

Birdsong Nature Center

May-June 2021

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

Hours: Saturdays 9 to 5

Sundays 1 to 5

May

Saturdays and Sundays only, trails open
Free Family Day on May 1st

June

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

Please, no pets on nature center property.

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 our March-April Newsletter we mentioned that Birdsong Nature Center and Tall Timbers Research Station have partnered to apply for a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grant. Of the fifty-one projects proposals submitted by Georgia organizations to the State for consideration, a slate of nine projects was approved by the Boards of Trustees of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources – and the Tall Timbers/Birdsong proposal was included. Now, we are pleased to let you know that the Tall Timbers/Birdsong conservation easement project proposal has gone to the next level in the grant application process: funding for the slate of nine project proposals was approved by the State of Georgia House and Senate Appropriations Committees! This is very good news, but there is still work to be done and more requirements to meet.

As the official applicant for the grant, Tall Timbers has received notification that we are now invited to go through the Second Level Application process. Tall Timbers and Birdsong staff are working on completing this second-level application, which is due on May 31st and once submitted will be evaluated by GOSP staff. If deemed satisfactory, a Project Agreement delineating the work required to complete the conservation easement project will be signed by all parties, and work can begin on completing the actual conservation easement. Currently, we are estimating that the project may be completed between December 2021 and May 2022. Once all requirements for completing the conservation easement project are met and approved, funding will be disbursed to Tall Timbers and payment will be made to Birdsong. We will keep you informed of how our progress is going in upcoming newsletters as we complete milestones along the way.

We again want to offer our sincere thanks to the talented staff at Tall Timbers who have worked on this grant - Shane Wellendorf, Kim Sash and Jessica Coker - and our Executive Director, Kathleen Brady and our own Board of Directors, for their dedicated and exemplary work on the GOSP grant application. We deeply appreciate everyone's excellent teamwork and exceptional individual efforts in producing the successful GOSP grant application.

Thank you for your support of Birdsong Nature Center and we hope you will visit one weekend soon to enjoy a springtime walk along the trails!

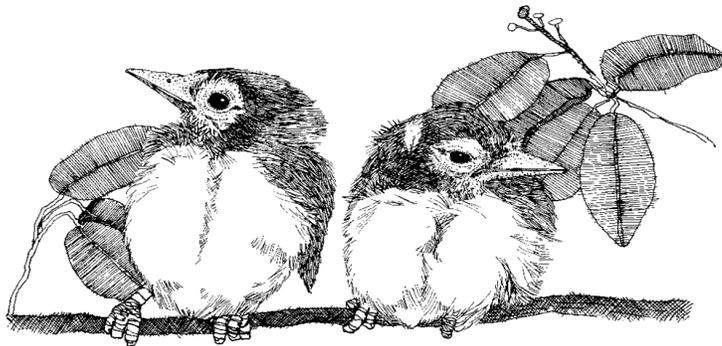
Joe Peresich, Board President

BIRDSONG'S YEAR-LONG PLANT SALE

Our old-timey plant collection is changing with the seasons. We sold hundreds of wild azaleas as they came into bloom over the last weeks. This is an advantage our little on-going sale has over the pre-COVID one day only extravaganza — Birdsong visitors and plant shoppers get to see the later blooming Austrinum and Flammeum azaleas which are not yet showing color at the mid March sale time. We are bringing in more plants as they come out of dormancy. Last week, Dan Miller noticed Giant Swallowtail eggs on the just emerging leaves of the Hop Trees and we are looking forward to seeing caterpillars. We sold the last of the nearly a hundred Pentas plants Barbara Jinright grew from cuttings, and she now has dozens of Pink Swamp Milkweed seedlings just about ready to sell. We have Coral Honeysuckle vines, Buckeye Trees, and other native plants from Yvonne Stinson and Beth Grant, and Bee Balm and Pineapple Sage from Gunilla Trull. We have pots of Christopher Lilies with fine new leaves and an unusual magenta Cardinal Guard from Becky McNeill's garden. We're growing old fashioned varieties of Morning Glories from seed ("Heavenly Blue" and "Flying Saucers") that will be available soon.

The plant collection is beautifully displayed behind the Butterfly Garden with the plants neatly set up on dead tree stumps provided by Alan and Albert, and all outlined with bright new-green boxwood bushes that John Brinson donated.

Thanks to all who have helped with this year-long plant sale! Please come and see it.



June White
Plant Sale Chair

NEW EMAIL SYSTEM

Birdsong is currently engaged in a technology upgrade, thanks to a grant received from the Williams Family Foundation of Georgia. In addition to installing new computers and software we have started using a new emailing system to communicate with our members and friends. It is called Mailchimp and is designed to let us send out messages to a large number of addresses. Our former system was not up to the task; we had a lot of problems getting emails out to you.

If you are currently on our mailing list you may have recently received several colorful photo-illustrated emails about the Metcalfe Spring Festival and about wild azaleas we have for sale. Thanks very much to Sue McFadden of Cazimi Press and Joe Peresich, for helping us set Mailchimp up and for cleaning up our main email address database. We want to make sure that all our members are receiving our emails, so if you have not seen our most recent message about wild azaleas, please email Lynn Brown at birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org and let her know.

We have learned in setting up the Mailchimp system that two local servers, Cairo's Syrupcity (syrupcity.net) and Thomasville's Rosenet (rose.net) do not support Mailchimp emails. If you get your emails through those servers, you may not be receiving our messages. The only practical solution currently is for anyone on those networks who wants to receive Birdsong emails to please provide us with a different email address, perhaps through Gmail, Yahoo, AOL, or another service that allows emails via Mailchimp. We are sorry for any inconvenience!

Please feel free to offer any feedback on the new system and service – we are still getting used to it and there is a bit of a learning curve involved so we appreciate your patience. We thank Sue and Joe for all their help!

METCALFE SPRING FESTIVAL

Thank you!

We want to thank everyone who came out and bought plants at the Metcalfe Spring Festival. It was an exceptional day, and you helped make it a real fundraiser – we sold \$6,000 worth of plants!

Our very special thanks go to Christine Ambrose and all her colleagues in the Metcalfe Spring Festival leadership for including Birdsong in their delightful and well-run event. Because the Birdsong Old-Timey Plant Sale happens on the third Saturday of the month of March, most of our volunteers have never been able to go to the Metcalfe Festival, which happens on the second Saturday of March. We are usually too involved in setting up for the Plant Sale to get to go! This year, once again unable to do the Old Timey Sale because of Covid, Christine's invitation to participate enabled us all to be present at the Festival, and we want everyone to know what a wonderful event it is. Please be sure to put it on your calendar for next March.

We also want to thank our extraordinary Birdsong plant sale volunteers who give so much to Birdsong year-round and make hard work so much fun. We appreciate their expertise and commitment, and their excellent support for our customers. Thank you to everyone who worked on this sale, both on set-up day and the day of: June White, Plant Sale Chair Extraordinaire, Dan Miller, Kristine Dougherty, Mike Miller, Beth Grant, Yvonne Stinson, Jan Blue, Margaret Tyson, Lynn Brown, Carole Hayes, Barbara Jinright, Gunilla Trull, Ken Misner, Ute Shorn, Alan Parker, Michael Carter, and Michael Dugger. Thank you too to Lagran Saunders and Ben Baldwin for providing us with a wonderful catered lunch on set-up day. What a great team!

VERY PART-TIME GREETERS WANTED!

Now that there may be a light at the end of the COVID tunnel, our Board of Directors is looking at ways we can continue to gradually re-open Birdsong. We are interested in hiring part-time back-up greeters in anticipation of re-opening an additional day per week, starting with Fridays.

We have been really fortunate to have Lynette Joye Hitt as our Greeter throughout this entire saga. She has done a wonderful job greeting on Saturdays and Sundays, signing in guests outdoors at our new checkpoint. We are now considering the next steps for re-opening and are looking first at extending our open hours to Fridays from 9 to 5, and then eventually Wednesdays, 9 to 5. For now we plan to keep only the trails open; the House, Bird Window and Gift Shop will remain closed, probably until the fall.

We do not have a date set yet for opening on Fridays; it depends on our ability to staff additional open days. Lynette is interested in trying this out, working Fridays, Saturdays, and Sunday afternoons, but it would be really helpful if we can find a few people who might be willing to be her backup. The job involves greeting visitors, signing them in, explaining our covid protocols and helping people get oriented on their first visit. Our Greeter keeps records, uses Square for card transactions, sells plants, and answers a lot of questions! Excellent hands-on training by our resident expert will be provided. The pay is \$10 per hour.

We are still signing people in from their cars as they pull in the driveway and arrive at the checkpoint and that will continue for the foreseeable future, so for now this will remain an outdoor position. Recently, Lynette has been enjoying the Cedar Waxwing activity in the nearby mulberry tree, the wild azalea bloom that took over the Butterfly Garden, and the spring songbird courtship, so there are a few nice perks at this job. She also meets really wonderful people every single day!

If you or anyone you know would be interested in greeting at Birdsong for a day or half a day per week, please give me a call and we'll discuss it. You will be helping us expand our days of operation. I know this is a rather unusual position announcement, especially since we don't have a start date established just yet, but we are feeling our way here and appreciate your understanding.

Please call or email me at: 229-377-4408 or kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org.

Please note: If we are able to find greeting support and open on Fridays before the next newsletter is mailed out (late June), we will make an announcement by email. Please see the article on the previous page about our new email system and help us make sure your address is on our list.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

April 16, 2021

Weather The past few months of transition from winter to spring have been notable for their variety! We have gone from hard freezes to temperatures in the mid-eighties; mild weather to heavy storms and tornado watches. It has been interesting. Since March 1st we've had 3.91 inches of rain and 9 rain events. We are very glad for the rain, and we love to see the vegetation thriving, but it has had an impact on our burn efforts.

Land Management The frequent and apparently unpredictable rain events have made scheduling our prescribed burning very challenging this year. We have a good crew, enthusiastic and ready to work, and we'll schedule a burn according to predictions on several usually reliable weather sites but then conditions change at the last minute and we have to change plans. On two occasions we've had requests for permits denied (not just us – across the region) because of low wind and somewhat high humidity, a combination that can result in poor smoke dispersion values. Those were disappointing days because we wanted to burn in those conditions at a specific location for a reason.

Meanwhile, we have managed to get several good burns in. Last Wednesday, April 7th, we burned the House Pasture and Squirrel Woods. We lit our fire near Chuck's House, burning against a southwest wind and creating a nice black line and then worked our way west. As it sometimes does, the wind switched on us several times, which always makes things interesting when you are burning against a mowed bahia grass road instead of a recently-harrowed recently-rained-on fire lane. The humidity ended up being much higher than predicted and this made for a patchier burn than expected, but overall it was a very good burn. Savannah Smith, our Southern Regional intern, and Alan Parker had made sure that the 8 or so snags in the area had been well raked around in advance, and not one of them caught fire. We are now expecting the Red-headed Woodpeckers to show up and start nesting – their snags await!

We still intend to burn 80% of the property this year and the season is moving right along, so we are getting a little obsessive about watching the weather and trying to wedge a burn in between these many rain events. If you would be interested in helping us or would like more information please email kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org.

Springtime I really like all seasons of the year but I have to say it: spring is my favorite. I love the emergence of the early flowers – red maple, yellow jasmine, wild azalea, redbud, wild white indigo – and the subtle daily expansion of pale green. Every day the landscape changes, the colors intensify, and we get to be fully in touch with the land coming back to life. Every tree stands out and displays its own unique shade of green. Eventually this patchwork of subtle differences in shade will merge into the general green backdrop of summer – our green and pleasant woods – but for now we get to see each and every tree for who it really is: its shape, its color, its character, its identity.

The first few weeks of the greening surge is dramatic and evocative and every year it makes me glad to be alive to experience this. I drive to work on Meridian Road and in the early days of March witnessed a noticeable difference in the green-ness between my morning trip and that of the evening; it is entrancing to watch this slow-motion unfolding of spring. We are now at the stage where most hardwood trees are at least part way through sending out their new leaves – the colors are deepening and the spaces among branches are filling in. I find the spring surge very hopeful and uplifting; I hope you are enjoying every minute of it too.

Wild Azaleas The wild azaleas have been spectacular this spring! We had a proper cold winter this year so they started blooming in early March. Last year with that warm winter we had, the azalea in front of Mirhi's office door was in full bloom at the end of January – that was so strange. Lovely, but slightly disconcerting.

There is a place on Birdsong we call the Wild Azalea Garden where lots of wild azaleas grow naturally along the drain to Big Bay Swamp. These are our native azaleas, *Rhododendron canescens*, a pale pink and very fragrant species that is very attractive to early spring pollinators. You can find this place easily by heading south on the trail next to the Barn, right by the Pear Tree. It is on the west side of the trail at the bottom of the slope. We discovered this area after a burn one year – Chuck Eason and I had to wade out into the burned area, well off-trail, to soak a huge loblolly that had caught fire and realized we were surrounded by wild azaleas. It was wonderful! That year Chuck created a maze of mowed trails back in there to allow us to get close and walk among an abundance of these fragrant flowering shrubs. Not long after that, in 2012, this site inspired Dan Miller to propose that we plant clusters of different varieties of wild azaleas along the main trail. This was quite an undertaking. Dan has led this effort very effectively and tended these plants well over the years. They have survived and thrived and grown and this spring they put on a beautiful show. Dan planted six or seven clusters of rich yellow *R. austrinum* and deep orange *R. flammeum*. They have done so well that this year you could see these beautiful gold and salmon and peach-colored shrubs through the pines all the way from the top of the trail south of the House Pasture. They are stunning and each variety has its own lovely spicy scent. As you walk south on this trail, you can look beyond the planted azaleas back into the woods and see an expanse of pale pink *R. canescens*, laden with bees. The maze will take you right up close.

We have quite a few of the native local *R. canescens* planted around the house and Butterfly Garden. Betty loved wild azaleas back before they were as well known and beloved as today. She planted a dozen shrubs in the Butterfly Garden in memory of Rodie White, June's mother, with whom she had been friends for many years. She wrote a poem in Rodie's honor; it is inscribed on a stone nearby:

"The Essence of Azalea; The Presence of Rodie"

These azaleas have developed into huge shrubs and were absolutely loaded with flowers this year. Several other Butterfly Garden azaleas were also impressive this year, in gold

and peach. They have all gotten really big and, fortunately for all of us, the blooms have lasted for weeks, making for a very colorful and fragrant spring.

The Mulberry Trees There are a number of old red mulberry trees at Birdsong that are favored springtime destinations for flocks of Cedar Waxwings and other migrant songbirds including Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Summer and Scarlet Tanagers. These trees bloom very early and start producing small green fruits that gradually grow and ripen into plump red to black mulberries. It has been a spectacular year for fruiting, and we've never seen such abundance of berries. There are two places where you can see these fruiting trees: one is right by the restrooms next to our checkpoint where there are several old trees; and the second is a huge and much older single tree just north of the Equipment Shed. Every spring as the years go by we are always relieved and thankful that this beautiful old tree continues to survive. A number of its branches have died, and we worry about it whenever there is a drought, but once again this spring it is leafy and covered with green and ripening berries. This particular tree is known to our regular photographers and birders as a great spot to see grosbeaks and tanagers. It also fruits out later than the ones by the bathrooms, so we still have something wonderful to look forward to.

Over the past two weeks, the Cedar Waxwings have arrived and they descend in small flocks of 15 to 20 and visit the trees by the checkpoint off and on all day long. They are so busy eating and enjoying themselves that they aren't too concerned about us, and we can get quite close and observe their acrobatic feeding techniques. Waxwings are among the most charismatic and photogenic of birds, so our visitors (and staff) who enjoy birds or taking photos become easily spellbound upon their arrival. They really are fun to watch.

When the Waxwings appear, these beautifully green leafy trees become alive with activity. From a short distance away, you can see the branches bouncing, full of birds enjoying themselves, hanging upside down, fluttering from one perfect berry to the next. You can also hear that tiny little sound, the music of 20 happy waxwings feasting on a favorite fruit, eating until they have to all go take a collective break in a nearby pecan tree, where they settle and recover and talk all about it until they are ready for another round.

Right now there are a thousand black berries on the ground; all that activity has shaken loads of berries loose and the raccoons and wood rats have been taking full advantage of the windfall. People love them too; the easy-to-reach black berries have a wonderful flavor and are very sweet and a little addictive - our red-stained fingers give us away!

Purple Martins We appear to have eight pairs of nesting Martins. There may be more, but I haven't actually seen any birds entering or leaving two of the ten gourds. I also haven't been able to spend much time observing them, so I'm hoping there are ten nests in progress.

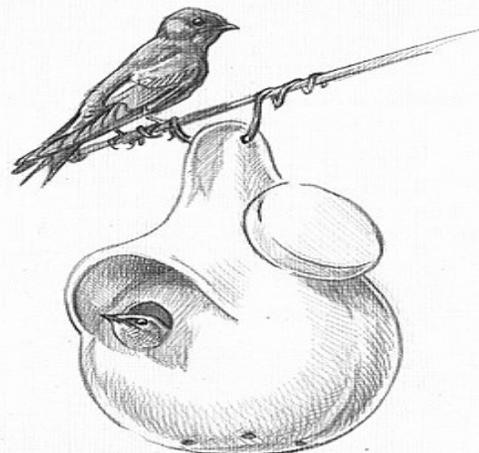
The Martins have settled in to their early nest building stage. It is a lot quieter than the recent "Here we all are, we made it back from Brasil, it is great to be here!" stage and the "That gourd is my favorite, you can't have it"

stage when all Martin pairs are actively checking out and selecting their gourd of choice. This involves a lot of busy gourd investigation and bickering among all colony members. All that racket is really quite endearing.

On the few recent opportunities I've had to watch the martin pole, I've seen several females returning to a gourd carrying leaves or grasses. Alan reports that on several days last week he had to stop the truck near the pole because both male and female Martins were in the road busy collecting grass and straw to take home and they were not about to move for him! One gourd has a curling strand of what is obviously broomsedge grass trailing out the door. Do the martins pull these dry leaves of grass directly off the stem? Yesterday, a female entered her gourd and sat looking out the doorway for a moment. Then she turned back inside the gourd to get something and leaned out with a brown live oak leaf in her beak. She tossed it away and watched it flutter to the ground. I guess that one just wasn't good enough. Apparently she or other birds are very choosy and like to improve upon their work as they build; there were a number of apparently discarded live oak leaves and pine needles on top of the predator guard below the gourds. Today, in a different gourd, there were four or five tangled longleaf pine needles spilling out of the doorway, swaying in the breeze. I was hoping someone would come home so I'd get to observe them tidying this up, but no one did. I'd love to see a Martin wrangling all those long needles through that little doorway!

Both males and females can be seen off and on during the morning calmly leaning out of their doors and singing their little greetings and chortly messages back and forth. They appear to have really settled in and are not too easily disturbed by our presence. They will occasionally get startled and all take off at once for a fly-about around the House Pasture and back. Some spend time perched up in the high branches of the nearest old pecan tree. It is a great observation post for them. They are such a delightful, lively presence - they are cheerful and they make us feel happy.

Please come out and indulge your senses in a late springtime/early summer experience at Birdsong! There is still plenty of time to enjoy a still-cool morning walk and hear the ardent music of courting songbirds, see a flash of color as a Bluebird flies back to its box with something delectable for a baby, catch the scent of spring flowers, and savor a handful of mulberries! We'll look forward to your visit!
- KDB



FREE FAMILY DAYS
First Saturdays: May 1 and June 5

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

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

Gifts in Memory of Phillip Loggins:
Robert Kauffman
Sallie and Duby Ausley

Gift in Honor of Dr. Don Hill:
Kandy Hill

Gift in Memory of Betty Jinright:
Harriet Hawkins

Special Financial Gifts:
Briarcliff Garden Club
David Beggs
Mary Mailhot
Kimberly Sash
Rebecca Hill
The Blackbaud Giving Fund
Virginia Harmon
The Annino Family
Tom Strazulla
Brenda Coy
Dr. and Mrs. David Jones



**Birdsong Nature Center
Board of Directors
2020-2021**

President	Joe Peresich
Treasurer	Bill Preston
Secretary	Margaret Tyson

Directors

Jim Antista	Ellery Sedgewick
Michael Brezin	Scott Ball

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

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

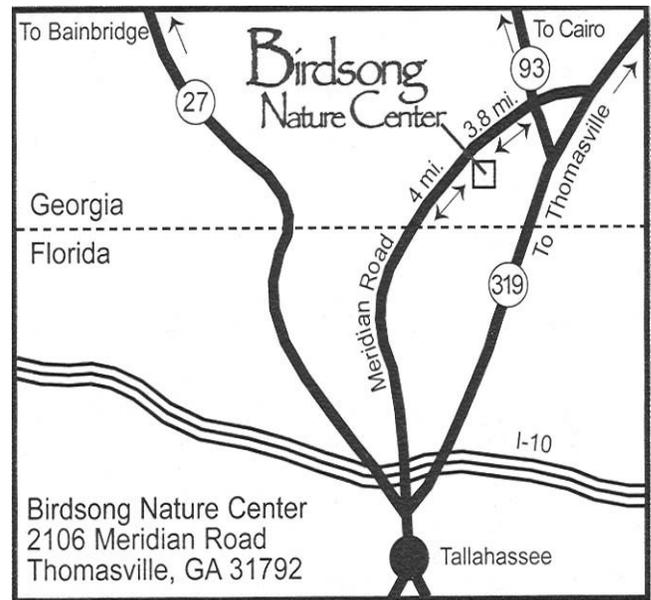
Michelle McClellan
 Janiece Owens
 Brian Haythorn and Helena Prikryl

Tallahassee

Sharon Mitchell
 Lina Gwynn
 Jean Huffman
 Elizabeth Hawkins
 Regina Richardson
 Andrea Fenn
 Jennifer Hobgood
 Bonnie Fesmire, Ron Clark, and Brendan Clark
 Peggy Cabe
 Lori Escallier

Other

Rose Ann Scheck	Havana, FL
Matthew and Lia Andress	Madison, FL
William Scott	Havana, FL
Jan Suber	Bainbridge, GA
Brian Childress	Valdosta, 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