

Birdsong Nature Center

July-August 2021

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

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

July

Trails open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on July 3
Open on July 4th , 1-5 pm

August

Trails open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on August 7th

Closed for Summer Break

August 21st through September 5th

Please, no pets on nature center property.

Admission: members, free; non-member adults, \$5.00; children 12 and under, \$2.50
Please see our website at www.birdsongnaturecenter.org in advance of your visit for our COVID safety protocols.

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

Dear Friends of Birdsong,

As many of you have already learned via Birdsong emails, Facebook page, and website, the Center's nature trails are now open on Fridays in addition to Saturdays and Sunday afternoons. We hope you will find the time to enjoy the extra day of opportunity to walk the peaceful trails at the Center and take in the sights and sounds of the varied botanicals and wildlife found on the 565-acre preserve. For the time being the House, Bird Window and Gift Shop remain closed, but timelines for reopening those are under consideration. We also continue to observe certain Covid-19 safety protocols established at the outset of our phased reopening (please see our website for details). As always, admission is free for members, with a small fee for non-member visitors.

In previous newsletters we reported on the status of the Birdsong/Tall Timbers GOSP grant initiative and can share with you here that work on this important project continues in earnest. At this point we expect to be signing a Project Agreement within a few months. The Project Agreement will detail the work required by Birdsong and Tall Timbers to complete the conservation easement. As you may recall, Birdsong/Tall Timbers were selected for a grant via the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program which would provide funding to place Birdsong's property under a conservation easement with Tall Timbers. Such an easement will protect Birdsong's property from commercial/housing development and ensure that it is maintained in a natural state in perpetuity. We will keep you informed in upcoming newsletters as we continue to complete milestones along the way.

The staff, volunteers, and Board all thank you most sincerely for your support of Birdsong Nature Center! We hope you will visit one weekend soon to enjoy a summer walk along the trails.

Sincerely,
Joe Peresich, President
Board of Directors

PLANT SALE PLANS

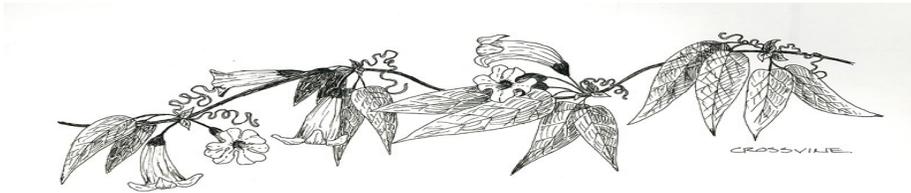
After a surprisingly successful series of weekend plant sales we have ended the sales for the summer. We have raised \$11,000 for Birdsong selling mostly donated garden plants and native plants so far this year. Many thanks to all who helped grow and sell the plants.

We are very pleased with the leisurely nature of this on-going plant sale. We had none of the stress and worry that our big one-day sale brings. No dread of bad weather ruining everything, no traffic snarls with hundreds of cars negotiating the one-way drive. People got to see the plants through the season, as each variety came into bloom. Wild azaleas with tightly closed flower buds are hard to sell in mid-March, but were quickly snapped up each weekend as their flowers opened through late March and April. And best of all we had time to talk and visit with fellow plant people as they shopped in our lovely little “garden” behind the mulberry tree.

The usually rainy months of late fall and winter are the best time to plant most trees, shrubs, and many perennials, so we’ve decided to start up our weekend sales again on October 23rd. We’ll tailor our offerings for the season, bringing out the showstoppers as they come into their glory, like red and golden hurricane lilies, chrysanthemums, and fall-blooming native asters. We’ll send out weekly announcements and some instructional emails about the plants we’ll be offering.

We hope to see you in the fall. Be looking around now in the full green of summer for a good place in your garden for a new tree or the perfect spot for a flowerbed. And don’t forget to water what you planted this spring.

- June White
Plant Sale Chair



THANK YOU, PLANT SALE VOLUNTEERS!

We are very grateful to all our dedicated Plant Sale volunteers who have helped make our 2021 spring/early summer plant sales so successful.

Many thanks to our talented growers who have supplied us with hundreds of beautiful healthy plants, all looking their best for each sale: Gunilla Trull, Ute Schorn, Barbara Jinright, Kris Dougherty, Lynn Brown, Yvonne Stinson, Beth Grant, and June White.

Thank you to our plant experts, who were present to assist and answer any and all questions about the plants: June White, Dan Miller, Mike Miller, Jan Blue, Kris Dougherty, Yvonne Stinson, and Beth Grant.

Thank you too, to our many helpers who assisted with getting the garden set up, and/or worked directly with our customers helping them get tallied and checked out: Margaret Tyson, Carole Hayes, Jan Blue, Yvonne Stinson, Beth Grant, Albert Harrison, Alan Parker, Lynn Brown, Lynette Hitt, Barbara Jinright, and Sherry Nichols.

Most of all we want to thank June White, our Plant Sale creative director, visionary, and expert botanist. June has deep knowledge and appreciation for every wonderful plant we offer, and she is the person who designs and writes the interesting and informative plant signs made for each variety. She creates the beautiful garden layout and is present at each sale to answer questions and advise on growing. June wants to make sure that every customer gets just the right plants and all the information they need to take their new plants home and help them thrive so they can love and enjoy their plants as much as June does. Thank you, June!

TRAILS ARE NOW OPEN ON FRIDAYS!

We are pleased to let you know that Birdsong's trails will now be open on Fridays from 9am to 5pm as well as Saturdays and Sunday afternoons. Our new hours are:

Fridays, 9 to 5
Saturdays, 9 to 5
Sundays, 1 to 5

The trails will be open during these times and the House, Bird Window, and Gift Shop will remain closed for now.

We ask that our visitors continue to observe Covid-19 safety protocols including wearing a mask when signing in at the checkpoint, and when encountering other individuals closer than six feet away. Once you are out on the trails away from others, you are welcome to go mask-free. Our Covid protocols can be found on our website and on the back of our trail maps onsite.

We look forward to seeing you on Fridays!

MEET OUR NEW GREETERS!

Lynette Joye Hitt has been greeting visitors at Birdsong for well over 10 years. With the advent of Covid, she began greeting on Saturdays as well as Sunday afternoons. We are now opening on Fridays for the summer and will be considering re-opening on Wednesdays later in the year as things continue to improve.

We are happy to let you know that we have hired two new part-time greeters to support Lynette as we gradually extend our hours of operation. You will continue to see Lynette on Fridays and weekends, but you may now also have the opportunity to meet Sherry Nichols and Jan Bordelon who will help on days when Lynette is not here.

We very much appreciate these ladies' willingness to help us on a part-time basis so we can make Birdsong more available to our members and visitors.

We look forward to seeing you Fridays and Saturdays 9 to 5 and Sundays 1 to 5!



FREE FAMILY DAYS **First Saturdays: July 3 and August 7**

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

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

June 15, 2021

Weather We are heading for the summer solstice next week, an astronomical milestone that technically indicates the beginning of summer. For those of us living in the south, it feels like summer arrived several months ago.

Since the last newsletter we've been coping with weeks of drought and rain predictions that never materialized. In May we had a total of 3.22 inches of rain in the first half of the month. Then there was a 21-day period of no rain at all, with all the accompanying miseries of drought. Starting on June 4th we've gotten some light rains, totaling 2.11 inches, while folks we know in nearby Thomasville have had deluges of up to 9 inches, and 6 inches in Tallahassee. We are glad for the rain we have received, but we really need a lot more.

Land Management Our hopes for getting 80 % of the place burned by the end of June have disappeared. As discussed in the last newsletter, trying to plan for a burn has been repeatedly complicated by ongoing rain predictions that never resulted in rain. This made for hotter, drier conditions on the ground. We also had issues again with not being granted a permit to burn on a day that would have been ideal for our prescription. Unfortunately, the lower-risk conditions that we wanted for a given site – moderate winds and humidity – caused low smoke dispersion values, so no permits were being given on those days. We did manage to get a section burned around the east drain, but parts of it were very patchy. Elsewhere it did very well. We will continue to check weather reports for some good days going forward, but we may have to wait until fall to accomplish some of our goals. Our great burn crew has been very patient; we all want to get out there and get it done, so it has been a frustrating season so far.

Purple Martins We are happy to report that this year's martin saga has ended well. As of a week ago, all babies were fledged and to the best of our knowledge we only had two fatalities this year.

We learned after the last newsletter that there were 9 nesting pairs feeding two to three babies per gourd. Only one gourd did not have a family. This is an improvement over last year: we only had six nesting pairs last time.

We got to watch the dedicated feeding of all those tiny birds over a period of weeks, with the eventual emergence of many little faces from the doorways. Life at the martin pole was lively, with constant arrivals of parents with an insect, zooming in at high speed to

deliver a meal to a baby and then zooming off to go hunting again. The weather got increasingly hot, the babies were growing and spending more time leaning out the doorways and then finally the time came for fledging.

Fledging is a very raucous and chaotic time at the martin pole. Most fledging appears to take place early in the morning, usually before most of us arrive at Birdsong. You can hear the cacophony from up at the office! Apparently it takes some serious urging for a baby to get itself out of the gourd and airborne. Parents all participate in the loud and unrelenting urging of hesitant babies to fly. The racket goes on all morning, we assume that a baby or two takes flight, and then things settle down a little and we can count more birds in the vicinity. Often the young are urged to fly up to the top of the pecan trees nearby; they can be seen begging to be fed and holding on tight to a twig, while parents attempt to get them off their perch and back in the air.

The fledging process went on successfully for well over a week, and we counted up to 18 birds at a time, lots of flying in big circles, landing on the crossbars, lots of talking, all very noisy and upbeat and fun to watch. About 10 days into this, there were two remaining gourds with three babies each still in them, one family closer to fledging than the other. At this point, late May, the weather had gotten almost unbearably hot in the afternoon, well over 90 degrees each day, and the little ones started leaning way out, waiting for that next meal and often panting in the heat. Many of the original colony were now spending more and more time away from the pole, off training babies to hunt and drink and bathe at the Farm Pond and elsewhere. The babies yet to fledge looked hot and exhausted. Over many years of observation we have learned that this is the danger zone – this is when babies get too hot and start to bail out without being able to fly. They will end up on the ground, in the grass, and are unable to lift off and on many occasions over the years we have found these little birds dead. It is always very distressing.

We decided to do the one thing within our power to help, and that is to put up our martin pole sprinkling rig. This is a slim PVC pipe outfitted with a hose and pop-up lawn sprinkler head. Alan attaches this to the main pole; the sprinkler is positioned up above the gourds, and when we turn on the water, a very fine mist sprays up in the shape of a petunia and rains down in a column over all the gourds. We turn this on at the hottest time of day for several hours and it is apparently very effective at cooling the gourds down. It also gives the parents a nice mist to fly through and they take advantage of it and seem to enjoy it. The babies, once they've gotten over the surprise of it, will often lean out

in the mist.

Meanwhile, with such intense heat even in the mornings, the close-to-grown babies will still attempt to fly to escape the hot gourds and Lynn and I began finding a baby on the ground mid-morning several days in a row. We got the ladder out and put him back in a nearby gourd – we couldn't reach the one he came from. He stayed there and was receiving some attention from adults, so we hoped he was being fed and could complete his fledging from that gourd. (In the past we have put babies back in the nearest gourd, even if there are other babies in there and they have successfully fledged. Raising babies and getting them to fledge appears to be a communal effort at this stage of the game.) Now under close observation from both Lynn and myself, we found him yet again under the gourds and decided to give him some help. That night Lynn purchased a bag of crickets and froze them. (I learned a long time ago to freeze them, or there will be live crickets all over your office or house, singing beautifully to you all night, never to be seen again.) In the morning, the baby was out again, Lynn and I sat at the bench by the nearby magnolia, and she gave him a little water from a syringe and we fed him thawed, outdoor-temperature crickets. To get a baby Martin to eat, you have to imitate the arrival of a parent to the gourd with a bug, so you have to grip the cricket's back legs firmly and then zoom it right at the little Martin's face. If you do this fast enough and assertively enough he will usually automatically open his mouth and you can lightly push the cricket in there and he'll swallow it. We would give him a little break, and then try again. Usually, he'd eat about three or four before not wanting any more. That morning, there were a lot of adult birds active and chattering around the pole, so we tried setting him back up on one of the crossbars in the hopes of his parents feeding him or getting him to fly. Several adults came and sat on either side of him, and kind of pecked at him as if to urge him to move, but he wouldn't. A little later on, we found him again under the pole. That night he got fed and stayed inside in a well-appointed box with a perch and little nest. Next day, after feeding him, Lynn put him in the gourd again, and later in the day fed him from the top of the ladder. This went on for about three more days, over the Memorial Day weekend. Lynn went above and beyond, coming to work to check on him and feed him (when he was willing) three times a day. Adult martins were looking in on him, and then one morning he was gone, nowhere to be found. We assume he was finally strong and willing and got encouraged to fly.

At this point all but four adult or juvenile Martins were still living at the pole, with the adult female continuing to feed the three remaining babies and occasionally remove fecal sacs. There was no adult male present. After another week, these sleek,

healthy, alert baby Martins made it out of their gourd and up to the nearby pecan tree. Only a day later, they were gone. All of them. We've had a few visits here and there, with up to 5 Martins, including adult males, but now the pole is silent and we hope all those birds are enjoying their new flying and hunting skills. We wish them a successful trip down to the coast to gang up with their friends and then head off to Brasil and other points south.

Looking after these babies is extremely nerve-wracking for protective human caregivers. Lynn and I are so relieved that all the Martins have left and are not attempting another brood. We won't have to endure more weeks of worrying 24/7 about another batch of tiny birds trying to survive the increasingly relentless heat as the days of summer wear on. No more hurrying down to the pole first thing to check for bailouts or worse or checking on them all day long and needing to turn on the sprinkler when it is 95 degrees and the little birds are leaning precariously out the doorway with their heads hanging down. We wish all our Martins well and hope that next year they return to their gourds-of-hatching and start their own broods. Hopefully, we'll be here to help!

We hope you will not be deterred by the hot weather and come on out to experience summer at Birdsong. There is a lot going on across the property – Alan has been enjoying watching beavers playing around in the Farm Pond, and has also gotten to see several broods of Wood Duck babies there. The birds are singing and courting without restraint, especially our resident Mockingbird, who made me think that the Martins were back this morning...but no, he was just playing. The Great Blue Herons and Anhingas are feeding young in Big Bay Swamp, with all their associated joyful racket. Quail are whistling *bobwhite* in the House Pasture. Twinflower and wild petunia are blooming, and the woods smell piney and fragrant after a shower. Well worth a little heat.

-KDB



BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

Gift in Memory of Ray Bieber:

Sunny Phillips

Gifts in Memory of Joanna Godown:

Laurie Lautzenheiser

Regina Lewis

Elizabeth Masters

Laurie Meehan

Special Financial Gifts:

John Lovett

Rad Cook

Billy Esra

Steve Neale

John S. Yow

Holly Greening

Howard and Linda Barnett

Dawna Bunker

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Kristine Nichols

David Brook

Billy Esra

Tallahassee

Ute Schorn

John Barksdale

Rebecca McNeal

Brian and Daphne McClain

Brandi and Steve Brown

Other

Emilie Allen

Howard and Linda Barnett

Dawna Bicknell Tanner

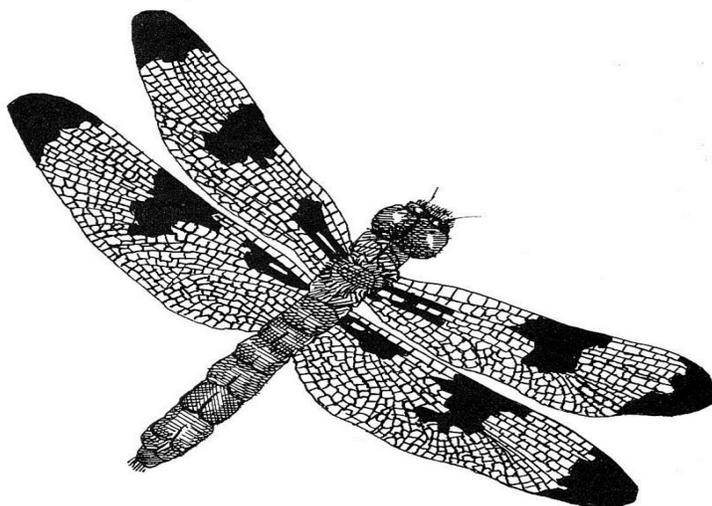
Janet Gysi

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Monticello, FL

Cairo, GA

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2020-2021**

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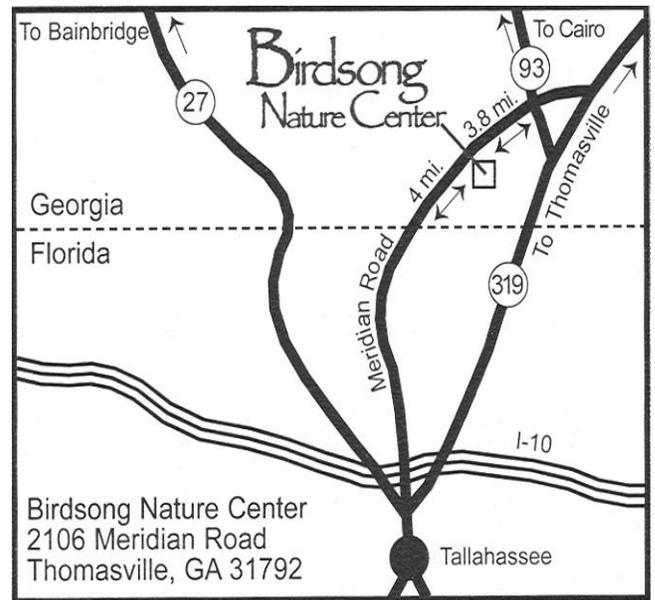
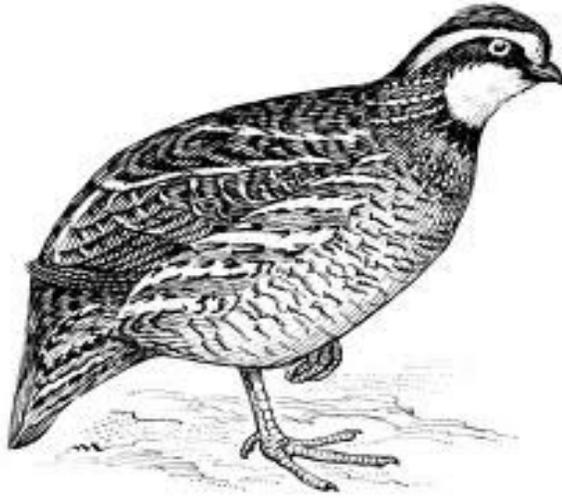
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DIRECTIONS:

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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TALLAHASSEE, FL
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