

Birdsong Nature Center

March-April 2021

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

Hours: Saturdays 9 to 5

Sundays 1 to 5

March

Saturdays and Sundays only, trails open
Free Family Day on March 6th

April

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

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,

In 2018 Georgia voters approved the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Amendment with the goal of providing a dedicated source of funding for land and water conservation in Georgia. As a result, a portion of taxes collected on the sale of outdoor recreation equipment is placed into the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund. The Trust Fund then provides a funding source, via grants and loans, to support parks and trails and protect and acquire lands critical to wildlife, clean water, and outdoor recreation across the state. In partnership, Birdsong and Tall Timbers Research Station has again applied this cycle for a grant from the stewardship program to create a conservation easement on 444 acres of Birdsong property. Combined with 121 acres that are currently under conservation easement held by the Georgia Wildlife Federation, creation of this new easement will ensure that the entire 565 acres of Birdsong property will be protected from development in perpetuity and will continue to be maintained in a natural state. The grant, if awarded, would provide a significant source of funding for the Nature Center.

We are pleased to let you know that of the 51 project proposals submitted to the State for consideration, both the GOSP Board and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Board recently approved nine grant applications, and the Birdsong / Tall Timbers proposal was included. These initial approvals are not a guarantee the grant will be awarded, however, as the slate of nine projects and its funding must also be approved by separate Georgia House and Senate Appropriations Committees.

It is our understanding that our project proposal has a relatively high ranking among the nine projects approved. We should know in the coming weeks how we fared, and we will keep you apprised. We want to offer our sincere thanks to the excellent team responsible for producing our successful grant application: Shane Wellendorf, Kim Sash, and Jessica Coker of Tall Timbers, and our own Executive Director, Kathleen Brady, with contributions from our Board of Directors. This was exceptional work done by an incredibly talented group of dedicated individuals - and their efforts are greatly appreciated!

We will certainly miss offering the Old-Timey Plant Sale for this second year in a row due to the pandemic, but will look forward to hosting the event again in 2022! We hope you will visit Birdsong's trails one weekend soon. And as always, please 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

As mentioned in our last newsletter, we will not be holding the Old-Timey Plant Sale this March due to ongoing Covid-19 concerns. We are of course disappointed to miss out on offering this special event two years in a row. We enjoy providing our customers with a special plant-buying experience and supplying healthy native and old-timey plants that grow well in our region, and the plant sale is our primary annual fundraiser. Please see the article below from our Plant Sale Chair, June White. June will be making some wonderful old style Pentas available at Birdsong on the weekends starting on March 13th. We are also pleased to let you know that Birdsong will be a vendor at two excellent events this spring where we plan to sell wild azaleas, native trees and other desirable plants. Here is that information:

Metcalf Spring Market

Saturday, March 13th, 9am to 3pm

www.facebook.com/metcalfspringmarket/

Rose Fest Artisan Market at the Ritz Amphitheatre

Saturday, April 24th, 11am to 5pm

www.thomasvillega.com/attraction/events/thomasville-rose-show-and-festival

These are two local events that we highly recommend; both have become iconic festivals that feature local artisans, businesses, and organizations. This is the Rose Show's 100th Year! We look forward to seeing you there!



PENTAS!

And other plants for sale....

A lot of plants needed homes when our 2020 plant sale was cancelled at the last minute because of the pandemic. One Thomasville gardener was stuck with dozens of old-timey Pentas she had grown for the sale from cuttings from her mother's garden. She planted them all in a little cottage garden in the front yard of a small house and had a lovely display all summer and into the fall. You can see photos of this charming Pentas garden on Birdsong's website at www.birdsongnaturecenter.org.

Thanks to this gardener, we have almost 100 of these same plants just ready to bloom. These are the old Pentas, more attractive to hummingbirds and butterflies than the new cultivars where available nectar has been reduced in selective breeding for a uniform, compact plant.

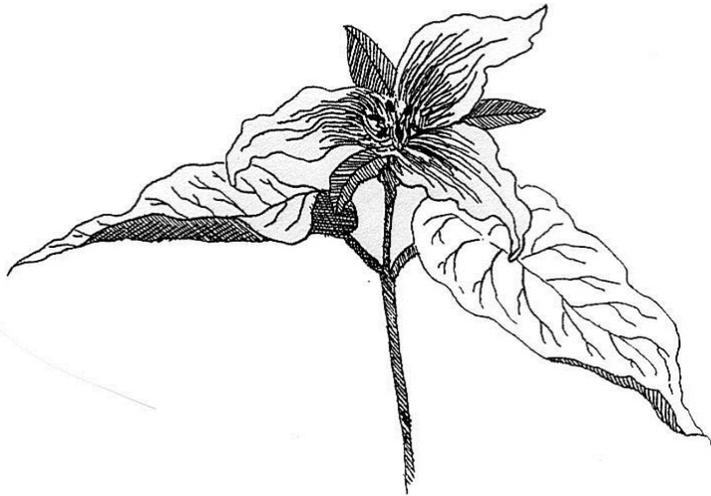
Though again we won't have a big sale at Birdsong in the spring because of worries about COVID-19, you will be able to buy Pentas and other plants when Birdsong is open on weekends, **starting on March 13th**. Birdsong will also have a booth at the Metcalfe Spring Market on March 13th and at Thomasville's Rose Fest Artisan Market at the Ritz Amphitheater on April 24th where we will have many beautiful plants for sale, including native trees and wild azaleas.

- June White
Plant Sale Chair

FREE FAMILY DAYS
First Saturdays: March 6 and April 3

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.

Admission: free



NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Allen Sawyer
Susie Womble
Robert and Katie Rush
Sonia and Gerry Mize
Margret and John Brinson

Tallahassee

Jonathan Williams
Latika Young
Paul Donovan
Judith Stuckey
Scott and Chris Savery
Preston Robertson
Briana Ozor
Nancy Standley
William Copps

Other

Robbie and Lindsay Hopkins	Leesburg, GA
Mia Brezin	Austin, TX
David Johnson	Dothan, AL
Hannah Daughtry	Cairo, GA
Dyan Backe	Valdosta, GA
Mike and Cheryl Mills	Cairo, GA
Florric Purcell Crapps	Cairo, GA

**BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO
THANK:**

Gifts in Memory of Mirhi Childs:

Trillium Gardens Nursery
Kathleen Brady

Gifts in Memory of Alice Honea:

Kathleen Brady

Gifts in Memory of Margaret (Peggy) Loyless:

Therese M. Lee

Gifts in Memory of Elizabeth O'Toole:

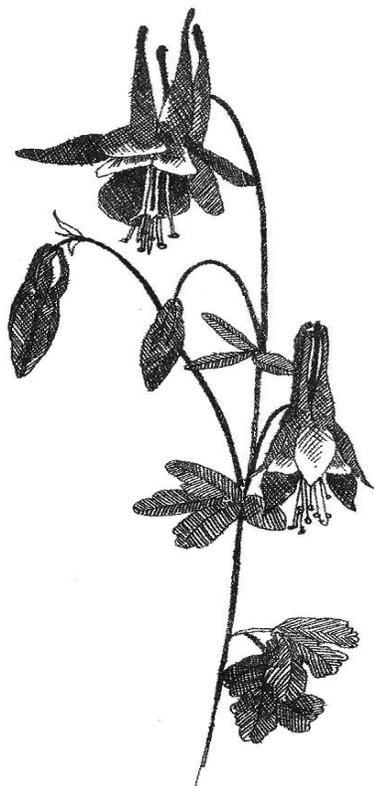
Alex and Jane Hinson

Special Financial Gifts:

Wade Research Foundation
Apple Lane Foundation
William H. Flowers Foundation
Ellery and Robin Sedgwick
Lisa Lazarus
Margaret Claborn
D. Wyche
William Carroll, Jr.
Melissa Proctor
Holly Thomas
Margarett Roddenbery
Phil Williams
Rebecca Cline
Shane and Nia Wellendorf
David Johnson
Barbara Cooper
Catherine Lannon
DJ and Gayle Underwood
Nancy Kranich
Sarah Dozier Sherraden
Dr. William Dickey, Jr.
Doug and Julie McPherson
Emily Hughey
Ellery Sedgwick
David Larbalestier
Julie Moore
Donna Legare
Dr. and Mrs. David Jones
Michael Miller
Judy and Phillip Gornicki
Rambler Rose Garden Club
Sally and Dean Jue
Ed and Marylyn Feaver

Great Backyard Bird Count
February 12-15, 2021
Observers: Duane and Lynn Brown
49 Species

- Wood Duck -3
- Common Ground Dove – 2
- Mourning Dove – 11
- Anhinga – 1
- Great Blue Heron – 1
- Great Egret – 6
- Turkey Vulture – 1
- Red-shouldered Hawk – 1
- Barred Owl – 1
- Red-bellied Woodpecker – 6
- Downy Woodpecker – 3
- Pileated Woodpecker – 4
- American Kestrel – 2
- Eastern Phoebe – 1
- White-eyed Vireo – 3
- Blue Jay – 6
- American Crow – 11
- Fish Crow – 4
- Carolina Chickadee – 5
- Tufted Titmouse – 7
- Purple Martin – 14
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet – 3
- White-breasted Nuthatch – 2
- Brown-headed Nuthatch – 5
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - 1
- Carolina Wren – 6
- Gray Catbird – 1
- Brown Thrasher – 1
- Northern Mockingbird - 4
- Eastern Bluebird – 14
- Hermit Thrush - 1
- American Robin – 40
- House Finch – 4
- Purple Finch - 6
- Pine Siskin - 18
- American Goldfinch – 15
- Chipping Sparrow – 35
- Savannah Sparrow - 2
- Eastern Towhee - 7
- Red-winged Blackbird – 33
- Brown-headed Cowbird - 24
- Common Grackle – 3
- Black and White Warbler - 1
- Orange-crowned Warbler – 1
- Common Yellowthroat - 1
- Palm Warbler - 7
- Pine Warbler – 8
- Yellow-rumped Warbler – 26
- Northern Cardinal - 22



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
2020- 2021

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| President | Joe Peresich |
| Treasurer | Bill Preston |
| Secretary | Margaret Tyson |
| Directors | |
| Jim Antista | Ellery Sedgwick |
| Michael Brezin | Scott Ball |

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES February 13, 2021

Weather We've had a real winter this year! From December through the present there have been lots of hard freezes and crystal clear cold days, with many nights well below freezing. We have also finally had rain and plenty of it: 9.7 inches in January and 2.6 so far in February, with much more predicted over the coming week. The ponds are filling up, Big Bay Swamp is full and flowing, and the beavers are back in business! Their devoted spillway-damming makes a lot of work for Alan, who keeps the drains flowing to reduce pressure on the old cavern-riddled Farm Pond dam, but we are happy to have rain again.

Purple Martins The Purple Martins are back! Lynn and Duane Brown had the first sighting on January 23rd, weeks earlier than what we have become used to over the last 10 years or more. The Martins used to arrive and leave like clockwork: they would show up on or a day or two either side of January 29th, Betty Komarek's birthday, and leave on July 4th. Their schedule has become far less predictable over time. After Lynn and Duane's sighting, none were spotted for almost another week...then for two days there were up to seven Martins circling and investigating the pole. In fact, they sat on the cross bars, making lots of wonderful racket, as if to ask "Where are our gourds?" We are so unused to them arriving this early we just weren't prepared! Alan quickly got the new gourds ready and up, and now we appear to have a full complement of Martins actively squabbling and selecting their preferred gourds. As always, it is evocative to hear those lovely sounds from a distance as we go about our business around the office and house; another Martin season is beginning and we know spring is on the way.

The Cedar Tree There is a huge old red cedar tree in the back garden near the house, not far from the back steps. We don't know how old it is, but it was a large tree when Betty and Ed bought this place in 1939. Dan Miller measured its circumference last year – it is 12 feet 9 inches around. It is a haven for birds as they fly to and from the Bird Window feeding station. Last week we noticed a lot of activity in this tree; dozens of little birds were flying and fluttering and darting through the branches. Upon closer observation, this was a large mixed flock of Pine Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Palm Warblers and one annoyed Mockingbird. They were feasting exuberantly on tiny blue cedar berries. That tree had had a very good berry season – it was loaded! With all that wild activity, hundreds of berries were also being knocked down– there was a lavish spread of little blue-gray berries on the ground, so soon it became a busy dining area as well. The Mockingbird was trying its best to defend this lush territory, but was fighting a losing battle. This phenomenon went on for three days, until most of the berries were gone. It was fun; the birds were so busy they didn't mind if we got close, so we could stand nearby and watch the spectacle without scaring them off.

Land Management Last year at this time we had completed two early burns before Covid arrived and changed everything. With health concerns and lockdown in place we held off on doing our usual late spring burning because we rely on our wonderful volunteer burn crew to help and we didn't want to risk anyone getting sick. So we missed out on our Year Two plans for getting the place into really good shape. This year, we know a lot more, we know how to best protect ourselves with masks and distancing, and many of us are now in the process of being vaccinated. So we have decided to go forward with our burn program again.

We want to do two early burns this year – the Gin House Field, to get ahead of the emerging *Agalinis*; and the planted longleaf pine acreage, to get a first burn in there before the trees start growing and extending their vulnerable candles. In January we watched and waited for ideal conditions for one or both of these burns, had a great day picked out and prepped for, and then that morning we could not get a permit. The wind was too mild to promote good smoke dispersion, so no permits were being granted that day. So then we had to wait. A week later, on February 3rd, we got a weather prediction with most of the conditions we wanted, got our permit, and gathered our crew to burn. It was wonderful to see everyone again after such a long absence, even though all those beaming smiles were covered up with masks....

We like to burn the Gin House with a northwest wind because it helps direct the fire away from the vulnerable Holly Woods, which we do not burn. To create a black line east and south of the Gin House, we first burned the wooded block east of the Field and then burned the strip between the trail to the Listening Place and Big Bay Swamp. We had a few challenges getting started which is not unusual for the first burn of the season. As the day progressed, the wind direction became less consistent and the humidity dropped, but we successfully burned all the way around to the Big Bay spillway. We had planned to then burn the entirety of the Gin House Field, but when we got started, it became clear that with the wind changing direction and the lower humidity, the risk was too high, so we burned the south half of the field instead. It was a good effective burn. I really want to thank our fantastic crew: Alan Parker, Scott Ball, Carolyn Cohen, Bill Carroll, Sandra Sallee, Karen Berkley, Jan Blue, and Savannah Smith, who is our new land management intern from Southern Regional Technical College. The team did an excellent job and the burn looks great.

We will be on the lookout for appropriate weather to burn the longleaf site as soon as possible, and we hope to burn as much of the property as we can in late spring and early summer. We want to make up for missing most of last year.

Snags One of our land/wildlife management goals is to protect dead trees, or snags, as they are called. Snags are a valuable source of insect food for woodpeckers and other birds and wildlife, and they provide ideal structures for nest-building for all our local woodpeckers and even nuthatches and other cavity builders. These former nesting cavities and other holes in snags can also serve as nesting sites for birds such as Bluebirds, Chickadees, Great-

crested Fly-catchers, Screech Owls and Barred Owls.

Snags present a lot of challenges when it comes to burning the woods: the first few years after they die, these trees shed flammable sheets of bark and branches that pile up around the base of the tree. Alan will go out before a burn and check for such trees and do his best to rake away the debris at the base of a good snag that is worth keeping, but that can be dangerous work, so he has to be very careful in case of falling branches, etc.. The dead tree itself becomes more and more flammable over time as it begins to decompose and especially in the case of pines, the outer layers of wood begin to decay. When burning around a snag, and when the humidity is low, a small spark is all it takes to get that outer layer to start smoldering and eventually to burn. Then it hits the fatwood layer. So we try hard to be prepared in advance of a burn, by raking and then spraying the tree with water from the tank on the tractor. This usually prevents a snag from catching fire, but in the case of a very tall tree, or a tree on slope or in some other location where it is hard to get the tractor close to it, we can't always soak the tree enough and it can catch.

This happened to us on the burn last week. Alan had done his usual excellent job of protecting a huge old loblolly snag not far from the Listening Place. We've been taking care of that snag for years now. Unfortunately, even with all our precautions, it caught up high and we couldn't put it out. So it burned. We were able to burn the adjacent section of land, the south Gin House, so the entire area around the snag was blackened; the tree could fall and not start up another fire.

At the end of the day, after we burned and did all our careful perimeter checking, after the crew had departed, I drove out for one final check. It had just gotten dark, and this snag was still on fire. It was unbelievably beautiful. It was about 50 feet tall, still flaming along the remaining blackened core and sending out fountains of golden and red sparks against the black background of approaching night. It was spectacular. I parked far away and walked in; a burning snag is very unpredictable. In the surrounding silence the flames and sparks made a soft but fierce sound as it continued to burn. I watched for a while, experiencing the moment and wished the burn crew had been with me to witness it.

After a Burn A few days ago I walked out to see how the burn looked, how it did. The first block had burned incompletely on its interior, but that was OK. Along the Bay, the fire had done a good job; a lot of sweet gum brush got scorched. The birds had found the burn! All along the trail to the Listening Place there was a world of activity and sound. A flock of crows was moving slowly around, making a lot of noise on the wing. Red-winged Blackbirds were singing. A mixed flock of Palm Warblers, Pine Warblers, Chipping Sparrows, Bluebirds, Robins, and Yellow-rumped Warblers were roaming the burn on both sides of the trail gleaning toasted or exposed insects and seeds on the blackened ground – obviously enjoying themselves! It always makes you feel like the work was worthwhile when you see wildlife taking advantage of a burn. We expect to see violets appearing along the north bank of that trail any day now... Moving on around to the Gin House, the fire had been quite hot there and the south half was nicely blackened. After passing the Star Pasture heading east, I got to watch the Northern Harrier hunting low over the burn, then moving up and over the pines toward the swamp. The Crows made another appearance. A little further along I startled up a huge Wild Turkey out of the unburned side of the field, a gorgeous male, and he flew

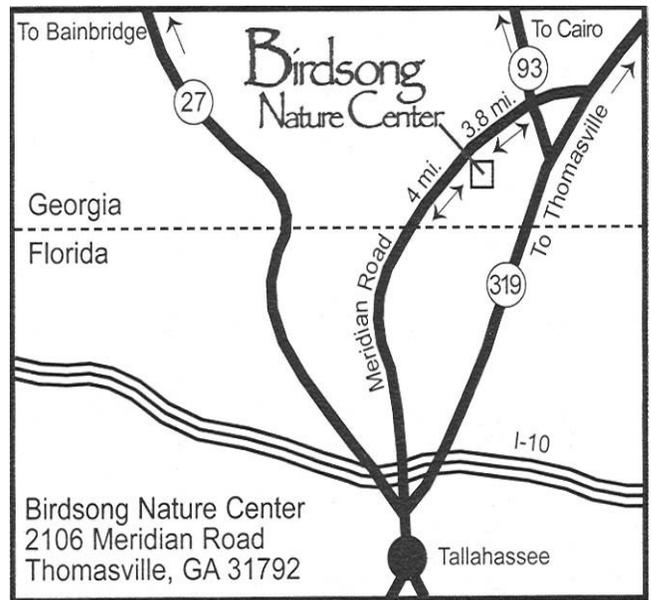
west; within 5 seconds another flew up not far from there and he too moved off to the west. They were both very colorful, with bright red wattles and stunning feather patterns. The sight and sound of a turkey hauling itself out of the broomsedge and flapping away is a magnificent thing.

Trompe L'oeil On this same burn check, while still on the trail along the bay west of the Listening Place where the woods open up, I began to notice an array of silvery discs scattered over the blackened ground. They were all over the place, only a few feet apart. They were about 2 or so inches across, mostly roundish but with irregular edges. It was one of those overcast misty gray days, very damp out, with all the colors in the woods very muted and wintry. This is a hard thing to describe, but these discs were intriguing, they had a patina, and ranged in color from almost black to bright silver. I had to understand what I was looking at, and upon getting closer and really seeing, I realized I was looking at two different things that at first glance had looked the same. Some of these discs were tiny, densely woven spider webs laden with miniscule dewdrops that gave the disc a reflective silvery sheen. Up close, even without sunlight, I could see little rainbows in some of these small webs. The other nearby items were flakes of burned bark. They too had a silvery look, were carbonized, charred, and the surfaces had a burnished quality. It was a wonderful surprise to see the difference up close, to have been fooled!

The day before, the fire heading south from the Gin House had burned hot on the north bank through the wide band of slash pines here and had scorched the bark on these trees, lifting these flakes off and carrying them away in the heated air. They had fallen, scattered, across the open burned grass south of the trail and were mingled in among all those wonderful little spider webs. These are the same spider webs we see in the mornings in many other places, usually up higher, closer to the tops of live or unburned grasses. The density of the web holds on to that moisture until late in the morning, so we can see the webs from a distance. These spiders obviously have strategies for coping with an oncoming fire – they must drop down to the ground and survive underneath the fire that is passing overhead and consuming the vegetation above. By the next morning, these spiders had woven a new web on the only available substrate - right on the blackened ashy ground. I enjoyed being tricked by a spider web and a flake of charred bark!

Hints of spring are appearing: the Bluebirds have started singing and nesting, the Martins have arrived, the wild azalea buds are getting plump. Please come out for a walk and enjoy the birds on a burn for yourself. Stay safe; we hope to see you soon.

-KDB



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".

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 ORGANIZATION
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 Thomasville, GA 31792
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