July-August 2023

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

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

July

July 1  Free Family Day
July 6  Butterfly Garden Workday
July 8  Explore Birdsong at Dusk
July 22 Summer Morning Trail Ride

August

August 3 Butterfly Garden Workday
August 5 Free Family Day

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

SUMMER BREAK SCHEDULE
Closing on Sunday August 20th
Re-opening on Wednesday, September 6th

Dear Friends,

In our November-December 2019 Newsletter, we reported that Birdsong would begin pursuit of a competitive grant offering from Georgia DNR – the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program – with the goal of placing 440 acres of Birdsong’s property into a conservation easement to be held by Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy. We’ve been keeping our members and followers updated on progress via the newsletters since that time, and we want to mention here that the grant and easement approval process is nearing its completion. We currently anticipate finalization within the next four weeks. We will keep you informed!

The favorable weather conditions continue in the area, with plenty of alternating rain and sun, much to the benefit of botanicals and wildlife at the Center. Fields and woodlands are vibrant and green, ponds are full, nesting and rearing of young is in full swing. The early-summer weather pattern has been pleasant for visitors and program attendees, as well, and we have greatly enjoyed greeting many old friends and new. We hope that you will visit the Nature Center one day soon to walk the meandering trails, take in the activity at the Bird Window, or to participate in one of our fun and educational program offerings. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely and very best wishes,
Joe Peresich, Board Chair
THANK YOU, PLANT DONORS!

We were surprised and delighted to receive some great plants from new donors back in the spring! Several unusual and beautiful begonias from a Tallahassee gardener are filling out nicely over the summer in the shade of a hickory tree and will be ready for our fall sale. Another Tallahassee Birdsong member gave us hundreds of swamp chestnut oak seedlings that will be a good size in a year or so.

After a good rain one of our plant donors takes a digging fork on her daily walk at her farm and digs up plants that have seeded and sprouted in the fire breaks. Southern Wood Fern, Red Maple trees, Deer Tongue, and Rattlesnake Master are all good native plants that are easy to transplant when the ground is wet. These are plants that would otherwise be mowed over or harrowed when the firelanes are maintained for prescribed burning, so we are glad to get them to a new home.

We got starts of an unusual variegated fern (*Pteris cretica*) from a Thomasville gardener. It thrives when grown near a rock or concrete, so we planted clumps of it in two concrete pots that we also received as a donation from Barnesville, Georgia. These will be full and beautiful for our fall sale.

We are always on the lookout for more good plants to sell! One of the reasons our Plant Sales are so well-attended is the great variety of interesting plants that donors provide, and we truly appreciate these gifts that keep on giving. Please keep Birdsong in mind as you thin or transplant this summer and give us a call or email if you have plants to share. If you can get the plants to Birdsong, we can give them the best care until they find a new home at one of our sales. Contact us at birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org or (229)377-4408. Thank you!

- June White
Plant Sale Chair

A DATE FOR YOUR CALENDAR: NOVEMBER 4TH
Birdsong’s Fall Plant Sale
Saturday, November 4th, 9am to 1pm

THANK YOU, ATLANTA CONTEMPORARY ENSEMBLE!

We want to offer our heartfelt thanks to the extraordinary artists of the Atlanta Contemporary Ensemble: violinist Tracy Woodard and pianist Emily Bragg, and their colleague Dr. Amanda Jacob, for bringing their extraordinary science lecture and chamber music recital to Birdsong on Earth Day in April. An appreciative audience of 135 people gathered behind the Barn to listen to a fascinating lecture by Dr. Jacob about her research at Emory University Bird Lab on the neuroscience of birdsong. Tracy and Emily then played for us, and it was memorable. Their program included these beautiful bird and nature-related pieces: *Lark Ascending*, by Ralph Vaughan Williams; *Whippoorwill*, by Matthew Kennedy; *Song of the Phoenix*, by Lauren Bernofsky; and *Spring*, violin concerto by Vivaldi. We could not have wished for a better way to celebrate Earth Day! Thank you, Tracy, Emily, and Dr. Amanda!

Please go to the ACE website at https://atlce.org/birds to learn more about these amazing artists and *The Language of Birds*. Birdsong was very privileged to be chosen as one of their sites for presenting this unique combination of science education and chamber music. We wish these talented ladies all the best in their ongoing endeavors and we hope to have the pleasure of their company again at Birdsong sometime in the future!
HOUSE AND GARDEN IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT UPDATE

We are currently getting the re-roofing of the main house and porch scheduled for this summer. We had wanted to get through our burn season and the spring events and programs before scheduling this major project – we are not sure how much it will interfere with visitation. The garden portion of the project is ongoing. Last fall and into January the Native Nurseries landscaping crew did a beautiful job clearing out our overgrown garden south of the house and Bird Window. This exposed the extent of invasive bamboo that was present throughout the area. It had been covered up and was much worse than we realized, so Alan has been treating this problematic plant and he and Mike Carter have cleaned out all other unwanted growth and debris. We are letting any surviving bamboo grow, so we can do additional treatments before planting anything there. We plan to do some re-planting this fall if these treatments prove successful. We are also pleased to let you know that a generous member and volunteer, Ken Kuhl, has had our metal garden chairs and tabletop sandblasted and repainted, as a gift. They are beautiful – you must come see! Thank you, Ken!

For Birdsong Members

NEW WAY TO ACCESS THE RECIPROCAL MEMBERSHIP BENEFIT

One of Birdsong’s valuable membership benefits is our participation in a country-wide program offered by the Association of Nature Center Administrators. This program enables a Birdsong member to enjoy various benefits such as free admission, gift shop discounts, free parking, etc., at 120 other participating nature centers. Up until now we have been mailing the list of these centers to new members, which involves a lot of printing, paper, and postage. Starting on July 1st we will no longer mail out a hard copy, but will provide members with a link to the site where the map and list of participating centers can be accessed and downloaded.

It is travel season, so if you are going on a trip, call us for the link and check out the map of sites and see if there is a nature center at your destination. We get a tremendous kick out of having visitors come to Birdsong and tell us that they are current members at X nature center in Arizona or Michigan or Florida, and we get to welcome them with free admission! We have seen a few on a regular basis over the years and it is very rewarding to see these folks who have come from far away – it is like having members of our own from sister centers. We hope you’ll take advantage of this great benefit sometime soon!
EXPLORE BIRDSONG AT DUSK
Saturday, July 8
7:30 – 9:00 pm

Enjoy Birdsong at a cooler time of day, as the sun is going down over the woods and fields. Sunset time on this day is at 8:42pm so we’ll gather at 7:30 and go out to experience nature in the early evening. We hope to hear a variety of birds and wildlife going about their dusk activities, especially our still-courting songbirds and frogs, possibly a Barred Owl or even a Chuck-will’s-widow. We’ll visit the Farm Pond, Listening Place, longleaf planting site and Big Bay Swamp.

Dress for the weather; bring binoculars, a flashlight, and bug repellent. The program is geared for adults and mature children – we may need to remain still and silent at times. Feel welcome to arrive early and have a picnic before we start our walk.

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE. Please call or email to reserve your space by Friday, July 7th at noon.

$8 Friends, $10 non-members.

SUMMER MORNING TRAIL RIDE
Saturday, July 22
9:00 – 11:00 AM

Join us for a summer morning tour of the property on a trail ride with Kathleen Brady. It may be hot at this time of year, but interesting things are happening on the property. We will ride the main loop trail and make a number of stops to discuss Birdsong’s ecology, land management, and history, at places such as the gopher tortoise neighborhood, longleaf pine planting site, Big Bay Swamp, the Farm Pond, Star Pasture and others. We will point out gopher tortoise burrows, Eastern Bluebirds and other birds that may be raising their final brood, tracks or other signs of wildlife, and summer wildflowers in bloom. At various stops we may take short walks to nearby sites of interest, so be prepared for some walking.

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE. Please call or email by noon on Friday, July 21 to reserve a space. There is room for 12 people on the trailer. Dress for the weather, bring binoculars and bug spray. Bring lunch if you’d like to stay after the ride.

$10 Friends, $12 non-members, children half-price.

BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAYS
Thursdays, July 6 and August 3
9:00 AM 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. Your involvement would be very welcome. 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.

FREE FAMILY DAYS
First Saturdays: July 1 and August 5

On first Saturdays of the month admission is free and we 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, get to know the property, and visit the Bird Window and Butterfly Garden.

Admission: free
Summer has arrived and we’ve been busy with programs and activities. Here are a few high points:

**The Language of Birds**  This was a well-attended and fascinating event held in celebration of Earth Day. Please see page 2 details!

**Spring Migration Bird Walk**  This was one of two excellent birding walks led by avid birder Janell Cleveland this spring/early summer. Our group visited a variety of good bird habitat, walking to the Farm Pond, then to the Listening Place and back along the Bay to the House Pasture and we listed 45 bird species! We got to listen to or see White-eyed Vireos, Yellow-throated Vireos, Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers, Common Yellowthroat, a Pine Warbler building a nest, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Blue Grosbeaks, Summer Tanagers, and more. One of the most interesting sightings was a low-flying “V” of 9 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks heading toward Big Bay Swamp. We also got to hear a Bachman’s Sparrow and really enjoyed seeing and hearing the Orchard Oriole and Indigo Bunting. Thank you, Janell!

**Gopher Tortoise Field Day**  Dr. Lora Smith started off our program with a discussion of gopher tortoise ecology, feeding habits, and life cycle. Our group got to see a large male tortoise up close and active, and then we went out in the field to examine four of Birdsong’s gopher burrows in situ. Using Lora’s camera that can be extended down into a burrow, we observed several tortoises at home, along with some crickets that only inhabit gopher burrows and one small photogenic gopher tortoise toad living deep in one of the burrows. Thank you, Lora!

**Take a Child Outside and Get Wet and Muddy!**  This one is always a hoot. We took a group of 8 adults and 8 children out to the Upper Pond and Farm Pond and sampled four different sites to collect aquatic plants and creatures. The kids did a great job and used nets to collect a nice array of aquatic invertebrates such as water scorpions, dragonfly nymphs, whirligig beetles, predaceous diving beetle larvae, water boatmen, water mites, and a few different species of minnows. We all got wet and muddy! Thank you, Sandra, Carolyn, Kate, and Faith for helping make this so much fun!

**Land Management Workdays**  Birdsong is fortunate to have dedicated volunteers who are willing to come out on a hot morning and clear brush around snags in preparation for burning, and then come back on an even hotter and more humid morning a month later to trim brush off the Azalea Garden trail and the Big Bay Dam. Sincere thanks to Karen Berkley, Mike Weed, Sandra Sallee, Carolyn Cohen, Scott Ball, and Alan Parker.

**Upcoming Events**  We will have a light program schedule these next two months, due to the heat and expected work on the House and Garden project. We will offer a Dusk Nature Walk, and a Summer Morning Trail Ride, as a way to enable visitors to enjoy Birdsong in summertime, but at somewhat cooler times of day. Please see program descriptions on page 4.
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES
June 2, 2023

Weather  This has been a very unusual spring, weatherwise. We’ve had a few nice cool fronts come through here and there with wonderful breezy blue-sky mornings contrasted with solid (endless) weeks of humid, cloudy days and afternoon showers. Since April 17th, we have recorded a total of 7.66 inches, with one major storm on May 18th that brought us 3.38 inches of rain. Overcast skies have really helped make hot days more tolerable, and we can always use the rain. The vegetation is thriving, the woods are green and lush, the ponds and swamp are full, and the creeks are flowing. This odd weather has been beneficial for our wildlife, and it has been a great nesting season for our birds, but it has been unhelpful for our late spring burn program; more on that later. The beavers, of course, are in their element, busy damming the spillways a few days after any big rain event. Typically, in years past, we could expect a drought during the month of May. Not this year.

Land Management  We have experienced a number of challenges this year to our prescribed burn program. Starting in January, and several additional times since, we have had equipment problems that resulted in extended delays and involved taking our tractor to the repair shop and having to bring in on-site help. We had planned to burn a significant part of the property during the late spring/early summer for effective brush control, but when it came time to burn, the weather became consistently rainy or the humidity was high, very unusual for this time of year. We did get a few sites burned well, and we are pleased with those, but the April and May efforts did not burn as cleanly as we would have liked. Fortunately, we have an intrepid volunteer burn crew, wonderful people who are willing to try burning under almost any conditions. Birdsong has benefited from their expertise, patience, and willingness to come out and experiment with burning under atypical weather conditions. Our last attempt was on May 30th, when Alan Parker, our land management staff, and three volunteers were willing to come out on a holiday weekend to give it one last try. We’ve done our best under the circumstances, but now we are going to wait until there is an extended period of dry weather and/or until this fall when the humidity is lower. We’d like to thank our burn crew for all their good work this year: Karen Berkley, Sandra Sallee, Carolyn Cohen, Bill Carroll, Ken Kuhl, Russ Barrett, Mike Weed, Gary Mizner, Scott Ball, and Alan Parker.

Purple Martins  Martin nesting season is going well this year, even though we have 5 pairs of birds instead of the 10 pairs we used to consistently host. This new pole has 10 gourds available, and up until recently, it has been a little hard to tell which gourds had nests in them – the adults seem to really enjoy visiting all the gourds and ever since they arrived, we’ve seen them checking out one gourd after another and squabbling over who gets to visit which one. Things settled down once gourds were selected and nests were built, but the adults continue to visit the empty gourds and some just hang out in there for a while at a time, gazing out the doorway.

As of today, June 2nd, three gourds on the top tier have babies in them, three apiece. Martin parents are amazing - they are energetic and protective and work hard all day long feeding their young. All of the youngsters are in excellent condition: bright-eyed, fully feathered, curious, able to lean way out of the gourd, and always hungry. The parents hunt for insects constantly throughout the day and it is always fun to see them approach the gourd, where two or three babies are crammed in the doorway waiting eagerly. The parent zooms in at high speed, delivers a bug or dragonfly to an open mouth and is gone in a split second, off to find more. Somehow all the babies of a particular gourd seem to be evenly fed; all appear to be close to the same level of development. We are right at the cusp now - there will be fledging very soon. These are exciting days!

Update, June 9th. The two gourds of active babies, three in one, four in the other, all fledged over the weekend. The parents must have gotten started right away on training them, teaching them to hunt, and leading them away from the nest site, because we haven’t seen them at all this week. They are just … gone. A few Martins are here off and on during the day, but not the happy throng of last week, with all the accompanying noise and buzzing of passing humans, and the all-day rapid-fire feeding.

Last Saturday, there was a visitation by a big group of other birds, including fledglings, 18 birds. We assume they came from nearby colonies, also teaching their babies to fly and hunt. A male was observed picking up oak leaves in the road near the pump house and carrying them to a gourd. Since then, this week, we have seen a female or two investigating this gourd, and we sometimes see a female sitting looking out the doorway. Since last weekend, there have been only four birds here visiting and perching on the nearby cherry snag. We are really hoping that this is not a new nest. It is so late in the season, and the heat is getting more intense. In the past few years, the colony has been leaving well before the end of June. It appears that the rest of this year’s group has moved on, so we’d hate to see a solitary pair trying to raise a brood well into August. This has been such a strange season; we haven’t been clear on what has been going on. We thought there were two additional nests, with babies being fed, but that activity ended last week, with no babies being seen. We may lower the gourd rack to
check the gourds and try to understand what has happened here.

Meanwhile, we miss the colony. They are such a cheerful bunch; vocal, free-spirited, feisty, such beautiful fliers and devoted parents – we really feel their absence every year when they successfully get all those babies out and leave. It is very quiet at the martin pole. We miss them.

Other Birds  A side benefit of taking a few minutes to watch the Martins is getting to see and hear other birds in the vicinity. Just today we got to see two Swallow-tailed Kites come over, a “V” of White Ibis, neighboring Eastern Bluebirds also feeding young in the House Pasture boxes, the pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers who are nesting in a snag at the east end of the Pecan Grove, and a family of Tufted Titmice chasing each other all over the House Pasture. A Barn Swallow visited yesterday, repeatedly swooping in low above the grasses near the martin pole. High speed Chimney Swifts in twos or threes fly over the lot frequently, chittering. The White-eyed Vireos that live over near the Equipment Shed have been singing, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have been zipping by on their way to the feeder at the Bird Window. A Common Yellowthroat loves the patches of wax myrtle in the House Pasture and sings all about it. Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, Pine Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Northern Parulas, Yellow-throated Vireos, and many White-eyed Vireos have been seen and heard singing throughout the woods across the property. The Orchard Oriole near the Star Pasture is still singing his beautiful song, and there are Wood Ducks at the Farm Pond and Upper Pond, one female with babies.

There is one bird I’m concerned about not hearing much at all this time of year: Northern Bobwhite. Typically, we hear one singing for all he is worth right at the south edge of the House Pasture, all morning long. Alan tells me he has flushed several groups of quail near here when riding by on the mule, so maybe we’ll hear singing sometime soon. We really hope so; their absence is noticeable.

Wild Turkey Family  In early May, I walked out to check a firelane on the east line, heading for the southeast corner on the main trail. It had rained the day before and I noticed that the fallen leaves on this stretch of trail were damp and soft – I wasn’t making any noise at all. I came around a curve and about 25 feet in front of me at the edge of the trail was a large Wild Turkey, facing away from me, sitting on the ground, wings tucked in. It was a cool morning and she appeared to be basking in a patch of sun at the edge of the trail. She must not have heard me coming, and my next steps startled her. She leaped to her feet and spun around to face me, clucking and scolding. As she rose up about 12 or more tiny little yellow and gray puffballs on legs scattered across the trail, peeping and running chaotically, searching for her shelter. They had all been tucked in around their mother, invisible to me. Meanwhile, she strode forward, confronting me with her wings spread wide, scolding loudly, hurrying right at me, and looking me right in the eye. This all happened in a couple of seconds. Trying to take in what was happening, I had stopped walking and realized how big she was, how large her feet were, and how intent she was on scaring me off and away from all her babies. It worked. It was clear that she was in fearless-righteous-mother mode, and I needed to get out of there and let her get back to her chicks. I slowly backed away and watched her relax a bit, mission accomplished. She turned around to gather up her brood, still scolding with her wings spread wide, keeping her eye on me. I left, not wanting to distress any of us any further.

That was an impressive display, very dramatic. I certainly would never have bothered her if I had known she was there, but I felt very fortunate to have witnessed a mother turkey passionately defending her brand-new brood so close up.

Ladies’ Tresses Orchids  It has been another nice year for the Ladies’ Tresses Orchid. This native orchid is invisible in the woods and grasses for about 10 or 11 months of the year, then in April and May sends up a single thin stem with a lovely spiral of tiny white flowers. Its genus name is Spiranes and it pops up in the middle of our hiking trails. If you have been out walking recently, you probably have seen many of them. Alan holds off on mowing on the trails where they are blooming to allow them to seed out. A particularly good area to view them this year was on the Upper Pond Dam. They look impossibly delicate on that thread-like stem, with their elegant spiral of miniature orchids. Lovely!

It has been a pleasant late spring/early summer this year and not unbearably hot yet, thanks to all the cloudy and rainy days. We are particularly grateful for this on behalf of our Martin babies – the seven little birds that fledged last weekend were in beautiful condition, clearly well-fed and well-feathered; ready to go. We are glad they got out of those gourds before a spell of baking heat came along. We wish them well on their long journey!

Please come out and explore, even if it is a hot day. So far this has been an unusual and unpredictable year, and we don’t know what you might encounter, but it will surely be interesting.

- KDB
NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville
Kathleen Vignos

Tallahassee
Ashley Barber
Jann Bellamy
Wayne Sprague
Laura Mulford

Other
Jamie Comstock           Chappaqua, NY
Cory Livingston          Monticello, FL
Tracy Woodard            Atlanta, GA
Jesse Agee               Cairo, GA
Buddy Hull               St. Augustine, FL
Christopher Batts        Havana, FL
Amanda Jacobs            Lilburn, GA

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In Memory of Phyllis Logsdon:
David Johnson

Special Financial Gifts:
Ed and Marylyn Feaver
John and Dede Yow

Birdsong Nature Center
Board of Directors
2022-2023

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BIRDSONG’S CORPORATE SPONSORS

Native Nurseries
Trillium Gardens Nursery
Carroll and Company, CPAs
Import Authority
Seminole Alterations
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TNB Financial Services
Target Print and Mail
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Woodleaf Senior Care
Cowhey & Ward, LLC
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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Date

☐ New  ☐ Renewal  ☐ Credit Card  ☐ Check  ☐ Cash  ☐ Paypal

Credit Card Account #

Exp. Date / Amount Authorized $ ___________________ Authorization No.

Cardholder Signature

Name (Please print clearly)

Address City State Zip

Phone: Primary ( ) Alt ( ) EMAIL

Place of Employment: Job Title:

Training, experience, interests:

How did you learn about Birdsong? From a member of Birdsong, the news media, word of mouth, our newsletter, etc? Please be specific:

I would like to join the Friends of Birdsong in the following category:

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

☐ Family/Friends $45  All of the above benefits for each member of the immediate household. Four free one-time guest passes.

☐ Friends of the Cardinal $60  Five free one-time guest passes in addition to above.

☐ Friends of the Chickadee $100  Six free one-time guest passes in addition to above.

☐ Business/Corporate Friend $100-$1,000  One free one-time guest pass for each $10 of membership (ie., 25 passes for $250) and recognition in newsletter. Call for more information.

☐ Friends of the Hummingbird $250  Hummingbird feeder in addition to above.

☐ Friends of the Bluebird $500  Bluebird nesting box in addition to above.

☐ Birdsong Naturalist $1,000  Personal tour of Birdsong with Executive Director and/or Board Chair for up to 6 people. Call for more information.

☐ I do not wish to receive any (above) benefits with my membership and would like the whole amount tax deductible.

I would like to support Birdsong by volunteering to help as follows:

☐ Bird Window Instructor  ☐ Public Relations
☐ Financial/legal guidance  ☐ Serve on Board of Directors (please submit resume)
☐ Fund raising  ☐ Teaching (birds, nature walks, stars, etc.)
☐ Greeter  ☐ Other
☐ Gift Shop Assistant
☐ Land Management
☐ Program Development

Memberships are renewable one year after the sign-up date. Members can upgrade to a higher category membership by sending the balance within the year. Memberships are deductible in part, depending on the value of goods and services received. Please call for information. Receipts stating the value provided and the deductible amount will be sent to those joining at the $100 or higher level.
DIRECTIONS:
From Tallahassee: Meridian Road north, 4 miles past FL/GA border 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”.