

Birdsong Nature Center

March-April 2022

**TRAILS OPEN WEDNESDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS;
HOUSE AND BIRD WINDOW REMAIN CLOSED.**

*Hours: Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays 9 to 5
Sundays 1 to 5*

March

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on March 5th

April

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on April 2nd

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

Admission: members, free; non-member adults, \$5.00; children 4-12, \$2.50

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

Dear Friends,

We have written here earlier of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program, designed to help conserve outdoor recreational areas in Georgia by providing grant funds to qualifying stewardship organizations. Birdsong and Tall Timbers were selected for participation in 2021 after an exhaustive application process. Our proposal was to place Birdsong's acreage into a conservation easement with Tall Timbers Research Station & Land Conservancy, thereby protecting Birdsong's land in perpetuity. We were notified last year that our application had been approved and the grant would be awarded contingent on the conservation easement work being satisfactorily completed. Cooperative work between Birdsong and Tall Timbers towards completion has been proceeding in earnest over these past several months. We are at the point now of working to refine our required documentation and terms of the easement. We are hopeful of completing all the requirements this year, 2022, though we cannot predict with certainty. But we are well down the road in the process.

Birdsong's Board is also paying close attention to the COVID situation, and we welcome visitors to come out and enjoy the trails. The trails are open during normal, pre-pandemic hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 9am-5pm, and Sunday 1-5pm. For now, the house and Bird Window remain closed.

We are looking forward to spring plant sales this year; we've been invited back to Metcalfe Spring Market on March 12. Please see June White's article in this newsletter and look for email and Facebook posts over the next several weeks. June will be providing more details about the spring plans. If you've not yet signed-up for our Mailchimp emails, please do call or email Birdsong and leave us your email address.

We can't thank you enough for your very kind support of Birdsong, especially over these past two years. We hope you will visit one day soon and enjoy the peaceful trails through the woodlands and fields – it's beautiful out there. And as always, please let us know of interesting sightings along the way!

With warmest wishes,
Joe Peresich, Board Chair

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER
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BIRDSONG'S SPRINGTIME PLANT SALES

We are looking forward to spring and our annual plant sales. We hope you will come out and enjoy the fresh air and the beautiful plants we'll be selling. There will be three Spring Old-Timey Plant Sales this year. The first will be in Metcalfe, Georgia:

Metcalfe Spring Market
Saturday, March 12th, 9am to 3pm
www.facebook.com/metcalfespringmarket/

The next two will be held at Birdsong Nature Center:

Spring Plant Sales at Birdsong
Saturdays, 9am to 1pm
March 26 and April 9

We'll have some real treasures this year at the sales. Along with the usual assortment of fine native perennials, shrubs, and trees, we'll be offering three beloved and storied old garden favorites:

- A plant donor is giving Birdsong her lifelong collection of Golden Hurricane Lily bulbs. We always have a few but they sell out quickly. This year we will have dozens of them, freshly dug for each sale date.
- We will have hundreds of Spring Snowflake bulbs (*Leucojum aestivum*). These were rescued years ago from an abandoned yard near the Thomasville train tracks.
- And we'll have Betty Jinright's tall heirloom Pentas plants, favored by hummingbirds and butterflies. These healthy plants are a sea of green now in the hoop house, and should be a riot of pink, magenta, and red blooms by sale time.

We will look forward to seeing you at Birdsong's spring sales!

- June White
Plant Sale Chair

BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAY **Thursdays, March 3 and April 7** **9:00AM to Noon**

Birdsong's Butterfly Gardeners meet on the first Thursday of each month at 9am.

Please feel welcome to join this accomplished and active crew of volunteers to tend our beautiful Butterfly Garden! The team is also helping to remove invasives from the garden around the House. Bring gardening gloves, knee pads, clippers, and lunch if you wish to stay afterwards.

For more information call Donna Legare at (850) 386-1148 or Birdsong at (229)377-4408.



IN MEMORY OF ERNEST F. KOONE, III

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our friend and supporter, Ernest Koone, III. Ernest passed away on January 7, 2022 from a sudden heart attack. He was 70 years old. Ernest was a long-time supporter of Birdsong and provider of the many thousands of wild azaleas that we offered during our annual spring plant sale.

Ernest lived in Pine Mountain, GA, where he operated the largest plant nursery in the country dedicated to the growing of native wild azaleas. Annually, he produced over 25,000 native azaleas of various species and cultivars. He authored many articles and was constantly giving talks to organizations, groups and anyone who would listen about the beauty and benefits of using native azaleas in gardens and landscaping. He leaves a legacy and advocacy of the beauty of nature and "Bringing Nature Home".

Thank you, Ernest, for sharing your life and native azaleas with us!

- Dan Miller



FREE FAMILY DAYS

First Saturdays: March 5 and April 2

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

Early Morning Bird Walk December 8, 2001

As we walked in the Gin House
Where grasses gleamed amber
And robins and goldfinches
Foraged in number,

A grasshopper sparrow,
Atop a bare stalk,
Caught our eye.
With binoculars brought

Into focus, we watched
As the bird, rarely seen
This high up above cover,
Lightly ruffled its feathers to preen.

The little brown bird,
Throat and breast feathers buff,
Allowed but quick study,
Then flew off.

We ambled on,
Delighted to see
The fields full of waxwings,
Warblers and phoebes.

A glorious morning!
Birds in abundance!
And one grasshopper sparrow
We saw quite by chance.

By Alice Honea

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

February 15, 2022

Weather We are having a real winter – lots of overnight freezes and cold breezy days. Early in January we had a couple of warm spells and the Japanese magnolias close to home in Tallahassee erupted into full bloom. Just last week I saw my first bright purple redbud, so springtime cannot be too far off. There has been plenty of good rain and a couple of long-lasting storms. Alan has recorded a total of 8.06 inches since January 1st, with 7.05 of that in January.

Beavers Our ponds are full of water, the drains are flowing, and the beavers at the Farm Pond and Upper Pond are in full engineering mode. A few days after a good rain they get busy and load the spillway and north drain with mud and waterlilies. It is very effective and takes a lot of effort on Alan's part to deconstruct. A visitor recently reported seeing water gushing out of a hole on the back side of the Farm Pond. Upon inspection it appears that beavers have been living in a cavern under the surface of that old earthen dam and the pressure of the recent rains built up and broke through the back wall. Once the rain stopped Alan lowered the water level by breaking up the beaver's nearby spillway work and now there is no longer any water running through the dam. There are lots of gnawed, peeled twigs and branches and wads of water lilies below the hole – it looks like the beavers themselves tried to dam up the breach, perhaps from inside, but apparently could not stop the flow of water. We knew the beavers were inhabiting this end of the Farm Pond Dam but now we are going to have to hire help and get some machinery in here to fill in the beaver caverns. In this old packed clay, beaver caves can remain quite stable and there is only foot traffic on the surface along here, but once things start breaking through like this we have to bring in help to repair the whole area. People versus beavers: beavers win every time!

The Woods The woods are in their mid-winter glory, at that point in the season when the forest is at its most spare and open. Almost all hardwood leaves have fallen, except for the bays, magnolias, and other evergreens and trees like live oaks that lose their leaves right before budding. It is a lovely time of year to be out among trees. You get to know a tree differently in the winter. You get to see their essential structure, the beautiful shape of an entire tree and all its branches. It is an opportunity to really see each tree's different bark. You also get to see farther through the woods, to appreciate the extent of a com-

munity of trees all living together. I want to know how much they communicate – through touch or the air or underground. Do they enjoy the breeze, the cold, sound? Do they sleep? How do trees feel about the trees closest to them?

Land Management We have made a good start on our cool-weather burning. As we have mentioned before, we want to get our planted longleaf burned this season. We've been watching for mild burn weather in January because we don't want to heat the pines up too much and want to burn them before the growing tips emerge. We have tried several times for a permit, but have learned that the kind of conditions we want for burning these pines, high humidity and low-ish wind, are exactly the conditions that result in low smoke dispersion. Regulations controlling smoke dispersion get more and more strict and we are having to reevaluate how to burn this site.

Meanwhile, two weeks ago we started off our burn season with a fire along the south edge of Big Bay Swamp, adjacent to the longleaf pines, and created a very nice protective black line to their north. Our crew did a great job. This area is long and winding and we were working with a mostly south-east wind. Unfortunately, we couldn't help but get smoked in places due to the curving trail. The fire did a good job at this site and the birds were all over it the next morning. Last week our team burned the wooded section to the east of the longleaf, creating another nicely blackened area, offering us protection from possible flying sparks when we do burn the pines. The same day we also burned the area south of the House Pasture and east of the Gin House Field. The humidity had dropped considerably by the time we got to this site and being adjacent to the open field we were exposed to more wind, so we did a careful backfire along the north and east trails, which took a long time, and then headed it down the slope on the east. We are pleased with the result.

This year we plan to get 80% of the property burned. We missed some sections last year and our intention is to get completely caught up over the spring and early summer. These first burns are often a little challenging – winter weather can be very low in humidity and highly variable within a day. There are not yet any other black lines to burn against, so the risk factors can be somewhat high. We are very fortunate to have an excellent volunteer crew that is dedicated and smart and experienced and always learning. We know that we can get this done.

We offer thanks and respect to our crew members who have helped so far this year: Alan Parker, Bill Carroll, Karen Berkley, Ken Kuhl, Russ Barrett and Sandra Sallee.

Bats On January 20th Alan stopped by to tell me he had something I needed to see. We went to one of the old buildings and Alan pointed out something tiny and dark up on the rough wooden ceiling. I had to look very closely to see two tiny furry creatures suspended upside down and snuggled right up against each other. It was a pair of little bats. They were each about two-and-a-quarter inches long and about an inch-and-a-half wide, round, dark gray on the face and body, short dark gray fur all over the back, with long rounded ears pointing down. When facing them, they are upside down and facing us - the one on the left has a pale gray belly with a deep part down the middle; the one on the right is slightly shorter in length and the belly is very pale, almost white, and smooth. If you walk around behind them their backs are dark gray and furry and you can see their little ears extending down below the heads. Their feet, where they are holding on to the ceiling, are not visible. You know immediately they are bats - the odd little triangular faces and long ears, and the barely visible edges of their brown wings tucked snugly at their sides. They do however give you the impression of two well-fed mice suspended from the ceiling.

It was very cold for the first two weeks we became aware of them and they seemed oblivious to our presence. Now if we check on them on a somewhat warmer day, or if we stand there admiring them for more than a minute, the larger one begins to pulse slightly. From photos, it also looks as if he opens his eyes at this point. The other little bat appears to continue sleeping.

From what we've been able to learn, local bats do hibernate, but most of the literature refers to hibernaculae, big groups of hibernating bats. We haven't found much information about very tiny solitary bats or bats that hibernate in pairs. We also learned that our bats can warm up and move around when the temperature rises, even though they may not become completely active. We remain unsure of the identity of these little creatures. They certainly are small. They also seem very attached to one another. In all this time, they have never been alone and they are always touching.

They are also extremely cute. Over-the-top cute. Irresistible. They are so endearing we have to control our need to go check on them all the time. We do keep our visits extremely brief in order not to disturb them too much. On today's quick check the temperature was up in the 70's. Both bats were there in their usual places, one beside the other, but today the smaller one on the right had her wings extended with each "wrist" claw hooked to the ceiling in front of her with her back extended. She was doing something with her back feet, kind of paddling away back there, with her lower half covered by the dark brown skin that encloses her tail. Her eyes were open and she didn't seem bothered by a person being in the room. Her companion, with his distinctive dark part down the middle of the fur on his belly, had his face covered by his wings and was all tucked in and seemed to be having a nap. This was new behavior.

We didn't stay - didn't want to bother these adorable little beings too much. We will really miss them when the weather warms up - we expect that they will leave as soon as the flying insects emerge.

Last Friday after we burned, I stayed late to check on the burned areas one more time. I was at the entrance to the Gin House Field and got to see the sunset. At about 6:45 the sun had just gone under the horizon and the sky along the treeline was the color of fire. It turned a deeper and deeper red and began to fade as the sky darkened and then I heard a familiar sound - Wood Ducks. Over the next ten minutes several groups of Wood Ducks came rocketing over the treetops, flying in from the Ochlockonee floodplain, calling and talking among themselves as their wings made that remarkable whistling sound. And then I saw a bat! Hunting in the reddish sky. In a place where bats are predictable in warm weather, right by the bench. I wondered if it was one of our bats, a little bit hungry and in search of an insect meal. We will keep you posted.

Birds Lynn has reported some very nice bird sightings over the past couple of weeks. We plan to share her photos with you on Facebook in the near future. These sightings include a variety of sparrow species found in different habitats at Birdsong and include Grasshopper, Bachman's, Swamp, Savannah, Chipping and White-throated Sparrows. Last week on our way through the house, Lynn and I had to take a moment to see if anything was happening at the Bird Window and saw a molting Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Gray Catbirds, Pine Warblers, Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Lynn has also recently seen a Hermit Thrush in the pool and a Black-and-white Warbler taking an enthusiastic bath!

We hope you will come out to enjoy the change of seasons at Birdsong. It is still nice and cold in the mornings and the woods have that special winter scent; there are lots of fallen leaves underfoot and bare tree branches are still silhouetted against a bright blue winter sky. There are early hints of spring, too - the ruby mist of the first southern red maples, a Carolina jessamine flower on the ground, herds of Robins roaming the Pecan Grove. Enjoy this winter moment while we have it -spring is on the way!

- KDB



BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In Memory of Lane Green:

Rosalie Rodriguez

On Behalf of Bill Carroll:

Aaron & Tiff Carroll

Special Financial Gifts:

Linda Anderson
Doug & Julie McPherson
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Carole Hayes
Bob Walker
Jack & Rosalie Olson
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Julie Moore
William Howard Flowers, Jr. Foundation
William Combs
Teaf Charitable Funds
Community Foundation of South Georgia
Ellery and Robin Sedgwick Fund
Cherokee Foundation Charitable Fund
Briarcliff Garden Club

Special Thanks:

Native Nurseries: Elizabeth Georges, Joe Walthall, and Seth Dunaway; and Donna Legare for the fragrant Fraser fir wreath—a traditional gift Donna Legare and Jody Walthall used to give to Betty Komarek.

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Stefon & Jessica McClain
Larry Bud Simpson, Jr.
Rocco Gemma & Alathia Ashman
Loblolly Rise

Tallahassee

Diane Vacca
Peer Beerli

Other

Barbara Gill Monticello, FL
Jesse & Gracie Griggs Moultrie, GA



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

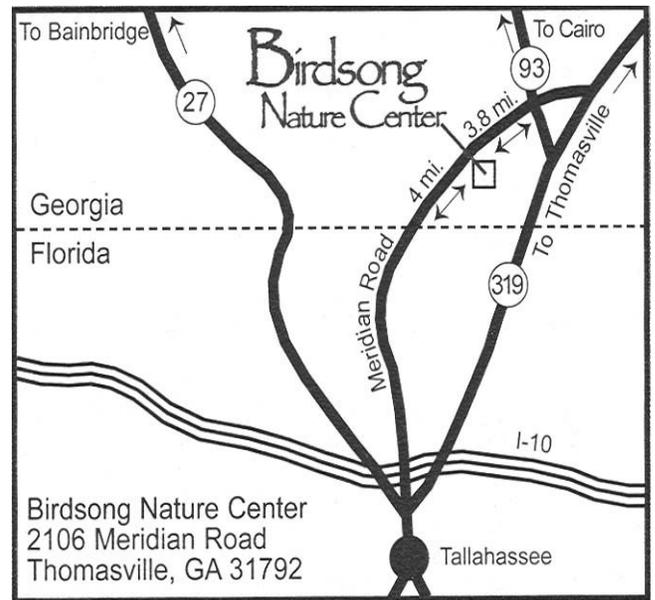
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DIRECTIONS:

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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