

Birdsong Nature Center

May-June 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*

May

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

June

Trails open Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays
Free Family Day on June 4th

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

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.

Dear Friends,

Our Board's efforts toward placing Birdsong's acreage into a conservation easement are continuing. Of the Center's 565 total acres, 144 are already protected; the remaining 421 acres of property will be placed under conservation easement held by Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy once this process is finalized. This will mean that the property will be protected from development and the land will be well-managed in perpetuity. Our goal is to complete all documentation and legal requirements by the end of this year. We are encouraged and delighted with the progress that has been made to date and we will keep you informed on our efforts in future newsletters.

We very much appreciate the many supporters who participated in Birdsong's Spring Plant Sales over the past several weeks. We hope you will enjoy the beautiful, healthy additions to your home gardens purchased at the sales. We also want to say a very special "thank you" to our Plant Sale chair, June White, and the many dedicated volunteers who made the Spring Plant Sales possible and so successful. We can't thank you enough for your hard work!

Thank you sincerely to all our members, donors, and visitors for your very kind support of Birdsong Nature Center. We hope you will visit soon to enjoy the sights and sounds along the trails winding through the property. Spring flowers are emerging and our birds and wildlife are active! As always, please let us know of interesting sightings along the way!

With warmest wishes,

Joe Peresich, Board Chair

THANK YOU
For two wonderful springtime Plant Sales!

Thanks once again to our faithful workers and to all the shoppers who made our series of plant sales such a success. Everyone seems to like the two or three smaller sales per season. The huge one-time-only sale of the past had become difficult in the last few years — too many cars on Birdsong's fragile driveway, jostling throngs of people crowded at entrance and exit, and the threat of one rainstorm ruining everything. This Spring's two sales had a leisurely, more relaxed feeling. We had time to visit with our fellow gardeners, and the plants had a chance to show off. At the March sale the dozens of pots of woodland Phlox were in full bloom and by the April sale the Blue-eyed Grass was at its peak. It's much easier to sell plants with flowers!

We are looking for plant donors! If you have good weed-free plants that you are thinning or dividing please let us know. This can be at any time of year. If you can get the plants out to Birdsong we'll care for them until the next sale. Let us know what you might have: birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org or 229-377-4408.

- June White
Plant Sale Chair



**REGISTER WITH AMAZONSMILE
AND SUPPORT BIRDSONG NATURE
CENTER**

If you like to shop on Amazon.com, registering with AmazonSmile will enable you to support Birdsong every time you shop, at no cost to you. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases on Amazon to Birdsong Nature Center, one of AmazonSmile's registered charities. (Donations are made by the AmazonSmile Foundation and are not tax deductible by you.) If you have an existing Amazon account, all your shopping cart, Wish List, and registry settings will remain the same. Go to smile.amazon.com for more information about this program and sign up to benefit Birdsong!

Birdsong Nature Center received \$45.32 thanks to purchases made between October 1 and December 31, 2021.

BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAY
Thursdays, May 5 and June 2
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! The team is also helping to remove invasives from the garden around the House. 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.

THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 2022

February 19 and 20

Thank you to our 2022 GBBC team: leaders Sharman Franklin and Gavin Franklin and their team of eight volunteers, for the guided count at Birdsong Nature Center on Saturday, February 19th. We also thank the individuals who contributed to the successful count: Lynn and Duane Brown and Robbie Hopkins. These observant birders recorded a total of 60 species that weekend, see list below. Out of 1,665 participating “hotspots” in the state of Georgia, with 5,586 checklists submitted, Birdsong ranked third in number of species reported! Thank you, GBBC birders!

Wood Duck - 21	House Wren - 1
Wild Turkey - 15	Carolina Wren - 5
Eurasian Collared Dove - 1	Gray Catbird - 6
Mourning Dove - 8	Brown Thrasher - 1
Great Blue Heron - 1	Northern Mockingbird - 1
Great Egret - 3	Eastern Bluebird - 12
Black Vulture - 2	Hermit Thrush - 1
Turkey Vulture - 4	American Robin - 14
Cooper's Hawk - 1	Cedar Waxwing - 13
Red-shouldered Hawk - 1	American Goldfinch - 3
Red-tailed Hawk - 1	Grasshopper Sparrow - 2
Barred Owl - 1	Chipping Sparrow - 13
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 1	White-throated Sparrow - 1
Red-headed Woodpecker - 2	Savannah Sparrow - 4
Red-bellied Woodpecker - 7	Eastern Towhee - 8
Downy Woodpecker - 3	Red-winged Blackbird - 7
Pileated Woodpecker - 3	Brown-headed Cowbird - 1
Northern Flicker - 2	Common Grackle - 11
Eastern Phoebe - 1	Black-and-white Warbler - 1
White-eyed Vireo - 3	Common Yellowthroat - 2
Blue Jay - 4	Palm Warbler - 1
American Crow - 5	Pine Warbler - 11
Fish Crow - 2	Yellow-rumped Warbler - 4
Carolina Chickadee - 3	Northern Cardinal - 15
Tufted Titmouse - 5	Common Ground Dove - 1
Purple Martin - 4	Wood Stork - 2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet - 7	Anhinga - 1
White-breasted Nuthatch - 4	Belted Kingfisher - 1
Brown-headed Nuthatch - 2	Golden-crowned Kinglet - 2
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - 1	Yellow-throated Warbler - 1

FREE FAMILY DAYS

First Saturdays: May 7 and June 4

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

April 18, 2022

Weather It has been raining. A lot. We've had a total of 17.39 inches since March 1st, with 9.95 in March and 7.44 so far in April. Each month there was a huge storm dropping more than 5 inches of rain overnight. This has had all kinds of significant impacts. The springtime greening happened really fast this year, no doubt encouraged by all the rain. The ponds and swamp were flooded and the flow was so significant after one storm that it lifted and washed one of our extremely heavy wooden walkways right across the spillway at the Upper Pond dam. These structures were built to be sturdy enough to support foot traffic and moved only by truck or tractor, so that took some serious force. The repeated heavy rains were very welcome for our springtime vegetation and our trees after the dry spell in February, so we were happy to get soaked, but every rain resulted in pools of standing water in the Pecan Grove parking lot and sections of trails under water. We always enjoy seeing how effective our "antique" terraces are all across the property. They are most easily visible in the unforested Gin House Field. These man-and-mule-made structures were designed and built in the mid-1800's to control erosion and they continue to work beautifully. The long curving parallel berms retain water and allow it to soak in, preventing the washing away of topsoil with every hard rain.

Land Management

With the frequent, almost weekly, rains combined with two springtime plant sales that require a lot of preparation, we didn't get much burning done in March or early April. It usually takes about three days after a rain for things to dry out enough to conduct a useful prescribed burn, so the timing has been a bit problematic. We were able to get one really good burn done: the House Pasture, the area south of the Barn and martin pole, all the way east through the Squirrel Woods to Chuck's House. We had a great team of volunteers, as usual, and the burn was well-executed. Late that afternoon the crew got to enjoy watching an American Kestrel hunting in the smoke, capturing large insects fleeing from the burn. This entire burned area has since greened up beautifully, as have our other cool-weather burns. We appreciate the help of those folks who worked so hard that day: Bill Carroll, Karen Berkley, Russ Barrett, Carolyn Cohen, Sandra Sallee, Scott Ball, and Alan Parker.

Now that the Plant Sales are behind us, we plan to get as much done as we can between now and early June. We still welcome any rain, and will work around it as best we can!

Purple Martins The first wave of Purple Martins appeared on February 19th and were recorded by our Great Backyard Bird Count teams. Over a period of a week or so varying numbers of Martins flew in and sat on the crossbars of the pole, were seen circling overhead, and heard making their distinctive calls. On one day that week Alan counted 30 birds zooming around the pole and filling the sky over the house and barn with sound. Then for several weeks there was a lull, no Martins to be seen. Starting the week of March 22 eight birds settled in and started the serious work of choosing gourds, which involves lots of bickering and sudden flights into the sky by all concerned. As of right now, April 15th, eight Martins appear to have sorted themselves out. They are present and busy and noisy in the early hours of the morning, still poking around in everyone else's gourds, and then by noon they leave and don't come back till evening. Soon we expect to see them gathering bits of grass and bringing home leaves to build their nests. Martin season is in full swing!

A surprise for us is the low number of birds. With eight birds that means only four gourds are occupied – up till recently all ten have been used nearly every year, even fought over, going well back into Betty Komarek's time, before the Nature Center got started (mid-1980's). Last year, only eight gourds were taken. We are concerned – having so few birds nesting is different and we don't like the trend. Nevertheless, we will enjoy our Martins – they are one of our favorite spring-summer residents.

The Bats As mentioned in the last newsletter, two tiny bats were found roosting together on the ceiling in one of the buildings in late January. Alan just happened to look up and see them when he was searching for something. We immediately became entranced with them and started checking in on them every day. They appeared mostly to be sleeping or in some sort of torpor, especially when the weather was extremely cold. They were always snuggled up together, hanging upside down facing us. We could tell them apart from their coloring, demeanor, and, as it warmed up, their behavior. We made some assumptions about their gender – the female resided on the right, the male on the left. She was a tiny bit smaller but wider, with lighter fur on her belly and very pink "forearms". He was darker gray in color and held his dark brown wings very close to his sides. We were very careful when checking on them and tried to move slowly and be as quiet as possible. They never seemed to be disturbed by our presence, even when their eyes were open and they were clearly watching us.

We learned that these little bats are called Tricolored Bats - thank you, Janell Cleveland and Kitty Spivey for helping to identify them. They are our

area's smallest bat and are known to roost in smaller numbers than most bat species. Mating takes place primarily in the fall, the bats "hibernate", the females ovulate in spring, and then the males and pregnant females go their separate ways. Females join a group of other females and raise their babies – always twins!

Being curious and completely smitten with these sleepy little mammals, we had to see how they were doing almost every day from the time they were discovered. We learned a lot. At first we thought that the male had a part in his fur, up the middle of his abdomen, but soon learned that that was actually his black tail curved up over his belly. The female hardly ever did this. Through mid-winter when it was very cold, they stayed motionless, pressed together, always in the same positions. If we stayed watching them, the male would start to pulse or vibrate. As the winter progressed into early spring and we had more warm days, the female would have one or both of her arms spread forward, claws hooked to the ceiling, the skin of her wings exposed, and she'd be watching us. The male would have his dark wings wrapped around the front of his body, with his elbows (wrists?) nearly touching, almost covering his little face. On most visits the bats would stay completely still. The female was the more active of the two – she would occasionally yawn and reach around with her forearms. On several occasions she was quite busy, moving her back legs around within the skin of her connected wings and tail. He continued to sleep through her activity.

On March 5th, I checked on the bats around 1pm; they were side by side as usual. About 20 minutes later I had to go near there on an errand and could not resist another quick look - and found them mating! It turned out that our assumptions about who was the female and who was the male were correct. He was embracing her from the back, holding her within his folded wings. I felt badly having intruded on them and left immediately. (The thought of our bats having furry little twins was almost too much to take – cuteness overload!)

A huge storm with lots of lightning and thunder came through on March 19th and it rained heavily. We checked on the bats the day after and they were gone. We were a little worried – we didn't know if the storm had frightened them off or if they were just on schedule to move on. The next day though, they were back! This same pattern happened one other time after another wild storm, and once again we were really pleased to find them hanging out as usual, wing-to-wing, in their spot.

There was one other notable day of activity. It was much warmer, March 26th. I went to see how they were doing, and the female was busy. She was stretched out, moving her arms/wings around, eyes wide open, did some adorable yawning, examined a few things on the ceiling, and then leaned over and started butting her sleeping partner with her head. He appeared to be hanging from only one foot and was swaying. She pushed

him and sniffed him and began kind of shoving and rocking him back and forth with her claw, and then pushed herself behind him, causing him to spin and roll around. Up until this he had remained oblivious, but now he uncovered his face and turned toward her as if to say "What on earth are you doing?" She continued this clearly affectionate, playful fiddling and then stretched back over to her "side" and they both eventually settled down. Fascinating!

This was the last day we got to see them. We had been busy with the Plant Sale not far away and don't know if they were disturbed and left or if they were just on schedule to go. Even now, weeks later, we keep looking for them. They gave us a wonderful experience. It was a privilege to witness this little couple going about their winter-spring lives and allowing us a moment here and there to learn something astounding. Needless to say, we hope they live long and happy lives, raise those twins, and come back next winter. We really miss our beloved little bats.

Springtime Highlights There is nothing like the early surge of springtime green in our southeastern woods; it is one of the most beautiful and engaging times of the year. We can actually witness the forest coming back to life each day - from bare gray branches to the pale green mist of budding leaves; to the lavish, vibrant dark green of late spring. It happens very fast – you don't want to miss out on seeing what can happen between morning and night.

The Wild Azalea Garden was spectacular this year. Many of our local *Rhododendron canescens* started blooming in early March and kept on going until just recently. It was like a sea of pale pink in the Garden maze, and so fragrant! The beautiful *R. austrinum* and *R. flammeum* planted along the trails by Dan Miller started blooming a little later and as one shrub reached its peak, another nearby started flowering. This wonderful emergence and subsidence of all shades of gold to coral to cerise continues, although the season is winding down. These shrubs have been covered in butterflies all along, especially Pipevine and Tiger Swallowtails.

The birds are in full-on courtship mode and are busy building; many already have eggs in the nest. Our Bluebirds have never looked this blue! We are waiting on migrants – the red mulberries are ripening and ready.

Spring continues. Please come out to enjoy this fast-moving time of year – the air is scented with blooming flowers, the birds are singing, migrants are arriving and the woods are green. You don't want to miss it!

- KDB

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Daniel and Desire' Stokes
Liz Owens
Vickie Whatley
Clay and Paige Parker
James and Vivian Loftin

Tallahassee

David Blodgett
Joseph Cote
Faith Hazelip
Wendy Bevan-Baker
Andrea Albertin
Robert Swoboda
Sharon Huntley-Miller
Julie Jaekel
Lucinda Keeseey
Betsy Palmer
Stephen and Nancy Price
Mary Driscoll
Penny Young
Sharon Gray
Brian and Cindy Jacobson
Diane Morgan
Charlotte Bull

Other

Lori Jones	Celebration, FL
Henry Binford	Dothan, AL
Debbie Potter	Havana, FL
Kathryn Cowdery	Havana, FL
Ellen Rumble	Boca Raton, FL
Colleen Millsaps	Cairo, GA

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In Memory of Rae (Kit) Parker:

Mary Mailhot

In Memory of Bernice Melton:

Helen McCann
Betty Sue and Thomas Bruckner
Harriett Hobbs and The Barnes Family

In Honor of Carl Tomlinson:

Margaret Bivins

Special Financial Gifts:

Katy Sparrow and Laura Binford
Rambler Rose Garden Club
Jan and Stan Roth
Tom Strazulla
Deborah Blakey
Anonymous Donation



Birdsong Nature Center Board of Directors 2020-2021

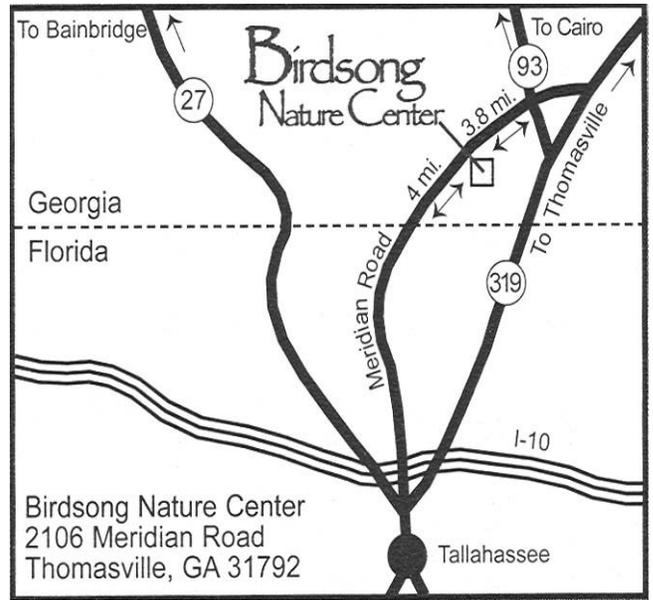
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DIRECTIONS:

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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