, *Lathyrus odoratus*. This plant is most famous in England where sweet peas flower all summer long, twining gracefully over fences and arbors in lush cottage gardens, and sweet pea festivals and competitions are held.

As is often the case, however, the usual gardening practices do not apply in our zone 9. Delicate sweet peas would never survive our hot, humid summer. There is a trick to growing sweet peas in north Florida and South Georgia — you have to plant the seeds in the fall. They will sprout and grow during our winter, which resembles the English spring, and they will flourish and flower in our spring months of April, May, and early June, which resemble English high summer. By the time our summer arrives (which is like nothing ever experienced in England) they will be finished. Even good southern gardeners who understand this rule often fail to plant sweet peas because they forget to plant in the fall.

But Birdsong will have sweet peas for sale on January 9th. The ones we have started have sprouted and are beginning to climb. They need a home in rich soil in full sun with room to grow on a trellis or wire fence.

In keeping with our “Old Timey” plant sale theme, these are all heirloom varieties of sweet peas, chosen for their exquisite fragrance. As is often the case in plant breeding, fragrance is sacrificed by sweet pea hybridizers who select for larger flowers, longer stems, and showier colors and forms. Varieties we have (mixed) are Cupani's Original, Miss Willmott, Lady Grisel Hamilton, King Edward VII, and Black Knight.

Birdsong has put away most of its plants for sale during the winter, but please let us know if you are looking for something for your garden. Our donors will be happy to bring plants out to Birdsong during the weekend hours if we have something you need.

We won't be able to hold our usual beloved sale this March, but we are working on some alternative small sale ideas and will keep you posted by email.

-June White
Plant Sale Chair

WELCOME, LYNN BROWN

We are pleased to let you know that Lynn Brown has joined Birdsong's staff and is helping us with bookkeeping and office management. She is already making a difference as we continue to pick up where Mirhi left off and she is doing a very nice job. You may know Lynn as the person who created our special mask fundraiser, or from meeting her at Birdsong pre-Covid when she and her husband Duane were here birding or helping with the Backyard Bird Count. Lynn and Duane have been neighbors, members, and supporters for the past three years. We want to welcome Lynn to her new role at Birdsong and are very glad she is here.

WOLF CREEK TROUT LILY PRESERVE *Visit Wolf Creek in February, when the Trout Lilies bloom...*

The Wolf Creek Trout Lily Preserve is a biologically diverse 140-acre hardwood forest about 5 miles west of Cairo in Grady County, Georgia. It is home to one of the largest (about 15 acres) and most dense populations (nearly every square inch) of the Trout Lily, *Erythronium umbilicatum*, known to exist anywhere. The beautiful Trout Lily is a threatened species in Florida and rarely found in south Georgia. Also present are several other rare plants: *Trillium maculatum*; *Uvularia floridana*; Bloodroot; Crane Fly, Green Fly and Southern Tway Blade orchids, among others.

Preserve volunteers will be offering field trips to see this amazing site in full bloom in February. The peak bloom dates vary widely depending on the weather. Here is a link to the Wolf Creek website, where you can learn about the upcoming season's bloom, tours, and hours when the site may be open to the public. We urge you to go; Wolf Creek is a precious site and one of the most impressive botanical displays of our area. You will love it! See www.wolfcreektroutlilypreserve.org.

FREE FAMILY DAYS

First Saturdays: January 9 and February 6

On first Saturdays admission is free and we will offer a \$5-off membership special. If you know of any families who have never been to Birdsong, please let them know about this opportunity. This is a nice chance for first-time visitors to enjoy the trails and get to know the property. Please note: due to our holiday closure, the first Saturday we are open in January is on January 9th.

Admission: free

THANK YOU

Gifts in Memory of Mirhi Childs

Don and Ann Morrow
Alan Strowd
Keith and Becky McNeill

Gifts in Memory of Sharon Chastain

Nada M. Anthony
Rebecca L. Allen
Joshua A. Bass
Alan Strowd
Jeanette Sickel and Joshua Bass

Gifts in Memory of Margaret (Peggy) Loyless

J.D. and Lamons Warren
Yvonne and Max Salfinger
Gene and Sue Baker
Elzada Stoble
Cynthia and Richard Shank

Gifts in Memory of Alice Honea

Jinx Stubbs
Kris Travis

Gifts in Memory Of Jacob Daniel Kimel, Ph.D.

Bernd Berg
Kenneth and Jeannie Brodhead
Dennis and Stella Lange
Elizabeth Blackard and Karen Hitchcock
Ernestene Dreyer
Tennessee Harris on behalf of the Department
Of Physics, Florida State University
Kristine Dougherty

Special Financial Gifts

John Lovett
The Jasper and Marthalene Davis Foundation
The Cherokee Fund of the South Georgia
Community Foundation
The George E. Crouch Foundation

Special Gifts

Thank you, Don and Hazel Dixon, for the beautiful hand-made and wood-burned cedar plaque in honor of Mirhi Childs.
Thank you, Donna Legare and Jody Walthall, for "Betty's Christmas Wreath", a long-standing and much appreciated annual tradition

IN MEMORY OF ALICE HONEA

We have lost another dear friend and long-time member of the Birdsong family. Alice Honea passed away unexpectedly on Friday, November 20th. She died peacefully at home in the company of two close friends. This is quite a shock, happening so close on the heels of losing Mirhi Childs in September; another significant loss of someone really important to us and to Birdsong. Our heart goes out to Alice's daughter Debbie Schmitz and her family.

Alice Honea was a really remarkable person. Upon meeting her, you might think: here is a reserved, slender, rather delicate woman. For those of us who had the benefit of getting to know her, we learned that yes, she was reserved, but she was extremely intelligent, resilient, curious about the natural world, and she had a wonderful laugh. I don't think I ever had a conversation with Alice when she didn't surprise me in some way. There was a great depth to her and she had a profound and all-encompassing interest in the natural world. Alice was one of the most talented nature observers I have ever met. She had infinite patience and was fascinated by all creatures and their behavior and would take the time to really observe what they were doing. She loved watching birds and foxes and squirrels in her yard, but was every bit as interested in the small things – she would watch a spider spin her web for hours, or watch what a particular tiny unknown insect was doing, or how a butterfly was feeding. She was a great storyteller and could relate these observations to you in such detail and with such enthusiasm you felt like you had witnessed it yourself. Plus you got to enjoy how full the experience had been for her and how much she was enjoying telling you about it! I loved those stories. The last one she told me was over the phone this summer. I heard all about her finding a small lichen-covered branch that had fallen in her yard. Anyone else might have tossed it aside, but she picked it up and observed two small garden snails interacting and then mating – it was fascinating. I will really miss Alice's stories – her sheer love of the intricacies and mysteries of the tiny things that are happening around us that most people overlook.

Alice and her husband Gerald (who passed away in 2017) became members and supporters of Birdsong in 1997 after moving to Tallahassee from Detroit, where Alice had taught high school English in a public school. She became very interested in many aspects of Birdsong and served on our Board of Directors from 2000-2003. She started going out with the Bluebird monitors while Larry Herring was still leading the effort, around 2002, and quickly became integral to the project. She took on the job of recorder and kept meticulous notes on the developments occurring in each box. Over those years the team increased the boxes from 28 to 43 and had to divide the monitoring into two days a week. Monitoring is not easy work – it involves slogging through briars and brush in the heat and bugs biweekly between April and mid-August - not for the faint of heart. Alice really took the Adopt-A-Bluebird box project to a new level when she started creating postcards for box adopters made from photos she had taken of the eggs or babies, and sending elegant hand-written notes to "parents". These were charming personal updates on recent nesting events going on in each box, and Alice was a very good writer. My dad loved those cards – we adopted a bluebird box in memory of my mother and he kept them in view on a kitchen shelf.

Alice also loved to read; she read widely and seriously, and remembered everything. She particularly enjoyed books about nature and Rachel Carson was one of her favorite authors. She loved to review a book with you, really talk about the content and its meaning. We exchanged an unusual array of books with each other this summer, not just nature books, but some mystery stories. She wrote me her views on some of the Inspector Montalbano books by Andrea Camilleri that I had gotten interested in and I really enjoyed her detailed critiques. Among the stack of books she had lent me was something far more sublime – *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, by Elisabeth Tova Bailey. If you read this book, you will understand quite a bit about Alice Honea. She could have written that book.

We are heartbroken to lose Alice; we didn't see this coming. She had some health issues, but was under care and nothing seemed to indicate she was getting ready to leave. Alice had really close friends in her life – I have talked to several of them, including some of the Bluebird Monitors – and we are all devastated. We didn't get to say goodbye to Alice, our caring friend, who felt things deeply, who saw great meaning and value in the small things of the world, and with whom we felt a profound bond. Alice is greatly loved and we will really miss her.

- Kathleen Brady



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES
December 12, 2020

Weather We finally got some good cold weather! The last two weeks brought a major cold front with several hard freezes and cold temperatures that lasted all day and night. It felt like winter was on the way. Over the past few days we've experienced a warming trend with pleasant sunny weather, the kind you want to be out in, that makes you somewhat resent having to go inside. It is just too nice out - perfect for a walk!

We are still in a rainfall deficit and only received 1.5 inches of rain in October, 1.8 inches in November, and 0.1 in December so far. Some major storm events have moved through our region, but they seem to split in two when they reach us, or just slide south or north of us. Very frustrating. Our ponds and swamp are low, and our greenery and soils could use a drenching. We need that rain that keeps passing us by...

The Woods The spectacular color of our fall wildflower bloom has faded and now we see the dried seed heads that remain. Some are more obvious than others; former goldenrod flowers keep their shape, but are now gray and fluffy, while *Agalinis* has disappeared – you have to look closely to see the small vase-like seed pods that remain. Narrow-leaved sunflowers seed heads are easy to find, as are the dried flowers of *Pittypopsis*. Grass flowers have mostly come and gone, but there are still some tall plume grass flower clusters catching the sunlight in the woods. A few golden asters are still in bloom, as are tiny yellow *Oxalis*, and of course the beautiful cold-weather purple violets, close to the ground and a treat to find. The understory is now mostly composed of dry vegetation and grasses in their winter attire, in a spectrum of pale gold to russet to brown. It is very beautiful in its own way, wild and illuminated by the low-angled sun. For the burn crew folks among us, it looks beautiful too, but it also looks like really good fuel and gets us stirred up and wanting to burn again.

Thanks to the recent freezes, we are starting to see a little more leaf color out in the woods. It was rather a monotone fall; with so little rain the leaves on many trees started turning brown and drying out early in the season. Without an early frost no eye-catching leaf color ever developed. We completely missed out on the brilliant ruby leaf color of our black gum trees. In a good year, with a nice frost and plenty of rain, those tiny round leaves can make a spectacular scarlet display. We missed it again this year. Now, however, you can wander out on the trails, especially on the east side of Birdsong or in the drains where we have the most hardwoods, and enjoy a burst of color across the wooded landscape. In the upland areas, the hickories are really making a statement – they are big old trees and are filling the woods along the ridge by Chuck's House and in the Wildlife Woods with enormous splashes of gold to bronze. The white and red oaks have

already turned mostly brown, and many of these hardwoods are losing their leaves with every breeze. It makes it fun to walk on the trails now; here and there you can kick up layers of fallen leaves, making that old familiar sound that reminds us of when we were kids.

In the drains, sourwoods are the star of the show. If you head down slope to the Azalea Garden, you'll come to the drain that flows into Big Bay Swamp. It is flanked by sourwoods of all sizes. Many of them are quite old and tall, while smaller ones line the trail edges. These beautiful trees turn the most gorgeous shades of coral this time of year – leaf colors are always hard to describe, but they range from pink to salmon to ruby, sometimes all on the same tree. The leaves are long and lance-shaped, and the trees are unmistakable in the woods. It is well worth a stroll through this site this time of year. Depending on conditions, the display may be subtle or showy, with subdued colors or brilliant pinks that look illuminated from within. Either way, you can't lose!

Longleaf Pine I hope we don't overdo it in these notes by talking too much about our longleaf pine project. I feel like one of those parents that bores their friends by bringing out the baby pictures every time and bragging on their extraordinary offspring. We just can't help it! We are very proud of the 17 acres of longleaf pines that we planted in 2016. These trees have grown really fast and after only four years we already have a burgeoning longleaf stand. We were amazed from day one at the high survival rate of those planted seedlings, and they have grown into beautiful thick-boughed trees with full green needles – some of them are 18 feet tall! It really is a beautiful sight. It helps if you can climb up onto a vehicle to see the entire vista. Alan gets to enjoy this sight from up high on the tractor, so he knows it better than any of us! This project was funded by a grant from the Natural Resources and Conservation Service to expand high-quality gopher tortoise habitat on Birdsong. We are well on our way to that goal. We had planned to burn the area this past January, before the then-much-smaller trees started candling, but it rained frequently and we held off and then didn't want to risk burning them after they had started to grow. We plan to burn through here early in January again this year. It will be really interesting to see what that site is like once burned – there are so many trees and the understory vegetation and grasses are so thick that we haven't waded in there to look around for the past two years.

The Live Oak Hammock The Live Oak Hammock is located at the southwest edge of Big Bay Swamp. It is about a 6-acre area where live oaks appeared many years ago in a former rented watermelon patch. Betty told us that the trees must have been planted by blue jays because there is not mother live oak anywhere in the area. She encouraged their growth and the early Leadership Training group thinned them several times. Later when the nature

center became active, they were thinned again a couple of times, but as they got really big it became harder for our volunteers to cut down and cut up such large trees, so the thinning operation did not continue. It is very hard to burn through a live oak hammock because the leaves that are shed each year are very tough, almost like plastic, and are basically impervious to burning. Because the hammock canopy is so thick, grasses or other flammable understory plants will not grow in its shade. So the area is not easy to manage – it has to be mowed with our huge old John Deere tractor and Brown mower. Not an easy place to maneuver a big vehicle among lots of closely spaced trees. Right next to the Hammock is an old fencerow where some very old sweet gums live and they are prolific seed producers. They are the nemesis of the Live Oak Hammock. As soon as the area gets mowed, it looks great for a year and then acres of sweet gum happily grow up there where we cannot burn them and where they are very inconvenient to mow. Over the years our land management staff have diligently mowed under these trees. It is never fun for the tractor operator – there are many low-hanging branches to avoid getting slapped by, invisible stumps to hit with the mower which makes you think you ran over a rock and destroyed the mower blades, and hidden yellow-jacket nests in the ground to disturb which then furiously chase you down and sting you as you are desperately trying to exit the scene on an over-sized vehicle. Our Live Oak mowers are our land management heroes. Chuck got to where he took the emergence of fresh green sweet gums in the Hammock personally, and got very vindictive about going in and mowing them down. Alan has now taken over this role and has had first hand experience with the challenges involved, having mowed in here several years ago. He has taken on the most recent provocation – sweet gums had gotten really thick and tall in there – and about a month ago he went for it. He did a beautiful job with the mowing, which does take artistry, and then he and Michael Carter went back in and individually cut down sweet gums that were too close to the trees for the mower to reach. These final trees will be pulled out of the hammock and piled for burning elsewhere. If you have the opportunity to go for a walk at Birdsong, by all means visit the Live Oak Hammock. It is just around the corner from the Longleaf Pine project, so you can see them both on the same walk. In a year or two when you walk by and the sweet gums are starting to become noticeable, you'll know that Alan will already be making his plans.

Wildlife There are a lot of active deer scrapes everywhere across the property, but in higher numbers on the east side of Birdsong. On a recent walk I counted nine of them in and around the gopher tortoise area. In every one the earth had been recently scraped and deeply scratched, most with a final assertive hoof print in the middle. Small branches and twigs directly above each scrape were broken, some dangling, where the ardent bucks have rattled their antlers. Establishing territory this time of year is serious business! I find it very interesting that so many of these scrapes are made in exactly the same location year after year, under the same tree or shrub, right at the edge of the trails. They must be effective places to mark or maybe it is a matter of outright ownership.

We rarely see any of our other large mammals, but they leave

evidence in the center of the trails that is unmistakable. Apparently Birdsong's coyotes, foxes, and bobcats are eating well and leaving plenty of sign for us to interpret. We have not seen many turkeys lately, but they too will occasionally leave us the gift of a beautiful feather. My favorites are the smaller curved feathers that cover the turkey's neck and breast – if you have the great luck to find one, hold it in the sunlight and turn it side to side to catch the light – you may see fiery iridescent opal, green, or orange flashing back at you. Beautiful!

The Winter Solstice is approaching and that gives us something to rely on: change is on the way. Off we go on another year-long ride around the sun. We wish you some rest over the holidays and look forward to a better year and getting past Covid so we can all get together again.

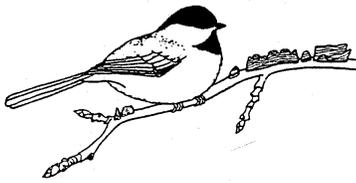
-KDB

BIRDSONG'S CORPORATE SPONSORS

- Hopping, Green & Sams, PA
- Monrovia Growers of Georgia
- Native Nurseries
- Trillium Gardens Nursery
- Carroll and Company, CPAs
- Import Authority
- South GA Low Cost Spay & Neuter Clinic
- Seminole Alterations
- Chelsea Salon & Spa
- TNB Financial Services
- Graco Fertilizer Company
- Target Print and Mail
- Armstrong Tree Service

**Birdsong Nature Center
Board of Directors
2019- 2020**

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| President | Joe Peresich |
| Treasurer | Bill Preston |
| Secretary | Margaret Tyson |
| Directors | |
| Jim Antista | Ellery Sedgwick |
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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:

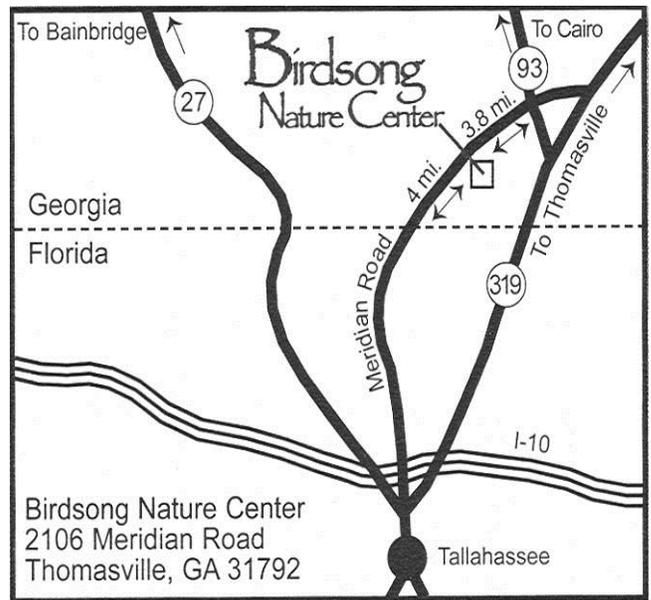
- Individual Friend \$30 Bird Window and Nature Trails free during open hours.
Two free one-time guest passes.
Member discount on scheduled programs.
10% discount on items at the Chickadee Corner Gift Shop.
Bimonthly newsletter. Reciprocal general admission at participating nature centers nationwide (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.



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
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*Birdsong Nature Center
 2106 Meridian Road
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