

Birdsong Nature

March - April 2026

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

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

March

Sat.	March	7	Free Family Day
Wed.	March	11	Land Management Workday
Sat.	March	21	Old-Timey Spring Plant Sale
Wed.	March	25	Land Management Workday
Sat.	March	28	Holly Woods Restoration Work Group

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

April

Sat.	April	4	Free Family Day
Sat.	April	4	Old-Timey Spring Plant Sale
Wed.	April	8	Land Management Workday
Sat.	April	11	Forest Bathing
Wed.	April	22	Land Management Workday

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

BIRDSONG'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR!

Birdsong Nature Center was incorporated as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit Georgia corporation on April 23, 1986. So our 40th Anniversary is coming up, and we want to celebrate this milestone with Birdsong's members and friends. In the early 1980's Betty Komarek envisioned her family's 565-acre property, with its many natural assets, eventually becoming a center for education and conservation. Forty years later we are planning a gathering in April to commemorate making this dream come true. We plan to honor Betty and her vision along with all the many other people who have contributed so much to Birdsong becoming an authentic community-supported Nature Center over the last four decades, including you! We will have a party in April, and we are planning other follow-up events through the coming months of 2026 to acknowledge our history and achievements.

Please make sure we have your current mailing address on file. We will be sending out invitations to the April party in March. It will include an RSVP card for you to return through the U.S. mail. You can call the Birdsong office at 229-377-4408 or email birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org to confirm we have your correct mailing address. We look forward to seeing you at the party or at a future celebratory event this year!

BIRDSONG'S LAST SPRING PLANT SALES

Birdsong's Old-Timey Spring Plant Sales will be held on Saturday March 21 and Saturday April 4 from 9am to 1pm. This will be our 19th year, and we've decided that these Spring sales will be our last.

We're proud of how the sales have evolved and what they've accomplished for Birdsong. We started by selling mostly non-native pass-along garden plants, but we shifted over the years as we learned more about the importance of native plants in the landscape. We've sold thousands of trees, shrubs, and perennials, with the Wild Azalea our "signature" plant. The annual plant sale became more than just a fundraiser. It has been an expression of Birdsong's mission and a school for natural history education. Many people have been introduced to Birdsong by the plant sale. They came out for the first time just to shop for plants, but stayed for a spring walk in the woods, visited the Bird Window, and fell under the charm of this old place. We've made lifelong friends.

We hope you'll come celebrate with us at one of the sales. We'd love to talk to you about the plants you've grown. We'll have some interesting things for sale – a collection of beautiful clay pots, and our whimsical "house of windows". Please come and enjoy a spring day at Birdsong with us.

-June White
Plant Sale Chair



IN MEMORY OF LYNETTE JOYE HITT

We are sorry to announce that our long-time weekend Greeter, Lynette Joye Hitt, passed away on January 26, 2026. Lynette was an old friend to those of us at Birdsong, and a familiar face to frequent visitors. As Greeter, she was stationed at the registration kiosk near the parking lot, where she registered and oriented our guests. We can't quite remember when she started working here, but we think it was around 18 years ago. Lynette loved her job and more than anything loved to be outdoors meeting and greeting people. Even in extremely cold or hot weather, she would insist on staying out at the registration desk – she really didn't like being cooped up indoors. We didn't really have a clear indication that anything was the matter all the way up to about 9 days before her passing. On the last day she worked, Lynette was in a jovial mood; we had been laughing about the squirrel that had been stealing the paper towels, and she was happy because there were so many visitors that day; she enjoyed having lots of company and telling people about what to look for on the trails and at the Bird Window. The following week I heard from her daughter Kim that they had taken her to the hospital and within days she was being cared for by Hospice and passed away on January 26th, a huge shock to her family and friends.

Lynette is very much missed – she was a constant presence here at Birdsong all these years, a friendly face, a part of the family, and well-loved and appreciated. Our hearts go out to her family members – we know the suddenness of her passing has been very difficult for them.

We learned that Lynette wrote her own obituary a couple of years ago – you may go to *Legacy.com* and enter *Lynette Joye Hitt* to read about her interesting life.

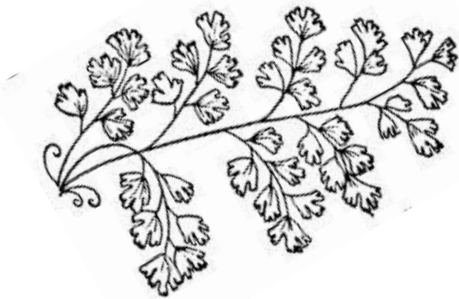
GUIDED FOREST BATHING SESSION
With Laura Poorman
Saturday, April 11, 1 - 2:30pm

Laura Poorman is a Forest Therapy Guide certified through the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy. Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in nature, forests, and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land. It is inspired by Shinrin-yoku, the Japanese practice of “Forest Bathing.”

Laura encourages us to slow down and experience nature in a variety of ways. For this guided forest bathing session, she will offer a set of carefully created invitations to engage all our senses as we wander outward from a central gathering circle. There will be moments of sharing and reflection, and we will end our time with a tea ceremony.

Please wear comfortable clothing and dress for the weather. Bring water and a snack as needed. Perhaps bring a small blanket, yoga mat, pad, or stool to use to sit on the ground, and wear footwear suitable for walking outside.

\$30 per person. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED, please. Call 229-377-4408 or email birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org by noon on Friday, April 10th to reserve your space. Minimum class size, 5; maximum, 25 people. If possible, please arrive 10 minutes early for registration.



FREE FAMILY DAYS

First Saturdays: March 7 and April 4 (Plant Sale Day)

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 getting to know the property, hike the trails, and visit the Bird Window, Gift Shop, and Butterfly Garden.

Please note that we will be holding our second Spring Plant Sale on April 4th. We will likely have a lot of company that day, so be prepared for possible traffic delays. Volunteers will guide you to park in the Pecan Grove.

Admission: free

ALAN and LESLIE

Many of you know Alan Parker, our Land Management Assistant, who has worked at Birdsong for the past 8 years. His sister, Leslie Parker, is having a series of medical procedures at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville this spring, and he is staying there to help her through this process. She is having very good results so far and we enjoy getting Alan’s updates. We are not sure exactly when he will be back. While Alan is away, our Land Management Crew is working hard on preparing several of our wooded sites for the upcoming burn season and are continuing a tree and brush trimming project to clear trail edges prior to burning. As soon as Alan returns, we will get started on this season’s burning.

We wish Leslie a very good recovery and a speedy return to normal life. We wish Alan the best as he cares for her and we look forward to his return to Birdsong. We miss them both!

HOLLY WOODS RESTORATION WORK GROUP

Saturday March 28, 2026 9-11am

Our third work morning in the Holly Woods will take place on March 28th. You are invited to help continue the work removing invasive plants such as camphor, ardisia, nandina, privet and ligustrum from the Holly Woods at Birdsong. Bring water, a shovel, garden gloves and pruners if you have them. Large plastic bags will be provided as all ardisia berries must be bagged to prevent them from germinating. We will have extra tools and gloves. A 7-gallon bucket or other container would be helpful in collecting berries.

The Holly Woods trail at Birdsong leads you through a diverse hardwood forest with large black cherry, white oak, American holly, smaller rusty blackhaw, possumhaw viburnum, red buckeye and hophornbeam. There is even a toothache tree. It is one of the few areas on Birdsong where fire as a management tool has been excluded. We have been making excellent progress in our restoration efforts. Please join us!

Call or text Donna Legare at 850 386-1148 if you have any questions.

LAND MANAGEMENT WORKDAYS **Wednesdays: March 11 and 25, April 8 and 22** **9am to noon**

Spring is nearly here and we are getting ready for burn season! Prescribed burning is our primary land management practice at Birdsong, and we could use some additional volunteer support to prepare the property for the burn season and assist us with burning. We have a wonderful volunteer land management crew that has been doing this for many years, but we can always use more workers. You do not need to be an experienced fire practitioner, but you do need to be physically capable, and able to take instruction. On scheduled workdays we do projects such as raking around trees of concern and trimming overhanging limbs and brush that is encroaching on the trails. We also have ongoing challenges to work on, such as invasive plant removal and cutting down the thriving sweetgum and pine saplings that show up everywhere. This time of year, we'll be focusing on burn prep such as raking around snags and clearing firelanes.

If you enjoy working outdoors with good-natured companions, please join us on these workdays. Alan Parker, our land and site expert, will be away for a while longer, but our experienced crew knows what to do and they would be pleased to have your help.

Be prepared for the weather and bring work gloves. If you have a favorite pair of loppers, a saw, or other tools, you are welcome to bring them, but we do have tools on site. There will be water and a snack on the truck; bring a sandwich if you want to have lunch together afterwards and Birdsong will provide drinks and dessert.

Please note: If the weather turns out to be good for burning on a scheduled workday, we will pivot to doing a burn, *and that means meeting at a different time of day*, so do let us know in advance if you are planning to attend so you can be informed of any potential time change. It will also help us prepare for lunch in case you want to join us. Please contact us at 229-377-4408 or email kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org. Thank you!

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

February 16, 2026

Weather As discussed in the last newsletter, we made it past the extended drought. Even though we have had some nice storms and periods of rain come through recently, the effects of the drought still linger. We continue to find dead trees on the property, and there is an odd gold color to the remaining leaves on trees everywhere, especially our oaks. Falling water oak leaves in particular are floating down from the trees all across the wooded part of the property. We had only 1.08 inches of rain in January, and so far we've had 2.27 inches this month, with a good downpour yesterday that brought us 0.75 inches. It is all very welcome, but our ponds and swamps are still extremely dry, with the Spring Pond and Frog Pond holding only a few inches of water. No water is flowing through any spillway anywhere. We still need more rain.

It has been a good cold winter so far, with a few pleasant warm spells. There have been plenty of sub-freezing temperatures, which typically make for a beautiful, blue-sky day to walk in the woods, but here at Birdsong it also means that staff stays busy draining all our old pipes before each low-temp freeze. We have had no problems, even with the several nights last week of temperatures in the low 20's.

We love the cold weather – it is a wonderful contrast to last summer and fall's intense heat and depressing drought. Getting out in the woods this time of year is heartening – especially on a slightly foggy morning. The winter colors are muted and subtle, you can see through the woods now that most of the leaves have fallen, and there is a sense of intimacy and deep quiet. It smells fresh and woody. A lovely time of year, now just beginning to shift.

Imbolc happened two weeks ago and coincided closely with the full Snow Moon, very appropriate for the cold winter days we were experiencing, including one with snow flurries. This Gaelic festival celebrates the the point in time halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, and it indicates the very earliest stirrings of spring. We are seeing it now at Birdsong, with the coming of snowdrops, with a few Carolina Jessamine flowers already scattered on the woodland trails, with the birds just beginning to sing. All this was suppressed a little bit with our recent series of intensely cold nights in the low 20's, but as soon as the freezing passed the small, welcome signs began to show.

Evidence We don't often get to see our major predators. We do have a healthy population of bobcats, foxes, and coyotes here at Birdsong and they

are very active right now. We know this because of the impressive amount of scat we are seeing along the trails recently. There have been numerous opportunities around the property, to examine scat and learn that our coyotes in particular are eating very well. There have been several locations where we have found some huge scat more than once, full of feathers and bone. The assumption would be that they are eating quail, but upon examination, the scat is packed with what we think must be duck feathers. One spot is near the Star Pasture, and one is near the Wild Azalea Garden. There has also been scat containing very coarse off-white fur, indicating they've eaten part of a deer. Most of the scat, including that of bobcat and fox, are full of fine gray/brown fur that likely belonged to rabbits or rats or other rodents. Yesterday, walking with the Winter Tree Walk group along the trail north of the Bay that leads from the Listening Place toward the house, we were finding scat every 75 feet – it was astonishing! We were clearly in someone's territory – the predators place their scat in the middle of our open trails. I'm sure it is in part a matter of convenience, but it is also apparently intended to mark territory. Several coyotes or foxes and at least one bobcat are doing very well this winter. It is unusual to find that much scat over a relatively small area. This location must be an ideal hunting ground – between the water, protected woods, and the highly diverse and productive Gin House Field. We so seldom actually see a coyote, or fox, or bobcat, it feels like they aren't part of the daily experience out here, but this magnificent showing of evidence of a lively population is edifying. We need to get a wildlife camera out here, stat!

P.S. If you are not squeamish and have kids or are a kid at heart or just a very curious adult, some of this scat is nice and dry and well worth exploring. It can be teased apart, and you will be amazed at what you can find – small rodent jawbones; small teeth; a rabbit claw; even an entire tiny rodent foot with toes, just the bones remaining, but intact – you never know.

P.P.S. The deer scrapes are still being tended and stamped! Many small longleaf pines have been scraped clean of bark due to intense antler-rubbing. You will no doubt find 5 or 6 on any walk along the eastern wooded trails.

Land Management Our intrepid and dedicated land management volunteer crew has risen to the occasion with Alan's absence and are coming out every other week to help us get ready for burning. They have been cutting small trees away from the edges of trails from the Frog Pond east and south toward the Spring Pond, to make laying a line of fire go faster. Last week they raked around snags and valuable live trees to protect the bases from a passing fire throughout a section of woods where we want to start

burning when the time comes.

Birdsong really is fortunate to have the most amazing volunteer teams. Our hard-working land management group covers a lot of territory and it is always fun to be out in the woods with them. Thank you very much to our crew: Karen Berkley, Sandra Sallee, Sherry Nichols, Stanton Beazley, Scott Ball, Carolyn Cohen, Russ Barrett, John Barksdale, Mike Weed, Bill Carroll, and new volunteer Seth Bigelow. We will continue our preparations and be ready to go when Alan returns. We all send Alan's sister very best wishes in her health journey and quick recovery, and to Alan while he is away.

The Little Bat We have not seen the little bat since December 19th. She was present most mornings in December after a very cold night up until then. Even with the very cold nights we had off and on in January and the severe cold recently in February, there was not a bat to be found. One windy cold morning in early January when I went to check for her, the barn door was swinging wildly and banging shut, and I'm afraid that all that noise and commotion was what made her leave her formerly quiet safe place. The latch on the door had loosened and the wind blew it open. I keep checking, but after this much time, I doubt she'll be coming back. This is a big disappointment, because getting to see this little bat up close and in repose and also get to watch her antics has been one of those intensely personal and meaningful nature experiences that one holds in one's heart for a lifetime. It is one of those things that makes a person want to protect all wildlife...She has been a loveable and unassuming ambassador for all bats. What a privilege it has been.

The Bird Window It has been a fairly quiet few months at the Bird Window. We have had another winter season where we have not seen our historic numbers of Pine Siskins and Goldfinches, like we used to 5 or more years ago. We are however enjoying the many birds that appreciate all the supplemental seed and corn we've been providing, especially during our many cold days and several spells of temperatures in the low 20's. Our regular year-round visitors who we see frequently at the Window include Carolina Wren, Blue Jay, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Cardinal, and Red-bellied Woodpecker. The White-breasted Nuthatches have been showing up more than in years past, so that has been rewarding. They are fun to watch, with their constant beeping and upside-down feeding and tree-trunk travel. The local Mockingbirds, seen often now at the yaupon holly elsewhere, have been making occasional appearances.

There are many other birds who spend time with us in winter. These include the Gray Catbird. Often two of them will be onsite at the same time, hiding in the camellia and playing around the pool and mister, and most days wild chasing will ensue. We've really enjoyed the continued presence of the Ovenbirds and White-throated Sparrows, with the White-throated being a reliable Bird Window visitor all winter. The small but charismatic Ovenbird is always a favorite. Lately, we have a solitary Yellow-rumped Warbler who is spending a lot of time at the Window, too. Our helpful human visitors have kept our bird list going and have observed Pine Warbler, Song Sparrow, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, American Robin, Cedar Waxwings (at least 50 at one visit), Hermit Thrush, Ground Dove, Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Goldfinch, Mourning Dove, and House Finch.

Bird Window volunteer Alan Strowd got to witness and photograph a Cooper's Hawk swoop in at the Window, causing all the birds to scatter, and then perch on the stump feeder in full view. The hawk didn't stay long. It was a very cold day and after his departure the songbirds returned fairly quickly to the seed and corn.

The young raccoon, now full-grown, continues to come by many times per day, delighting our visitors. He entertained a group the other day by enjoying a meal and then climbing straight up the palm tree to his childhood roosting site high in the fronds.

We love the change of seasons and really enjoy the contrast of intense cold weather compared to what we experience most months of the year. It is a precious time right now, this in-between. There will be more freezes, more brisk cold mornings, more draining of old pipes, and we'll wish our offices heated up faster than they do, but we are also very aware that the wheel is turning fast and we are heading into spring at a pace. So please come out and enjoy this special and possibly short-lived moment, the next 5 or 6 weeks of truly cool weather. You will love being out in the woods with no canopy, just the interwoven winter branches and the bright blue sky above you. Look for those deer scrapes and that informative scat and hope for an actual life-changing sighting of one of our valuable and beloved bobcats or foxes or coyotes.

-KDB

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Julia Stolle

Tallahassee

Tara Boyter

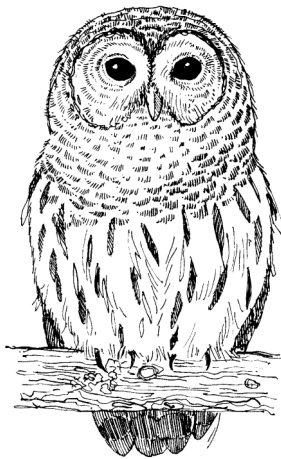
Jean Pepe

Nancy Wonder

Katelyn Van Scoy

Bainbridge

Emma Marzolf



BIRDSONG WISHES TO THANK:

Special financial gifts:

Sarah Dozier Sherraden

Doug and Julie McPherson

Mary Lee

Cheryl Burnett and Roland White

Stephanie Clapp and Catherine Lannon

Thomas Painter

Carl Tomlinson

Mark and Susan Baldino

Gloria Rollins

Briarcliff Garden Club

Apple Lane Foundation

Ellery W. and Elyse Sedgwick

George E. Crouch Foundation

Theo B. Bean Foundation, Inc.

Cherokee Foundation Charitable Fund

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Wiregrass Electric, Inc.

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Ellery Sedgwick

Lora Smith

**BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES
TO THANK:**

On behalf of my sister, Kristine Dougherty
Richard Anderson

In honor of Hazel Dixon:
Maggie and Harry Haley

In memory of Hazel Dixon:
Jocelyn Gustafson

In memory of Hazel Dixon:
Jerry Altman and Ellen Berkowitz

In memory of Grayal Farr:
Elizabeth Hawkins

In memory of Grayal Farr:
Kelley Phillips

In honor of Grayal Earle Farr:
Stephanie Liberato

In memory of Grayal Earle Farr
Barbara Cooper

In memory of Grayal Farr:
Bradley and Anna Hartman

To commemorate Margaret Elizabeth Caldwell Rabby:
Barbara White

In memory of Alice Abbitt:
Sidney and Elizabeth Bigham

In memory of Alice Adeline Abbitt:
Carol Gregg

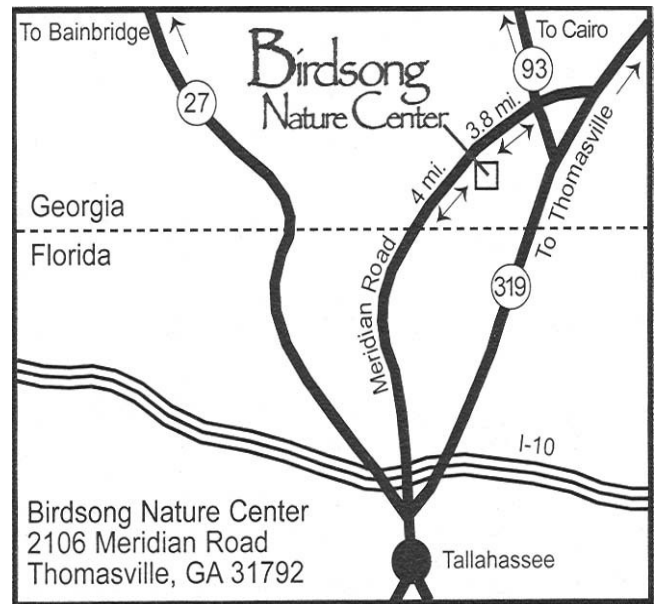
In memory of Alice Abbitt:
Giles Toole

In memory of Alice Abbitt:
Meredith and Elsa McKinney

In memory of Scott Otte:
Barbara Cooper

*In memory of my second cousin, Lynette Hitt. My
father loved you so much – you were the sister he
never got to have. You lived a big life. It is an honor
to be named after you.*
Christy Lynette Thomas





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".

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*Birdsong Nature Center
2106 Meridian Road
Thomasville, GA 31792*