

Birdsong Nature Center

January-February 2022

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

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

January

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on January 8th

February

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on February 5th

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

Please see our website at www.birdsongnaturecenter.org in advance of your visit for our COVID safety protocols.

Holiday Closure: Birdsong will close for the holidays on Wednesday, December 22 and re-open on Wednesday January 5.

Dear Friends,

We very much appreciated everyone's support of our fall weekend plant sales at Birdsong in October and November. The smaller weekend sales were an alternative to the traditional and much larger springtime Old-Timey Plant Sale that we'd hosted over the previous 14 years. We had to cancel the spring sale the past two years, of course, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are uncertain at this time if we will once again host the Old-Timey Plant Sale in March as has been our tradition. We are working on plans and will pass along more information after the New Year. We hope you will thoroughly enjoy the beautiful new additions to your home gardens purchased at the sales. We also want to say a very special thank you to June White, Old-Timey Plant Sale Chair, and the amazing Plant Sale volunteers for their outstanding work in creating and carrying out the event. The Plant Sale would very truly not exist but for their highly creative and dedicated efforts.

This autumn has brought with it a series of dazzling natural displays at Birdsong - the prolific flowering of bright pink *Agalinis* (false foxglove) covering the fields followed by equally stunning bloom of bright yellow narrow-leaved sunflowers and goldenrod, and now the iridescent reds, golds, and copper shades of the hardwoods over the property. We tried to capture some of these beautiful sights with a series of posts on our Facebook page (facebook.com/BirdsongNatureCenter/), but of course these don't come close to what it is like in person. We hope that you have had a chance to visit recently and enjoy these unforgettable scenes or will visit one day soon and experience the peaceful serenity of Birdsong's trails winding through the fields and woodlands. There is still much to see and hear with the arrival of many migratory and over-wintering avian visitors.

All of us at the Nature Center want to wish you a very happy and healthy year in 2022. We can't thank you enough for your support over this past year and hope you will visit often in the year ahead.

Sincerely and with warmest wishes,

Joe Peresich,
Board President

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER
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FACEBOOK: Birdsong Nature Center
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2021 Fall Plant Sales and Wildlife Arts Festival Booth

We've had a very good fall plant sale season! Birdsong's four on-site sales were well-attended and we nearly sold out before the final sale. We offer our sincere thanks to our entire volunteer crew, plant donors, and buyers for making those four sales so successful. Thank you, volunteers:

Dan Miller	Mike Miller	Yvonne Stinson
Jan Blue	Beth Grant	Barbara Jinright
Margaret Tyson	Sandra Sallee	Ken Kuhl
Buddy Holshouser	Phil Williams	Jan Bordelon
Mark Phillips	Karen Berkley	Kristine Dougherty
Alan Parker	Sherry Nichols	Lynette Hitt
Lynn Brown	Betty Esco	Kitty Spivey
Ernest Koone	Gunilla Trull	Ken Misener
Ute Shorn	Albert Harrison	Clayton and Berry Penhallegon
Carole Hayes		

We were honored to be a part of the Thomasville Art Center's Wildlife Arts Festival Artisan Market where we sold plants next to pearl jewelry and fancy clothing and handbags. It should be no surprise that wildlife enthusiasts appreciate native plants. We sold many wild azaleas to people who recognized the promise of fat flower buds on the bare leafless branches.

This was a complicated undertaking, gently hauling hundreds of plants to Thomasville and setting up a very different sale space. Buddy Holshouser built us two nicely finished tables to display plants. Our tent looked very civilized with Buddy's furniture, and we fit right in with the elegant atmosphere of this wonderfully lavish event.

Thanks to our loyal helpers who spent so much time with us in Thomasville: Twitty Titus and Sharon Kindred, who worked until 10:00 on the opening night; Alan Parker, Jan Blue and Mike Carter, for hauling plants to Thomasville; Barbara Jinright, who let us store plants in her yard and helped at the booth; Ken Kuhl, who came early in the morning to transport plants; Beth Grant, for sharing her extensive knowledge of native plants; Yvonne Stinson, for tirelessly helping plant shoppers; Sandra Sallee and Carole Hayes, for working so well with our customers; Mike Miller, for setting up all day Friday and staying late on the last night transporting plants in the dark; and Alan Parker, ditto.

Our sales are now over until spring. We'll let you know how we plan to proceed. Please make sure you are on our email list for earliest notifications.

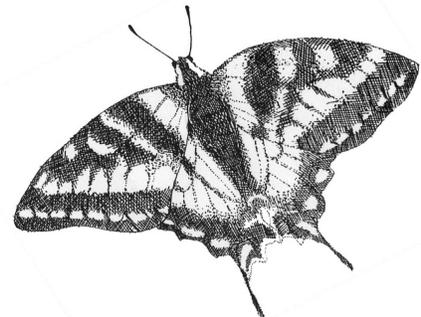
-June White
Plant Sale Chair

BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAY **Thursdays, January 6 and February 3** **9:00AM 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! 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.



WHISKEY IN THE WOODS
Brought to Birdsong by the Thomasville Arts Center's Wildlife Arts Festival

We really enjoyed being part of the Thomasville Arts Center's 26th annual Wildlife Arts Festival this year! Festival organizers created a new event this fall, a big party and open-air concert called Whiskey in the Woods and held it at Birdsong on Saturday, November 13th. It was enormous fun! To learn more about this special local event see thomasvillearts.org/wildlife-arts-festival/.

The event featured an evening of music by Jason Byrd and his band, cigar and whiskey tasting, and a Brunswick stew dinner served on site by John Thomas Catering. The place was beautifully decorated and at night, under the stars, it was magical. The event was attended by over 200 people who appeared to really be enjoying themselves. Jason Byrd's music was extraordinary; please see his website at <https://jasonbyrdmusic.com/>. We thank Mariam Mirabzadeh, Festival Director, and her wonderful creative team from the Arts Center for including Birdsong in this event and for making it so special.

25th ANNUAL
GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT
Friday through Sunday at Birdsong
February 18-20
Self-guided or join a scheduled guided group

The 2022 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), one of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Citizen Science projects, will be held February 18-21, 2022. Please have a look at the GBBC event description on their web page at www.birdsource.org for detailed instructions to create a free GBBC account for entering your observations. You are invited to count birds at bird feeders, in your yard, local parks or other outdoor locations, and then report your findings online at gbbc.birdcount.org or at eBird.

A guided GBBC count will be led by Sharman Franklin and her grandson Gavin Franklin on Saturday, February 19th from 8:30 am to noon. If interested, please contact Birdsong to sign up and plan to meet Sharman and Gavin in the Birdsong parking lot at 8:15am.

If you prefer doing your own survey, come out and observe birds anywhere at Birdsong, for a minimum of 15 minutes and up to as long as you want, on any or all days of the bird count, and as many times as you want. (Birdsong is open 9 – 5, Friday and Saturday and 1 – 5 on Sunday, closed on Monday. The Bird Window remains closed for now.) You can turn in your own results online at gbbc.birdcount.org or pick up a tally sheet at the registration desk, go bird watching, fill the sheet out and leave it here at Birdsong and we will submit your results.

This is a chance for you to participate in what is now a worldwide citizen science bird count and you can help us by listing observations from Birdsong!

FREE FAMILY DAYS
First Saturdays:
January 8th and February 5th

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

December 4, 2021

Weather It has been a beautiful fall in every way. We are enjoying lovely weather, amazing fall wildflowers and leaf color, and interesting wildlife sightings. We had a pleasant October, as the temperatures shifted from hot to cooler, and 3.97 inches of welcome rainfall arrived. We only had .58 inches of rain in the month of November and experienced our first of several good freezes. It has been dry now for over three weeks, so a predicted rain next week will be welcome. We've enjoyed day after day of perfect fall weather: beautiful cool mornings, sunny bright blue skies, pleasant afternoons with hot sunshine and cool breezes, and then early sunsets and cold, starry nights. It has been wonderful. We are taking the time to appreciate every moment!

Color in the Woods This year's complex of weather variables has combined to result in one of the most visually delightful autumns we've had in years. It started in October with the surge of *Agalinis* flowering in the Gin House Field and continued all month and into November with waves of exuberant wildflower color filling up the fields and woods with gold and purple, notably Goldenrod, *Liatris*, *Pittyopsis*, Mistflower, Narrow-leaved Sunflower, and Golden Aster.

By mid-November the leaf color began to appear. First to show up were the garlands of bright golden grapevine leaves draped over the backdrop of forest greenery. I first noticed this driving up Meridian Road heading north from Tallahassee. Fall is very educational this way – it shows you the different color and aspect and personality of every single different tree, shrub and vine – each one is making its own statement, and the colors all vary and deepen and evolve as time goes on. It is amazing how much wild grapevine there is, how many different hardwood species thrive in our woods, and the sheer numbers and variability of each one is amazing. And we only get to fully appreciate this when the right conditions happen at the right time.

That week the hardwoods began their color surge which has lasted for almost four weeks. The hickories have been particularly stunning, in all shades of gold, and the oaks turned varied shades of russet and brown. The star of the show at Birdsong has been the sourwood grove, located around the drain south of the House Pasture, in the same habitat as our wild azaleas. The lance-shaped leaves of these gorgeous trees range from pale peach to salmon to ruby in color and contrast beautifully with their black bark. These graceful trees, with their curved or leaning posture are scattered all along the drain, many are very tall. Their rosy colors stand out among the evergreen bays and pines and wax

myrtle and remind me of stained glass. They glow in the sunlight and are beautiful against the blue fall sky. What a visual pleasure.

Another nice aspect of this extravaganza is: it slows us down. With every tree throughout the woods becoming visible and showing off its unique colors and form, we want to look at each one – and really see it. So many trees! This takes time and really takes our appreciation to another level. Meanwhile the conifers and evergreens have patiently maintained their calm green demeanor, while the rest of the trees continue to joyfully express their individuality with vivid abandon.

The other amazing thing about this fall display is its longevity – over a period of weeks the colors have deepened and intensified, even more trees are showing color, and it is continuing. Most years the trees show some color, but it disappears within a short time, or all the leaves turn brown and fall quickly. This year has been very different and we are enjoying every minute of it. Perhaps some of the extended color can be attributed to no rain – the leaves haven't been blown off the branches by a storm. In that case, we won't mind waiting for some rain a little longer – this is well worth it.

A Fox Squirrel For many years, Birdsong had a nice fox squirrel population – these huge furry-tailed squirrels were frequently observed in many places across the property. One place where they were particularly abundant was (yes) the Squirrel Woods and the open mixed woods surrounding what we now call Chuck's House or the cabin, formerly known as Roy's House. Chuck Eason was our land management assistant for nine years and lived on site here. During his time at Birdsong, we were able to watch a family of these squirrels develop and grow. We knew where at least two nests were and could identify six different squirrels by their coloring and behavior. Some got named in order to talk about them more easily: Shrug, due to her little $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeved black bolero – she was silver everywhere else; Onyx, the matriarch, was solid black with a little silver around her muzzle. Silver Fox, a huge, powerful climber and a loner, lived further away – we thought he might be the dad. We got to know these squirrels so well because Chuck spent a lot of his free time out behind the house where they could be easily observed going about their business, cavorting in the huge old white oaks and loblollies that were all connected in the canopy. They also loved the old post oak by the front door.

Bob Bearss, our dear friend and longtime Bluebird Trail and burn crew volunteer, grew pecans on his property and started bringing Chuck a huge bag of pecans each season. Chuck threw pecans out for the

squirrels - and they loved them! Fox squirrels are naturally very elusive and usually do not let you see them, much less come close to where people are. It took a long time, but finally Onyx became comfortable enough to climb down the post oak to collect pecans in the yard when Chuck was on the front porch.

We got to watch a lot of interesting antics and behavior over a period of about seven or eight years and then we noticed the numbers of squirrels diminishing. For about the last four years now, we haven't seen any fox squirrels here at Birdsong and we'd like very much to understand why. They are extraordinary creatures and we really miss them.

Last week, I walked around the corner of the office towards the Pecan Grove and witnessed a wonderful sight: near the first big pecan tree a huge fox squirrel was leaping straight up into the air, whirling around and landing on all fours, apparently playing with a crow, who was stalking around him straight-legged, cawing at him. They were definitely interacting - this leaping and goofing around continued another 30 seconds until the squirrel spotted me and ran off to a nearby pine tree. The crow saw me too and he lifted off to join some crow companions in the trees. I walked down to the area to see if I could find the squirrel but, as they do, he had hidden himself extremely well. In a moment though, he appeared on the ground and began bounding through the grass off to another pine tree. This squirrel was mostly silver, slightly dark around the head and chest, and had the characteristic fox tail - huge and bouffant and very long. When a fox squirrel is in a hurry, springing across the grass, that tail follows in a graceful floating arc - a sight to behold. We are thrilled to have seen a fox squirrel, and so close to the buildings. This is unusual. We are of course hoping that this bodes well for another family to get established. Please let us know if you ever see any fox squirrels on your walks around Birdsong, and especially let us know if you see any dancing with a crow!

White-Tailed Deer We don't often get to see many deer at Birdsong - they are very wary and are active during times of day when we are not around. This time of year, however, they make their presence known. White-tailed bucks are in an ardent mood and they are claiming territory throughout the woods. I think there are more deer scrapes along the edges of the trails this year than we've seen in a while. (Again, another sign of an extraordinary fall.) You can find these scrapes easily in wooded areas. Look for places where small branches extend out over the trail at about shoulder height - often the twigs will be broken and dangling - look on the ground and you will see a patch of exposed earth about two feet across, covered with deep scratch marks or gouges. A commanding buck has been here, rattling and rubbing his antlers in the branches and scraping the ground with his hooves, claiming this territory and all the females in it as his own. For extra emphasis he may stamp one hoof right in

the middle of the scrape. The other day I started counting scrapes along one trail, from marker 28 to 13 and got to fifteen scrapes. That is a lot! We don't see these scrapes in completely open areas like the Gin House Field, so do go for a walk on the east and central areas of Birdsong where it is more wooded, and you will find some of these interesting scrapes. We may not get to see these beautiful white-tailed deer often, but they are letting us and all the other deer know that they are here!

The Harrier The Northern Harrier is back. Alan Parker gets to work early and has seen her almost every morning at around 7:30 cruising the west end of the Gin House Field and perching occasionally in a tree on the south edge of the Lewis Field. We love to see this big hawk; she is one of our seasonal favorites. She has been showing up for about five years now and we are always delighted when she appears. Watching her fly, cruising just above the broomsedge grasses as she leisurely makes her way back and forth across the field, is mesmerizing. She is soft brown in color, with her distinctive white rump patch, and has a slow oddly rhythmic wing-beat. Lifting. She hunts patiently, watching carefully, and will spot something and instantly drop down into the grass, invisible. She will usually finish her meal on the ground, but sometimes will lift up again and take her mouse or rat up to a perch in a nearby tree - we once saw her in the middle of the trail eating a rabbit. We hope you get your chance to witness this special bird as she goes about her harrier business; she can be seen all times of day, so do come out and look for her.

A Thank You Note On Wednesday before Thanksgiving, I took a walk to get some photos of our woods to share with you on Facebook. Getting out in the woods while it has been so colorful has been very uplifting. Every walk is completely different and the air is fresh and cool, and the woods smell good, and the sun is shining down illuminating everything and it just gets more beautiful every walk - I wish you could be here - it is truly wonderful. So I got to go out and take photos for you and was enjoying this very much, when I came across a turkey feather in the middle of the Wildlife Woods. Turkeys are another woodland creature that we may not see that often, but are powerful, important players in the natural web of life in these woods. They will often leave us feathers, which to me are like messages or gifts. This feather was a thank you note from Birdsong's Wild Turkeys to all of you who care about this place and help keep it looked after for birds like wild turkeys, and harriers, and the fox squirrels and white-tailed deer. We are all thankful for you. You do make the difference.

We wish you all a very Happy New Year and Happy Holidays and look forward to seeing you at Birdsong in 2022.

-KDB

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In Memory of Carl Dunnam:
Sylvia Dunnam

In Memory of Peggy Loyless:
Carol Maxfield

In Memory of Thomas Black:
Kathleen Reid Scott and The Scott Family Fund

In Memory of Mirhi Childs:
Kathleen Reid Scott and The Scott Family Fund

In Memory of Lane Green:
Kathleen Reid Scott and The Scott Family Fund
Donna Legare and Jody Walthall
Susan Pearson

In Honor of Margaret Vann:
Carol Jones

Special Financial Gifts:
Ramona Bowman
The Jasper and Marthalene Davis Foundation
Margarett Roddenbery
Jeffrey Mandel
Bruce Ritchie
William Dahlem
William Carroll, Jr.

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville
Melissa Watson
Lisa Gatherer
Sarah White

Tallahassee
Renee Adrianse
Michael Scholl & Joan Nelson
Philip Sandon
Steve & Heidi Copeland
Denise Hernandez
Kerri Crannis
Roy & Ruth Ziegler
Virginia Horak
Linda Petrovich
Janice Mazza
Clara Grace Atkins
Caroline Manuel
Joseph & Connie Krueger
Barry Ray
Eve Cantral

Other
Joni Hughey
Michael & Karen Noll
Shelly Searcy
Ellen Ferrell Clark &
Brenda Ferrell
Hannah Rick
Abigail Stowel
Madison, FL
Valdosta, GA
Cairo, GA
Whigham, GA
Ochlocknee, GA
Ochlocknee, GA

**Birdsong Nature Center
Board of Directors
2020-2021**

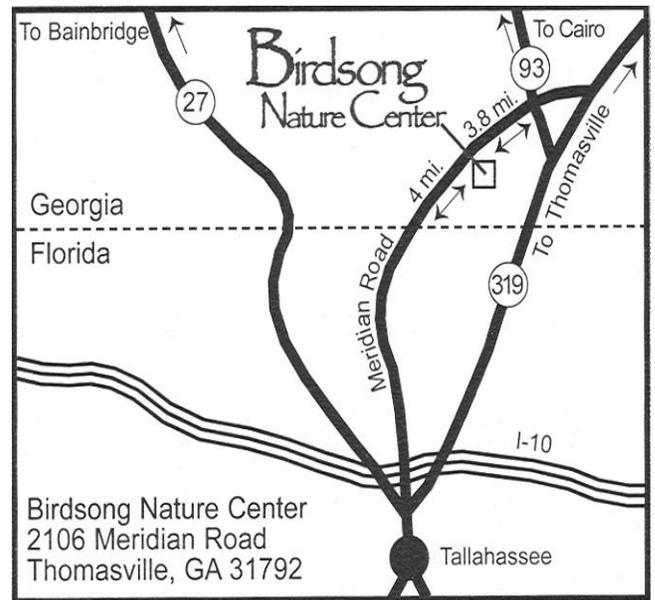
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DIRECTIONS:

From Tallahassee: Meridian Road north, 4 miles past FL/ GA border (marked by a blue sign that reads Grady Co.), on right side of road. OR 319 north, turn left onto Rt. 93, then turn left onto Meridian Road, 3.8 miles on left side of road.

From Thomasville: 319 south, turn right at Marathon gas station onto Meridian Road, approximately 5 miles from Marathon or 3.8 miles from stop sign at Rt. 93, on left side of road.

Watch for small sign that reads "Birdsong".

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ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
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TALLAHASSEE, FL
Permit No. 660

*Birdsong Nature Center
2106 Meridian Road
Thomasville, GA 31792
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