

Birdsong Nature Center

September-October 2022

TRAILS AND BIRD WINDOW OPEN WEDNESDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS

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

September

Sept. 9 Re-open trails and Bird Window
Sept. 10 Free Family Day
Sept. 24 Take a Child Outside

October

Oct 1 Free Family Day
Oct 6 Butterfly Garden Workday
Oct 15 Old-Timey Plant Sale
Oct 22 HOTC Volunteer Day

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER
WEB SITE: www.birdsongnaturecenter.org
EMAIL: birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org
TWITTER: @BirdsongNatureC
FACEBOOK: Birdsong Nature Center
YOUTUBE: Birdsong Nature Center
PHONE: 229-377-4408

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

Dear Friends,

As you may have already learned, Birdsong will begin to gradually re-introduce events and educational programming at the Nature Center this fall, and we could not be more pleased! Beginning on Friday, September 9th, the House and Bird Window will once again be open to visitors. The Gift Shop will remain closed for another two months. We hope you will enjoy the opportunity to spend time at the House and Bird Window when you visit Birdsong!

Work towards the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) grant and placing Birdsong's property into a conservation easement with Tall Timbers continues. We are reviewing the legal documents and plan to have this work completed by the New Year. The GOSP grant, together with the re-opening and re-introduction of programming at Birdsong, leaves us with a greatly heightened sense of anticipation and optimism in looking towards 2023.

In the previous newsletter we outlined many of the exceptional stewardship objectives our staff and volunteers have accomplished over the past several months, e.g., extensive prescribed burning, property infrastructure and building maintenance, etc. As we look towards the New Year, we want to continue these considerable efforts. On July 30th we launched our *2022 House and Garden Improvements Campaign*, and those of you on our U.S. mail list have received our request. We are also asking for other readers' help in raising significant funds to make important repairs and improvements to the House, surrounding Gardens, and Birdsong office. Please see page 4 for campaign details and how to donate, and www.birdsongnaturecenter.org for more information. The total cost estimate of these improvements is \$65,000, and we ask for your kind support in meeting this important campaign goal. With your help, Birdsong will be looking its very best for its visitors in 2023 and beyond!

Thank you to all our members, volunteers, donors, and visitors. We hope you will join us at Birdsong one day soon to enjoy the beautiful Nature Center that you help make possible!

With warmest wishes,
Joe Peresich, Board Chair

TWO FALL PLANT SALES
Saturdays 9am to 1pm
October 15 and November 5

Fall planting weather is on the horizon and we are excited about our fall plant sales coming up on October 15 and November 5! Here are just three of the hundreds of rare, unusual, and beautiful plants that will be available:

Apalachicola Indigo (*Baptisia megacarpa*) is a very rare indigo whose native range has been so reduced by habitat fragmentation, land use changes, and invasion of non-native plants that it is now thought to exist in only 20 sites in South Georgia, North Florida and South Alabama. We are fortunate to have a few of these plants (seed grown) for sale.

The Swamp Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus grandiflorus*) is the spectacular native Hibiscus that can stop traffic when it comes into bloom in damp roadside ditches at the edge of the highway. The huge (6 inch) shell-pink five-petaled flowers nod gracefully at the top of the 6-foot-tall plants. Bloom time is late spring to early summer. It will do best in a moist location, in full to part sun.

The Bigleaf Magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*) has the biggest simple leaf and the biggest single flower of any tree in North America. The foot-wide flowers are creamy white and fragrant, and open from huge buds in May. The cones which follow ornament the tree through the Fall. These hairy egg-shaped cones are bright pink with shiny crimson seeds poking out. For a fascinating description of this plant look up “Bigleaf Magnolia, Arnold Arboretum”. You will have to have one after reading this!

We will have a nice variety of plants for you at these sales including native trees, shrubs and perennials that thrive from being planted in the fall. We are still working out all the details, so please be sure that your email address is on the Birdsong email list. We will be notifying our members and friends when we have our final plans ready to share. Please send a note to Lynn Brown at birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org to get on the list. You may also check the Birdsong website at www.birdsongnaturecenter.org for updates, starting in mid-September.

- June White
Plant Sale Chair

THE BIRD WINDOW WILL BE OPEN AGAIN
Starting Friday, September 9

Birdsong will re-open the main house and Bird Window starting on Friday, September 9th. The Gift Shop will re-open in two months to give our volunteers time to reorganize and restock. Going forward, the house and trails will be open during our regular hours of operation:

Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday 9am to 5pm
Sunday 1 to 5 pm

The Bird Window is a small room, so masks are recommended but not required; a supply of masks will be available at the door. We ask that you respect the well-being of others and yourself. Please note that the back porch bathroom is under renovation and does not currently have a working sink, so hand sanitizer will be provided. There is a sink available at the outdoor bathrooms.

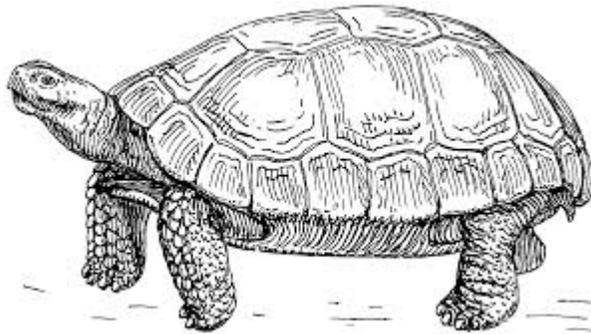
We look forward to sharing the Bird Window with you!

POP-UP PROGRAMS

As we start to re-introduce educational programs back to our calendar, we'd like to try something new: pop-up programs that are not scheduled in the newsletter but announced by email and on Facebook.

This fall we want to invite you to come out to enjoy the wildflowers close to their colorful peak, and we'd love to go birding with you when sightings have been good at Birdsong. Please make sure that we have your email address, and we will send out an announcement in advance of the ideal time for these opportunities. We will also post them on Facebook.

Find us on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BirdsongNatureCenter>



TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE AT BIRDSONG IS BACK! **Saturday, September 24** **9:30-11:30AM**

If you are a parent, grandparent, or friend of a child please join us to celebrate *Take A Child Outside Week* and take your favorite child on a natural adventure at Birdsong. We will explore the trails and look for evidence of deer, coyote, or other wildlife; see butterflies face-to-face; search for doodlebugs; and watch birds go about their daily activities at the Bird Window. We will practice using all our senses as we explore what nature has to offer. This program is geared for children and accompanying adults who want to learn how to better share the wonders of nature with their favorite young ones. Children may collect natural items along the trail for keepsakes and/or to use to make a craft when we return to the Barn. Resource material on outdoor activities for children will be provided.

Birdsong began offering bimonthly *Take a Child Outside* programs in 2012. Please see the mention below of the inspiration for these programs. For Birdsong this celebration of nature on behalf of children became a bimonthly program featuring current natural events year-round, not just during Take a Child Outside Week. Our volunteer leaders Sandra Sallee and Carolyn Cohen are happy to be getting back out in the woods after our extended Covid hiatus!

\$5 Friends, \$7 nonmembers, children half-price. **RESERVATIONS PLEASE:** we ask that you register by phone or email so we know how many adults and children to prepare for.

TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE WEEK **September 24 – September 30**

Take a Child Outside Week was developed at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences to help people overcome obstacles that prevent children from discovering the natural world. By arming parents, teachers, and other caregivers with resources on outdoor activities, the goal is to help children develop a better understanding and appreciation of the environment in which they live, as well as a burgeoning enthusiasm for its exploration. Going outside connects children to the natural world, enhances cognitive ability, and improves academic performance. Please see this website: <http://takeachildoutside.org/> for more information and please join us at Birdsong on September 24th for our fall version of *Take a Child Outside!*

2022 HOUSE AND GARDEN IMPROVEMENTS CAMPAIGN

Birdsong members have received a letter describing our 2022 House and Garden Improvements Campaign. We are also inviting public support to implement significant repairs and improvements to our historic home that houses the Bird Window and Gift Shop, the office building, and the surrounding gardens. Here are the improvements we'd like to implement this fall:

The House: replacing the house and porch roofs, renovating the bathroom, re-screening the porch, adding improved A/C and lighting in our meeting space and Bird Window, replacing the hot water heater with an efficient tankless heater.

The Office: painting the building and replacing the shingle and metal shed roof.

The Garden: hiring professionals to remove three large trees - two are safety concerns and one is an invasive; removing limbs close to the buildings; and hiring garden support to beautify the garden and clear out invasive trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants.

These improvements will enable Birdsong to enter 2023 in excellent shape and looking its best, with the house and gardens refreshed and upgraded. We want the place in beautiful condition so that our members and visitors can enjoy all that Birdsong has to offer. This fall, leading up to the new year, we will gradually re-introduce educational opportunities and events and open the house so visitors can enjoy the Bird Window again *starting on September 9th*, upon our return from the August break.

The new year will welcome a new phase for Birdsong – we expect to have the conservation easement process completed by December. With the support of our members and friends in getting our improvements implemented over the fall, we can welcome 2023 in beautiful shape, knowing that Birdsong's land and assets will be protected for future generations. This will be cause for celebration, and we will schedule a party to honor all of those who want to participate in this Campaign.

The total cost of these improvements is \$65,000. Would you like to help by making a gift to the 2022 House and Garden Improvement Campaign? Your support will be greatly appreciated. Gifts to Birdsong and the Campaign are tax-deductible as allowed by law. If you wish to participate, you may donate online at our website at www.birdsongnaturecenter.org or send a gift to Birdsong at 2106 Meridian Road, Thomasville, GA 31792.

Thank you very much for considering this request. We sincerely appreciate your engagement and support, and we look forward to seeing you at Birdsong in the fall.

FREE FAMILY DAYS First Saturdays: September 10th and October 1st

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



**BECOME A NATURAL LEADER:
A Training Program for Volunteer Children's Program Leaders**

This is a 3-part training to be held in October, November, and December of 2022.

Part 1: A *Project Learning Tree Workshop*, provided by Georgia Project Learning Tree

Part 2: A 3-hour session at Birdsong Nature Center, including *How to Lead a Guided Nature Walk for Children*, and instruction on using Birdsong's trails, Bird Window, Butterfly Garden and Bluebird Trail. Educational materials provided. Date to be announced.

Part 3: A 3-hour plant and wildlife ID session onsite at Birdsong so volunteers may learn to identify our most common plants, birds, etc. Date to be announced.

Birdsong Nature Center has been extremely fortunate to have a talented and committed group of volunteer children's program leaders. They are called the WILD Women (because their first training was a Project WILD workshop and they all happened to be women). This group emerged out of a series of trainings offered in 2016 to help us increase volunteer support for children's education. The WILD Women were active from 2016 until Covid arrived in 2020 and shut down school and other field trips.

As part of Birdsong's broader effort to return to providing regular educational programming in 2023, we are offering a new training program this fall to recruit more volunteer leaders, with the expectation that we will get back to working with groups of school children, scouts, FFA, home school groups, church groups, and others on a regular basis. Not having a full-time dedicated educator on staff, Birdsong relies on its volunteer WILD Women to lead such groups, usually in teams of two or more. If you would like to help Birdsong make a difference, and give young people a high-quality learning experience outdoors, please see the multi-session training program description above. We invite you to call or email to schedule a screening interview with Executive Director Kathleen Brady and sign up for the Project Learning Tree Workshop. There is no charge for this training, but we do require that participants agree to participate in 5 programs in the coming year. Please note: most children's programs are scheduled during the week, so attendees must be available to volunteer on weekdays and occasionally on a Saturday.

Additional note: we are open to changing the name of this group. All are welcome!

**Become a Natural Leader, Part 1: Project Learning Tree
Thursday October 6th
9am to 4pm**

Led by Georgia Project Learning Tree facilitators, this award winning and nationally recognized environmental education workshop is a day-long outdoor immersion in teaching natural principles using hands-on outdoor games and activities. An excellent instruction manual is included. This is an extraordinary program and it is a lot of fun for participants. Volunteers will come away inspired and energized, with some new friends and with all the tools they need to give children an appreciation and awareness of nature. Our current WILD Women will be present, so you will get to enjoy this experience with some great mentors!

You may be a retired school teacher, or you may never have taken a child outdoors to learn, but this class and the subsequent sessions will give you the confidence and knowledge to lead a great kids' program. If you have been looking for a way to change the world for the better, you can start right here!

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED by Thursday, September 22. Call 229-377-4408 or email Executive Director Kathleen Brady at kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org to schedule your screening interview and register or to request more information.

IN MEMORY OF MIKE MILLER

Last week we received the news that our dear friend, Mike Miller, had passed away unexpectedly. When a greatly-loved person leaves suddenly like this, an entire community of people – his family and all his many friends – is left shaken and disbelieving. Many of us are still trying to adjust to this seismic shift in our world and I am having difficulty finding the words to express the depth our loss.

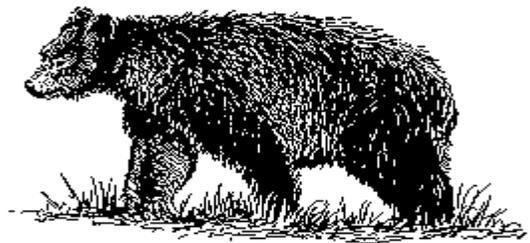
Michael's family and close friends are organizing a celebration of his life to take place at Birdsong on Saturday, November 19th from 3 to 5pm. Anyone who knew Mike and would like to join us to honor him is very welcome. There will be more information available in the November-December newsletter or you may email us closer to the date at birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org.

Mike was an extraordinary person and there is so much to tell about his life and how fortunate we were to know him, but I just can't write about him right now. Maybe you can help. If you have a story or a thought or a song about Mike that you would like to share, or photos of him, please send them to us. We'd love to compile a collection of memories that we can make available at the event. Please send items that you don't mind being copied and distributed in some fashion. Maybe some stories could be printed in an upcoming newsletter, for example. This idea is in the early stages and may evolve as we go along. Please send to me, Kathleen Brady, at Birdsong Nature Center, 2106 Meridian Road, Thomasville, 31792 or kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org. We have some great photos of Mike out burning with us in the Birdsong woods, where he was right at home.

We will see you on November 19th to honor our dear friend, Michael Miller.

VOLUNTEERS: FALL WORK DAY WITH HANDS ON THOMAS COUNTY! Saturday, October 22, 9 AM – noon

Please join us for a busy volunteer event at Birdsong. This is a big day for **Hands On Thomas County** – every fall they send teams of hard-working volunteers to non-profits in need of help and we are one of those fortunate organizations on their list! We can use many more hands to spruce up the House Garden, remove problematic shrubs and plants, and help with invasive plant removal. You will get to meet a lot of nice people - HOTC volunteers are the best! So please come on out, bring your work gloves, loppers, shovels, and enthusiasm and help give Birdsong's garden a fall makeover! Thank you, Angela Kiminas, Executive Director of HOTC for including Birdsong in this wonderful community improvement day. Call or email for more information: 229-377-4408 or birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org



BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAY Thursdays, September 1 and October 6 9:00AM to Noon

Birdsong's Butterfly Gardeners meet on the first Thursday of each month at 9am. (Please note, we are closed for the summer break and will re-open September 9, but the Butterfly Gardeners will maintain their first Thursday schedule.)

Please feel welcome to join this accomplished and active crew of volunteers to tend our beautiful Butterfly Garden! 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.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

August 14, 2022

Weather It has been hot and humid and rainy for weeks now. Rain is predicted almost every day, and it does rain somewhere, often at Birdsong. We've totaled 6.32 inches in the month of July and 4.88 so far in August. The ponds and swamp are consistently full lately and the vegetation is responding joyfully, growing wild and green and tall. Alan has been mowing trails non-stop; as soon as he finishes mowing all 11 miles, he has to start over again, the grass is growing so fast. The sides of the dams we had mowed in April are already growing up, not tall enough to block our view of the ponds and swamp, but faster than we would like. That all said, we are enjoying the summer in all its lush, green glory, even if it is starting to look as if we hadn't burned at all.

Land Management Our burn crew kept at the burning into early June, until rainy weather and high humidity reduced effectiveness. We are now waiting for drier weather to get back to burning the east line and northwest corner. Hopefully we'll get back out there in September.

Meanwhile, Alan has been mowing areas where our hot burning top-killed a lot of sweetgum and other hardwood brush. This is easy for the bush hog when the tall stems are dead and dry. He has made great progress through Linton's Corner in the southwest section. Knocking the heavy brush back with hot burning and mowing will help make it easier to carry a good fire through here next year.

Cool Sightings from Alan Our irreplaceable Land Management Assistant, Alan Parker, spends a lot of his time at Birdsong working hard out on the land. He arrives at work very early in the morning and while doing his job out in the woods often gets to see interesting things on the property that the rest of us don't get to see. He is the one who reported most of the Swallow-tailed Kite sightings, as we mentioned in the last newsletter.

About a month ago, Alan was mowing sweetgum brush out in the Live Oak Hammock and saw some movement out of the corner of his eye – it was a very tiny fawn, not far from the huge noisy tractor and mower. The fawn got up on its long, spindly legs, moved about 8 feet away and disappeared down in the brush. Alan turned off the tractor and stepped down to investigate. As he approached, the fawn disappeared, going very slowly, the little one got back up and moved another 8 feet away and settled back down in the brush. Alan moved just a little bit closer, enough to take a couple of photos of the tiny spotted deer curled up under the greenery and then moved

back to the mower and cranked it up and left the area. That project could wait! We assume that the mother deer had tucked him into the weeds there for protection when Alan first approached with the mower and took off to safer ground where she could observe what was going on. Nice sighting!

Alan has also regularly spotted a family of raccoons, a mother and three babies, in various locations: on Big Bay Swamp Dam crossing into Gentian Slough (several times), climbing trees near the woods south of Lewis Field, and up around the Barn. We are not sure if they are the same family, but over the past few weeks, a mother and three babies have been coming in to the Bird Window and they pile into the harrow disc where we place cracked corn and sit there and eat until it is gone! They also love playing around in the pool.

Alan also gets to see beavers swimming around the Farm Pond in between their active water management and burrowing projects. A few weeks ago, he saw a massive one just cruising along, head visible with a wide wake behind him. They are typically very shy, so a beaver sighting is special. We don't seem to have a lot of alligators inhabiting the Farm Pond right now, but Alan will be the first of us to see one.

Last week Alan texted me – he had found an entire patch of Orange-fringed Orchids in a place we've never seen them before. Apparently, Alan spotted one all by itself near Big Bay Pond and then cruised the nearby edge of the Swamp to see if he could find any more. Amazingly, he found this lovely patch of about 25 plants, nicely spaced out in the grasses and herbaceous vegetation, under the cypresses on the shady south edge of Big Bay Swamp right by the water, an area we burned back in February. This is not a rare orchid, but we don't see a lot of them at Birdsong, so this was big news. Lynn and I had to ride down and look.

Orange-fringed orchids are beautiful. The thin-stemmed plant supports a cone-shaped cluster of pale orange flowers, and each one has a fringed lower lip. They won't still be in bloom by the time this newsletter gets to our readers, but Alan put flagging tape along the trail to indicate their location. Last year, also in late July, Alan found a smaller group of these orchids near the Bog Garden. The last time they were seen there was 20 or more years ago when Betty was still with us, and she found them along the drainage ditch. This year Alan went searching and only found one plant. So, we are not sure why they have showed up at the Bay, but we are very pleased to know these beautiful little orchids are out there!

We're so very glad to have Alan with us - he is an integral part of our staff and he helps with everything we do, not just land management. We are lucky he is here for many reasons, and just one is that he is out on the place scouting these great nature sightings for us!

Cats of Birdsong Housecats are known predators

and are completely unwelcome in any natural setting. Unfortunately, people don't always take proper care of their pets and cats and dogs end up being abandoned and having to fend for themselves, often getting dropped off out in the countryside. This has happened at Birdsong many times over the years. In every circumstance it puts a huge burden on staff to find a way to capture the creature and take it off the property, hopefully to find it a good home. We have dealt with one or two completely feral cats who would not let us anywhere near them – they usually didn't stay around here long. A number of these cats, if they were tame enough to be captured, have ended up being adopted by our staff.

Last Thursday, for the first time in years, two cats were spotted near the barn, a calico and a patterned white and tabby mix. Within two days, the tabby became approachable, and was clearly starving and ready to submit to some affection and be fed. He is definitely not a feral cat. Very well-mannered in the house. Our staff is now taking care of him the best we can, and we've looked up every possible place we can go for help to get him adopted. This little cat must be about 5 months old; he's clearly been in the woods for a while. He is extremely thin and eats ravenously. The calico has disappeared and we have no idea what has happened to her. This is a real problem for our tender-hearted staff. Unfortunately, none of us are in a position to adopt this little creature.

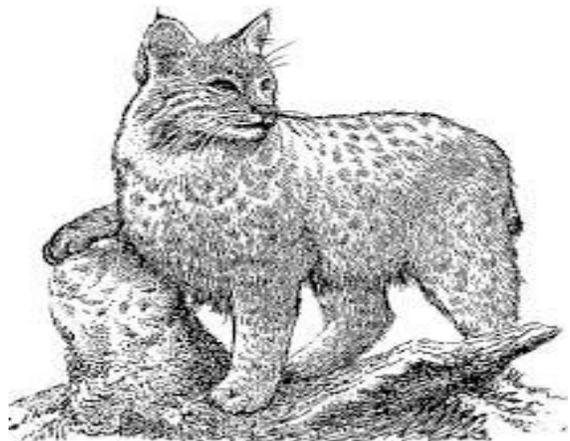
Not all cats at Birdsong have been housecats. Betty Komarek raised a bobcat from a baby. Ed was the superintendent at Greenwood at the time, 1970's I think, and a mother bobcat had been caught in a trap and given birth. The manager brought a blue-eyed bobcat kitten to Betty and she raised him. His name was "Vivo Yo!" in honor of the Basque people Betty and Ed had met when they were doing fire consulting in Spain and Portugal – he was a survivor. We have photos of Betty with Vivo Yo as he grew from a kitten to a full-grown bobcat. Apparently one of his favorite things was to wake her and Ed up by meowing at the bedroom window in the morning, be let in the house, and then rush around to the kitchen and bathrooms and madly pull down any dishtowels or hand towels that might be hanging on a rod. He hadn't had any cat training from his mother and had not been taught to hunt, so Betty had to shoot squirrels for him. He grew to be a very big cat, and he was always affectionate, could be picked up and loved on, and never extended a claw. There are photos of him sitting on a branch in a magnolia tree with Eddie, Betty's son, both looking like they are enjoying themselves; and a photo of Betsey, Betty's daughter, holding him in her arms out in the garden. There is one of him curled up on the floor at the Bird Window snuggling with a little girl, looking huge in comparison. When

he matured, he began to claim Betty, and would spray her gardening basket when she was outside working. Eventually a female bobcat came around and Vivo Yo left with her – she had to do the hunting, since that was not in his repertoire. Once he left, Betty thought she saw him looking at her from a distance once or twice, but he never came close again.

Years later in the late 1980's, after Birdsong became a nature center, Betty walked out on the porch and there was a cat sitting on the steps just like Vivo Yo used to do – she said she thought it was him at first glance. It turned out to be a tabby that looked a lot like her bobcat. Betty was smitten and that was that. She called him Vivo Yo in memory of her wildcat. Betty kept him inside during the day so no one would be offended that there was a cat living at the nature center, and he'd sleep on the bed while Betty was reading her books. He'd sit with her at the Bird Window while she read or drank tea and showed remarkably little interest in the birds. He was allowed out after hours and at night and would sit on the steps with Betty and then they would go for a walk. He never caught a bird or a lizard that I am aware of, but he was a good mouser. We did not have any rat problems in those days. He did bring home a dead golden mouse mama with a living baby still attached. I raised that baby mouse - there were midnight feedings, heated half-and-half, nursing on a Q-tip. Stories for another time. Back to Vivo Yo – Betty really loved that cat. We all did. He had that old soul quality. He lived a long life and is buried under a special rock beneath Rodie's azaleas at the Butterfly Garden. If ever there was an exceptional cat, it was Betty's Vivo Yo.

We are looking forward to all our new activities and house and garden improvements this fall. It will be nice to share the Bird Window with all of you again. See you in September!

- KDB



NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Kent Smith
Emily Bragg

Tallahassee

Sandy Kirk

Other

Graham Edwards Albany, GA

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In Memory of "B" O'Toole and Lane Green:

Gwendolyn Waldorf and Dana Bryan

Special Financial Gifts:

Donna Legare and Jody Walthall

Jane Preyer

Carol Jones



Birdsong Nature Center Board of Directors 2020-2021

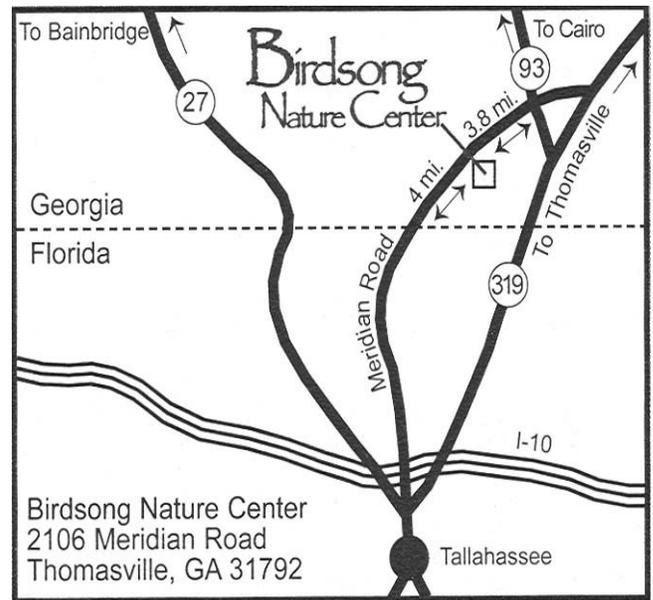
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DIRECTIONS:

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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