

Birdsong Nature Center

May-June 2026

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

Hours: Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays 9 to 5

Sundays 1 to 5

May

Sat.	May	2	Free Family Day
Sat.	May	2	Spring Migration Bird Walk
Wed.	May	6	Land Management Workday
Sat.	May	9	Woodlands and Weedslore
Sat.	May	16	Holly Woods Restoration Work Group
Wed.	May	20	Land Management Workday

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER

WEB SITE: www.birdsongnaturecenter.org

EMAIL: birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org

FACEBOOK: Birdsong Nature Center

YOUTUBE: Birdsong Nature Center

PHONE: 229-377-4408

June

Wed.	June	3	Land Management Workday
Sat.	June	6	Free Family Day
Sat.	June	13	Holly Woods Restoration Work Group
Wed.	June	17	Land Management Workday

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

THANK YOU, JUNE WHITE Birdsong Nature Center Plant Sale Chair

As you now know, after 19 years of Old-Timey Plant Sales, we decided that this April would be a good time to wrap up this unique mission-based fundraiser. We wanted to go out on a high note and let this spring's sales be our last. As expected, both spring sales were very well-attended, we sold nearly every plant and were very happy with the results and with how beautifully our volunteers managed the entire effort. It was indeed a bittersweet experience for most of us, since we are all practically family now. We intend to find a way to enable our group to keep getting together – we may be able to let go of the sales, but we can't let go of these lifelong friendships!

With all that said, we want to offer a special thank you to June White, our Plant Sale visionary, creative director, and expert botanist and horticulturist. For these 19 years June has applied her deep knowledge and appreciation for every wonderful plant we offer, she has grown and selected and procured them, and she was the author and designer of the beautiful and informative plant signs made for each variety. She has written almost all of the amazing Mailchimp content and provided most of the plant photos for our marketing efforts. She created new and interesting sale layouts for every sale and was present at each event to answer questions and support our volunteers. June has always wanted to make sure that every customer gets just the right plants and all the information they need to take their new finds home and help them thrive so they can love and enjoy their plants as much as June does. She has kept our volunteer team well-directed and happy, and we all love her and appreciate her leadership. As our wild azalea expert Dan Miller said, "We had a good, long run". Yes, we did, and June was responsible for it.

Thank you, June!



WE SAY GOODBYE TO BIRDSONG'S OLD-TIMEY PLANT SALES

Almost twenty years ago I organized a team of hardworking gardeners from Tallahassee and Thomasville, and we put on the first Old-Timey Plant Sale by selling plants from our own gardens. Our goal was to raise \$1000 for Birdsong, and we did, barely. In the next years more people joined our group. We became good friends. We collected hundreds of plants by dividing, rooting cuttings, and digging up — with permission or under cover of darkness. Janeen Key discovered a gorgeous violet-colored iris growing at an abandoned farm in Musella Georgia and shared it with Kris Dougherty who planted it in her yard. It is such a good multiplier that we have sold its rhizomes every year since. One fun day I took a picnic lunch and drove up to Unadilla Georgia with Isabelle Blakey and her cousin Charlotte to get cuttings from a deep blue hydrangea growing beside an abandoned store building. For a few happy years we sold old garden roses grown by our very own “Rose Man” Tracy Harrington. I know where two of his Birdsong roses grow, one on a trellis in Quincy and one on a fence in Thomasville. I love seeing those roses blooming in April - *Souvenir de Mme Leonie Viennot* - and remembering Tracy. It was his favorite rose.

Our group has been very good at paying attention to and learning from each other. We had a very strong-minded, convincing contingent of native plant enthusiasts and after a few years of selling mostly old pass-along garden plants we began to feature native plants more prominently. The native azalea became our signature plant. Dan Miller brought azaleas from his nursery Trillium Gardens. They were dormant at our early March sales and selling them was difficult. It is hard to describe the glory of a mature Wild Azalea in full bloom to a skeptical plant shopper who is looking at a few bare stems in a gallon pot. That changed over the years and at our last sales we could not get enough Wild Azaleas for our enlightened shoppers. Dan made trip after trip all the way to Ernest Koone’s Pine Mountain nursery, hauling hundreds of plants each trip, and still we would sell out by mid-morning.

I like to think that not only did the plant sales raise money for Birdsong — netting over \$430,000 in sales over nearly 20 years — but that we provided an education to our garden shoppers. We taught about the beauty of Wild Azaleas in the spring, *Crinum Lilies* in summer, and *Sourwood Trees* in the fall. We taught people how to dig a hole, how to plant a tree (not too deep!), how to water new plantings. We taught how important native plants can be in an urban landscape.

I am so proud of “my” faithful plant sale workers who so generously shared their skill, knowledge, and good will all these years. I thank them and all the gardeners who came and bought plants and made this sale such a success for Birdsong Nature Center and such a joy for me.

- June White
Birdsong Plant Sale Chair

THANK YOU, PLANT SALE VOLUNTEERS!

All these many spring plant sales we have offered, with their extraordinary results, have happened because Birdsong has such a remarkable group of volunteers who contribute their time, talent, energy, expertise, and good cheer to the cause. We have all gotten so good at this – now, everyone knows exactly what to do, and our set-up workdays and the sales themselves go just like clockwork – we are a well-oiled plant selling machine! We all truly enjoy working together, and even the hardest work is fun, thanks to these wonderful people. We also learn so much about plants from each other – so many people involved are expert gardeners and growers. Birdsong is so fortunate.

We offer our sincere thanks to everyone who helped us this spring for our final sales:

Carole Hayes
Beth Grant
Yvonne Stinson
Ute Schorn
Dan Miller
Sherry Nichols
Scott Ball
Alan Parker
Julia Sawyer
Jan Bordelon
Mark Phillips
Brenda Coy
Mike Weed
Kristine Dougherty
Lynn Brown

Sue McFadden
Stanton Beazley
Sharon Kindred
Gunilla Trull
Ken Misner
Carolyn Cohen
Ben White
Lisa Reeves
Gail Sloane
Rick Cantrell
Sharman Franklin
Betty Esco
Karen Berkley
Melissa Rigsby
Britt Martinez

Albert Harrison
Mike Carter
Joe Peresich
Buddy Holshouser
Margaret Tyson
Connie Clineman
Carla Peterson
Phil Williams
Paul Parker
Brooklyn Miller
Sandra Sallee
Ellen Rumble
Cheryl Burnett
Roland White

We also want to acknowledge all the volunteers who have helped with the sales in years past, all the way back to the beginning. Thank you, June and our dear volunteers, for 19 enjoyable, rewarding, and memorable years. You are extraordinary and we appreciate you.



LAND MANAGEMENT WORKDAYS Wednesdays: May 6 and 20, June 3 and 17 9am to 11:30am

The drought has impacted all our land management activities this year, but we are continuing to prepare the property for possible burning in case conditions allow. On scheduled workdays we do projects such as raking around trees of concern and trimming overhanging limbs and brush along firelanes and trails. Our crew would be pleased to have your help.

Be prepared for the weather and bring work gloves. Bring a sandwich if you want to have lunch together afterwards and Birdsong will provide drinks and dessert. Please call to let us know you plan to attend. You may contact us at 229-377-4408 or email kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org. Thank you!

**WOODLANDS AND WEEDSLORE:
A Good ol' fashioned Plant Ramble
Saturday, May 9 9:30 to 11:30am**

Join us for a stroll along Birdsong's trails for a "meet and greet" with some of our more interesting local plants. Plants you're already familiar with might even have some surprises for you. From traditional uses of common weeds to some favorite native trees and the stories they can tell us about the landscape, Birdsong member Dylan Ryals-Hamilton will share fun facts on topics ranging from ecology to ethnobotany. We will probably walk 1.5 to 2 miles and discuss a dozen or so plants. Expect to make a few new plant friends and take away some fun nature facts to impress your human friends.

Dylan Ryals-Hamilton is an Environmental Biologist with Florida Environmental & Land Services, Inc. (FELSI) where he conducts environmental surveys, wetland delineation, ecological monitoring and restoration projects. His professional background also includes ecological landscaping, permaculture and sustainable land management. An Associate Instructor with the Florida Master Naturalist Program, Dylan also volunteers with land management workdays and with the burn crew at Birdsong when he's lucky enough to join in the fun.

\$8 members, \$10 non-members. **RESERVATIONS, PLEASE.** Call 1(229)377-4408 or email birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org by noon on Friday, May 8th. The maximum number of participants for these walks is 15. Feel welcome to bring a sandwich if you would like to have lunch together afterwards and Birdsong will provide drinks and dessert; please just let us know when you sign up if you would like to stay.

**SPRING MIGRATION BIRD WALK
Saturday, May 2 8am to 11:00am
with Janell Cleveland**

Spring migration may be winding down, but our summer nesting migrants have arrived! We can look for Summer Tanagers, Orchard Orioles, Indigo Buntings, Blue Grosbeaks and others. We can also observe Eastern Bluebirds as they feed their newly hatched young and continue nesting. Please bring binoculars if you have them and be prepared for hiking through the fields and woods around Birdsong. Wear muted colors.

Please save your space and RSVP by emailing birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org or calling 1 (229)377-4408 by noon on Friday, May 1st. The maximum number of participants for these walks is capped at 15. The walk will be led by Janell Cleveland, an avid birder who is very good at helping others learn to identify birds and enjoy the art of birding.

\$8 members, \$10 non-members.
Reservations required.



**FREE FAMILY DAYS
First Saturdays: May 2 and June 6**

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.

Admission: free

DO YOU HAVE A BIRDSONG STORY TO TELL?

This is Birdsong's 40th year of operation as a not-for-profit organization. We have been extremely fortunate along the way to have made many friends as we have gone about our work providing educational nature programming and taking care of these 565 acres. Birdsong has meant a lot of different things to different people over the years. We invite you to tell us a story or remembrance, if you have one you would like to share, about any experiences that were meaningful to you, anything unusual that happened, any people you met that influenced your life, anything funny or surprising, any wildlife encounters that were enjoyable or life-changing for you. Depending on the response to this request, we may compile a memory book to share with our members and possibly plan a gathering later in the year to share some of the stories in person.

Has anything at Birdsong in the last 40 years inspired you in any way – to create art or a poem or dance or music or creative writing or some other form of expression you can share? Is there anything you want to tell about the early days or before Birdsong became a nature center, or of Birdsong's recent years? We will leave the request open and mention it in the upcoming newsletters this summer/early fall and keep you posted on our plans. We may present some of your offerings in the bimonthly paper newsletter, if appropriate and with your permission. If you have your non-written remembrances or stories in electronic form – photos or videos or audio files, we'd be interested in those too. With your input, we will no doubt refine this concept and means of sharing as we go along.

Please feel welcome to email Kathleen at kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org or call her at 229-377-4408 if you have any questions at all.

Thank you!



HOLLY WOODS RESTORATION WORK GROUP Saturdays, May 16 and June 13, 2026 9-11am

Our next work mornings in the Holly Woods will take place on May 16 and June 13. You are invited to help continue the work removing invasive plants such as ardisia, camphor, nandina, privet and ligustrum from the Holly Woods and Letz Mill corner 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.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

April 12, 2026

Weather The drought continues to dominate all aspects of life at Birdsong. Everything is under stress, including us. We are having issues getting our burning done because of these unfavorable conditions and total lack of soil moisture. The ground is like a brick – we had to soak down the Plant Sale area for hours in order to get our small metal H-frame plant signs pushed into the ground. Alan had to use cement blocks to hold up our parking lot sign-age because the metal stakes we use can't be hammered into the soil.

We have had minimal showers since the last newsletter: a total of 1.57 inches of rain for March and zero for April sounds so paltry, but in spite of this lack of needed rain, the inevitable onrush of spring is here and the vegetation is greening up. It is happening slower than usual, but the pale green is surging throughout the fields and woods. Amazing, considering the lack of water.

After the last spate of minimal yet welcome rains in mid-March, the lawns around the house responded and looked a lot better. Even a little moisture gave the armadillos something to celebrate and they proceeded to dig up the lawns every night. Now however after three weeks of no rain and low humidity the grass around the house is looking parched and miserable again and the armadillos have given up. We almost feel the same way.

The Ponds and Swamp There is no flowing water at Birdsong at all right now. Our many creeks have totally disappeared. The Frog Pond, Big Bay Pond, and Spring Pond are completely dry, no central pools at all. The Upper Pond is full of vegetation that is lying down and turning brown on the muddy pond floor. The deeper pools in the Farm Pond contain some water, and the surface is mostly covered with *Brasenia*, but the entire edge around the pond is a wide mud flat. In one area you can see the smooth track where a gator has pulled itself from the pool across the flat to the shore. Now is an enlightening time to see the Farm Pond Dam because from across the pond we can now see the fully exposed wall of the dam with several obvious beaver caverns. This is discouraging because it means we will eventually need to get this section of the dam repaired. Fortunately, there is no immediate threat to the integrity of the dam.

Big Bay Swamp is now a series of pools, some connected, some isolated among the water tupelo and cypress. There are mud flats here, too, with swaths of collapsed waterlilies and other aquatic plants. The Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons are

undeterred, feeding babies high in their nests, invisible in the middle of the greening tupelo hammock. Even though we can't see them, we can hear the youngsters coaxing the parents for a meal from as far away as the Listening Place.

Purple Martins Another early spring came and went without an appearance from our beloved Purple Martins. We were on the alert for any visitors from mid-February through April, trying not to get our hopes up too high. One morning in late March we heard that marvelous chortle, dropped what we were doing to rush to the pole, and there was a pair of Martins busily examining various gourds as if shopping for a possible nest site. The male stayed inside one of the gourds, leaning out and singing; the female sat on the crossbar and then flew several wide sorties out over the House Pasture and back. They stayed for about an hour, then were gone. This pattern occurred almost daily, off and on over the last two weeks. With it being so late in the season, we think they must have a nest somewhere not far away and are touring the area and checking out possible sites for next year. That sound is so cheerful and deeply familiar – it just makes our day. We'll keep watching and let you know what happens.

Summer Tanager Last Tuesday, April 7, our staff arrived at work and were immediately serenaded by an ardent Summer Tanager singing his heart out in the spruce pine right above the house. It has been delightful ever since– he travels all morning between the top of the spruce pine to the top of the nearest pecan tree in the Pecan Grove, and then to the tall loblolly in the House Pasture and back. He is not always easy to find up in the pine needles and new pecan leaves, but when he moves from high point to high point you can catch a glimpse of those bright red feathers. He also doesn't mind being seen at the Bird Window where he comes to bathe and splash diamond droplets of water all over the place. It is so nice to be reunited with our migratory friends this time of year. We always hope that these birds we see are the same birds that nested with us last year.

Land Management We were very pleased to have Alan Parker back for a few weeks, right around the time of our two last Plant Sales. His sister Leslie is doing very well at Mayo and their Aunt Helen Anne came to be with her niece so Alan could come back here for a while. It was great to have him with us for the sales, and we were also able to get a burn in during his time here.

It has been an unusual burn season all around. The drought has made for extreme conditions on the

ground, with no soil moisture and parched fuel. Springtime cold fronts have brought very low humidity intrusions and highly variable and unpredictable winds. This past week we had three Red Flag days, meaning that no burning was permitted by the forestry agencies because conditions were unacceptably dry and windy. For three days this week, gusts of up to 28-32 mph were predicted for entire afternoons. We have learned of wildfires in southern Florida and on the Florida-Georgia border – of great concern to anyone who wants to get some burning done but recognizes the danger of a wayward spark.

Two weeks ago, there was a day shortly after Alan came back when conditions were ideal for a burn. Any burning right now is very risky, but predictions that day were for relatively mild winds and low gusts. We had a good crew assembled and they had done some excellent trail prep in advance, so we went for it. The burn went beautifully, it was very well executed and the crew was pleased. We are happy that we were able to get that one done – ever since, the weather has been unacceptable for burning. Just to let you know how dry it remains, and how risky any burning at all is right now, I went out to the east side to look at something unrelated just a few days ago, about two weeks after the burn, and there within the black area was a large log on the ground, burning. It had been smoldering invisibly for two weeks. Alan cut off the burning end section and moved it and soaked it, so everything is safe, but it is just a reminder that these drought conditions continue to be dangerous.

We are now uncertain of getting our typical amount of land burned this spring. We really need a good three inches or more of rain to proceed safely. It is just not worth it under these conditions. Even with accomplishing a safe, contained burn, healthy trees can be surrounded by smoldering duff and become damaged. We already have lost so many trees to this drought we do not feel a need to push our luck and do any risky burning. We also usually rely on our many creeks and drains to provide fire breaks, but as mentioned, there is now no water flowing, complicating our plans. We will see what transpires, but if we get no ideal conditions or no rain by the end of May, we may just have to wait it out for now and try again in the fall. Our crew will continue its burn prep work so we will be ready when conditions improve.

I would like to thank our excellent land management volunteers. As mentioned last time, they have really stepped up to help us manage without Alan, and they've done some great work on burn preparations and on our one good burn. We also had part of the crew go on a thistle eradication mission this week

and they removed a huge number of invasive thistles from the Star Pasture. Future star gazers, lying on the ground and contemplating the universe, will honor them, as do we.

Sincere thanks go to these great crew members: Mike Weed, Sandra Sallee, Paul Parker, Russ Barrett, Carolyn Cohen, Stanton Beazley, Scott Ball, Sherry Nichols, Karen Berkley, Seth Bigelow and Bill Carroll. It was nice to have Alan back among us – he did a great job getting things ready for the burning and running the tractor and doing all the mopping up. He has returned to Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville to support his sister Leslie as she recovers from her treatments and we wish them both well and hope they come home soon.

A Recent Walk In spite of the drought, Birdsong is responding as best it can to all the usual cues of spring. I walked out last week to take some notes for you and even with how terribly dry things are, plants are emerging and leafing out and blooming. Life goes on, against difficult odds, and with minimal water.

As I walked into the middle of the Star Pasture the air was flooded with a pure, clear, melodic song: it was vaguely familiar and seemed almost improvisational – one lilting segment of notes, then another unrelated series of notes. At the far end of the Star Pasture, sitting alone on a small branch of the spindly wild cherry tree that we leave so the birds will have a perching spot in this wide-open place, was a tiny brown bird. I finally connected with the song he was singing – it was a Bachman's Sparrow. I felt like I had walked into a concert being given for all the female Bachman's Sparrows within listening range. There we were, no other humans anywhere, no other birds singing, the air full of this tiny maestro's full-throated yearning as he presented himself to the world, full of hope. He was unperturbed by my presence and calmly kept on with his inventive singing. I passed on by and continued my walk, knowing without doubt that this bird's music would soon call in a female, intrigued by his talent and perseverance.

It is these observations, of the ongoing resilience of nature, of birds, of our insects and other wildlife, of the plants that are holding on, that provides a sense of hope – they are setting an example of being in it, uncomplaining, for the duration. They are not letting disturbing conditions prevent them from fulfilling their purpose, no matter what. There are always lessons available to us if we'll listen.

- KDB

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

D Delaney and Family
Robert Von Itter
Gail Seifert
Julie Spence
Andrea Hancock

Tallahassee

Christina Parker-Flynn
Phyllis and Susan Thomson
Chip and Laurie Hartung
Judith Pascoe
Elizabeth Rogers
Mary Jane Justham
Kati Schardl
Kira Scott
Andrea Moran-Melendez
Anita Dixon
Fred and Beth Tedio

Other

Thomas Lehman	Cairo, GA
Joseph Lewis	Cairo, GA
Jack Flaumenhaft	Orlando, FL
James O'Reilly	Glen Burnie, MD
Richard and Sharon Carter	Valdosta, GA
Rodney Crosby	Donalsonville, GA
Ellie Patterson	Whigham, GA
Elizabeth and Tom Kennett	
And Rhonda Shipley	Whigham, GA
Jim King	Havana, FL

BIRDSONG WISHES TO THANK:

In honor of Lynette Hitt:
Greater Horizons

In memory of Lynette Hitt:
Anonymous

To celebrate Lynette's life in nature at Birdsong:
The Annino Family

In honor of Lynette, Peace and love:
Linda and Stewart Fleming

In memory of Alice Abbitt, my dear friend:
Jann Bellamy

In memory of our dear friend and neighbor, Hazel Dixon:
Tim Watson and Chris Franzetti

In loving memory of Alice Adeline Abbitt:
Jerry and Cheryl Thompson, friends from Indian Pass

Special financial gifts:

June White
Donna Legare and Jody Walthall
Cheryl Burnett and Roland White

A special gift from our dear friend, Alice Abbitt.

BIRDSONG'S CORPORATE SPONSORS

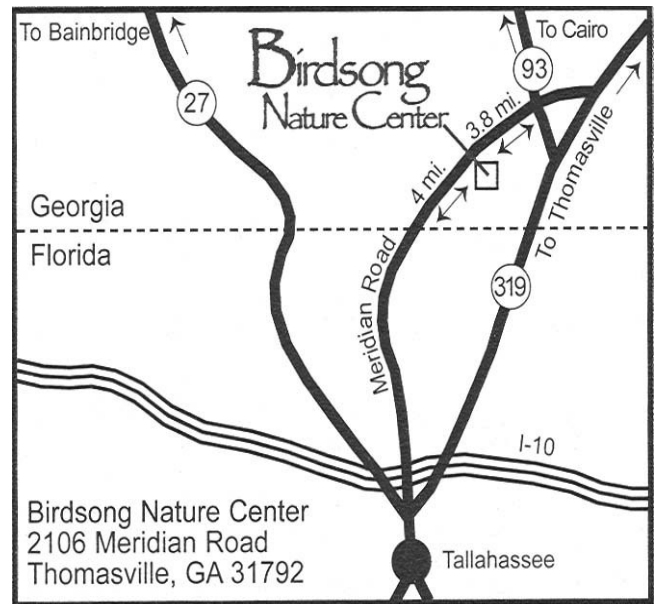
Faceville Nurseries
Native Nurseries
Trillium Gardens Nursery
Import Authority
Seminole Alterations
Chelsea Salon & Spa
TNB Financial Services
Target Print and Mail
Armstrong Tree Service
Woodleaf Senior Care
Cowhey & Ward, LLC
Loblolly Rise
Blue Bear Farm & Cattle Co. LLC
Magnolia Chapter, Florida Native Plant Society
Wiregrass Electric, Inc.
Homestead Imprinted Sportswear
Simmons, Mills & Simmons P.C.

Birdsong Nature Center Board of Directors 2025-2026

President Joe Peresich

Directors

Jim Antista	Sue McFadden
Scott Ball	Ellery Sedgwick
	Lora Smith



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".

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TALLAHASSEE, FL
Permit No. 660

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