

Birdsong Nature Center

November-December 2022

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

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

November

- Nov. 3 Butterfly Garden Workday
- Nov. 5 Free Family Day
- Nov. 5 Old-Timey Plant Sale
- Nov. 12 Whiskey in the Woods
- Nov. 19 In Memory of Michael Miller

December

- Dec. 1 Butterfly Garden Workday
- Dec. 3 Free Family Day
- Dec. 3 Take A Child Outside

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

Holiday Closure: Birdsong will be closed starting on Wednesday, December 21 and will re-open on Wednesday, January 4

Dear Friends,

We are happy to share the good news with you that the response to Birdsong's "House and Gardens Improvements Campaign" has been simply outstanding. We could not be more grateful for your support or humbled by your generosity. *Thank you very sincerely!* We are over two-thirds of the way to our goal of raising \$65,000 for the campaign and have already begun implementing the planned improvements. Please see our Director's article on page 2 for an update. We can't say "*thank you*" enough for the generous gifts we've received from all of you, our amazing and cherished members, donors, and supporters! Thank you!

Our work towards the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) grant and placing Birdsong's property into a conservation easement with Tall Timbers continues in earnest. We hope to have the required documents submitted to Tall Timbers' Easement Review Committee in December. Once enacted, the conservation easement not only protects Birdsong's acreage from commercial development in perpetuity, but also sets forth specific principles, guidelines, and requirements regarding how the property will be managed and its natural-state values maintained.

We held the first of our two Old-Timey Plant Sale events on Saturday, October 15th. The Sale's second weekend is November 5th, and we hope you will join us! On behalf of Birdsong's staff and Board, I want to take this opportunity to say a very fond "*thank you*" to June White, Plant Sale Chair, and all the many dedicated Plant Sale volunteers who make these events possible. Without June and the volunteers' special efforts, these Plant Sale events would simply not happen. Thank you, June, and Plant Sale volunteers extraordinaire!

With warmest wishes,
Joe Peresich, Board Chair

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

OLD-TIMEY FALL PLANT SALES
Next one: Saturday, November 5, 9am to 1pm

Our first fall plant sale was a happy success. In spite of competition from other interesting events on October 15th, we had a good crowd of plant shoppers. It is always nice to talk to repeat customers about their gardens, and especially to hear stories about plants they've gotten at previous sales. We learned about a Fairy Magnolia tree we sold ten years ago that is now mature and thriving in its home garden. We especially love to hear about plants that have been so successful that their owners offer to donate their offspring back to our sale!

Please let us know if you have plants you'd like to donate, or if you'd like to volunteer to help at the next sale on Saturday, November 5th. We have some beautiful plants, including many varieties of Wild Azaleas, our signature plant. It is interesting to see them at this time of year when they have last year's healthy foliage and next spring's fat flower buds.

- June White, Plant Sale Chair

HOUSE AND GARDEN IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT UPDATE

We want to thank all the many members and supporters who have given so generously to the 2022 House and Gardens Improvements Campaign. We have been very touched by the kindness and the caring shown by the 104 gifts we have received so far. We are pleased to let you know that we are over two-thirds of the way to our goal of \$65,000. With all this support, we have gone ahead with the project and want to provide you with an update. Here is what we have accomplished so far:

- Armstrong Tree Service has removed all three of the huge trees that were of concern, along with four additional trees and all overhanging limbs surrounding the second story roof. They did an extraordinary job, were very easy to work with, and it was fascinating to see these professionals do their amazingly accurate work with all that large equipment.
- Our large out-of-date water heater was removed and donated to a worthy cause. It was replaced with an efficient pass-through heater. This will save energy and money in the long run. It makes very hot water!
- Plumbing and electrical work associated with the bathroom renovation and the heater exchange has occurred.
- Our construction volunteers are planning out the design and building of new cabinets for the bathroom. There is a very nice surprise relating to this project that we will reveal at a later date!
- We had the first of our series of workdays with the Native Nurseries landscaping crew to remove invasive plants and trees and clear out overgrown sections of the gardens surrounding the house. This team is very focused and energetic and have made a big impact in only one visit.

Our next steps will be to continue work on the bathroom cabinets, flooring, sheetrock, and final plumbing and electrical work. Now that the trees and branches around the roof are cleared away, we can get the house and porch roof replacements scheduled. Our construction team is also getting the supplies it needs to replace the screening on the back porch.

So, thanks to all of you who have given to the campaign we are on our way! We will appreciate everyone's patience when we get some of these projects started that will require us to close the house again temporarily. We'll send out notifications of any closures by email and Facebook, but meanwhile we recommend calling or checking the website for any updates if you are making plans to visit.

Thank you very much for caring about Birdsong's stewardship of its historical, ecological, and aesthetic assets. If not for your gifts to the campaign, we could not be doing these major improvements. Thank you.

UPDATE: BECOME A NATURAL LEADER Training

Part 1. Project Learning Tree Workshop

We are pleased to let you know that we had an excellent one-day Project Learning Tree workshop at Birdsong on October 6th. This was the introductory session of our three-part leadership training series. The workshop was led by Jessica Pippin, Administrative Coordinator of the STEAM Center for Applied Creativity and Innovation at Valdosta State University, and she was assisted by Teresa Adkins, who has been one of Birdsong's WILD Women for many years and is the 4H/Family and Consumer Services Agent for the University of Georgia Extension Agency in Bainbridge.

Jessica led us through a day of environmental education activities with a focus on forestry and forest ecology. Participants were given an excellent K-8 activity guide called *Explore Your Environment*, published by Project Learning Tree. This 422-page guide contains 51 well-designed activities that can be used by teachers and non-formal educators to give children hands-on, active, thematic learning experiences outside. Jessica and Teresa guided our participants through five of these activities, and our team learned how to use and adapt this manual for Birdsong's educational purposes.

Our multi-talented leaders and enthusiastic participants made the whole day an enjoyable and rewarding experience. The activities were fascinating and fun - we learned how to make paper, among other things! We are happy to welcome back many of our original WILD Women group leaders: Sharman Franklin, Sandra Sallee, Laurie Jones, Carolyn Cohen, Jeanette Sickel, and Gavin Franklin. Alan Parker and Serena Ernst also attended that day – Alan has often assisted with our school programs. We would like to welcome our new participants: Lia Dominique Andress, Kate Taluga, Michael Weed, Faith Hazelip, and Ken Kuhl. Each person attending clearly has many talents to bring to our programs and we thank them for being willing to serve as volunteer leaders.

Part 2, *How to Lead a Nature Walk for Children*, will take place at Birdsong on Friday, December 2nd at 9am. This 3-hour session will provide instruction on how to utilize Birdsong's trails, Bird Window, Butterfly Garden and Bluebird Trail for programmatic purposes.

If you were unable to attend the first workshop but have an interest in getting involved and taking the remaining trainings, please call Kathleen Brady at 229-377-4408. **Reservations required.**

Thank you, Jessica Pippin and Teresa Adkins, for an excellent Project Learning Tree workshop!

TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE

For The Holidays!

Saturday, December 3

9:30-Noon

Bring your favorite child to Birdsong and enjoy a morning in the woods with Sandra Sallee, as you get an early start on preparing for the winter holidays. Give your young person an alternative approach to holiday giving this year and let them collect their own natural materials to make a holiday gift. Each child can take a collecting bag and Sandra will lead us out on a natural treasure hunt to discover what nature has to offer! This is harvest time, with nuts, berries and leaves in profusion. Back at the Barn turn your child's imagination loose to create whatever item he or she wants or let them make a small candleholder or surprise gift item with the materials you have collected.

\$5 Friends, \$8 nonmembers, children half-price. Make **RESERVATIONS, PLEASE** by noon on Friday, December 2, so we know what materials to provide. Please call (229)377-4408 or email birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org.

FREE FAMILY DAYS
First Saturdays: November 5 and December 3

On first Saturdays of the month 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, get to know the property, and visit the Bird Window and Butterfly Garden. *Please note: the November Free Family Day coincides with our November 5th Plant Sale that lasts from 9am to 1pm. The parking area may be a little busy that morning. You may want to have a look at our beautiful selection of plants before you go for a walk around Birdsong!*

Admission: free

POP-UP PROGRAMS

As we start to re-introduce educational programming back to our calendar, we are also experimenting with something new: pop-up programs that are not scheduled in the newsletter but announced by email and on Facebook. We scheduled such a program on October 8 and offered a nature walk to view our extraordinary *Liatris* bloom. We had three guests and thoroughly enjoyed a cool fall morning walk, surrounded by purple and gold wildflowers and butterflies. There were some extraordinary photographic opportunities!

This November and December we want to invite you to come out to enjoy wandering the woods during leaf fall, and we'd love to go birding with you when sightings have been good at Birdsong. Please make sure that we have your email address, and we will send out an announcement in advance of the ideal time for these opportunities. We will also post them on Facebook.

Find us on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BirdsongNatureCenter>



BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAY
Thursdays, November 3 and December 1
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.

BIRDSONG GIFT SHOP

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we thought we could re-open the Birdsong gift shop by November. As you can see from this newsletter, a lot is going on at Birdsong this fall. Because so many of our efforts are of high priority and are also time consuming, we are putting re-opening the gift shop on hold for now. As soon as we can get the shop updated and restocked, we'll let you know. Thank you for your patience.

IN MEMORY OF MICHAEL MILLER

Michael Miller's family and close friends are organizing a celebration of his life to take place at Birdsong Nature Center on Saturday, November 19th from 3 to 5pm. Anyone who knew Michael and would like to join us to honor him is very welcome. We will be sending out an email before this event to provide more information. Feel free to contact us if you have questions at birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org.

If you would like to provide a photo or a tribute to Mike that can be shared at this event, please send to Kathleen Brady, at Birdsong Nature Center, 2106 Meridian Road, Thomasville, 31792 or kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org. Please see the tribute below, submitted by Ken Kuhl who became friends with Mike when they were volunteering at the Birdsong plant sales. We plan to share a few photos of Michael out burning with us in the Birdsong woods, where he was right at home; and some of him volunteering at our plant sales with our team. We will see you on November 19th to honor our dear friend, Michael Miller.

A TRIBUTE TO MIKE

By Ken Kuhl

Mike didn't just volunteer his time, but gave all of himself to the cause, every time. He was in his element here at Birdsong.

He gave each of us a welcoming and cheerful smile, taught us to live in the moment, and reminded us to enjoy each other as well as our natural surroundings.

While clearly serious about the task, he lessened our work with humor when needed the most. Mike enjoyed solving the common problems encountered in the field. His clear mindedness was always focused on the solution.

It is likely that his many roles including being a resourceful leader, teacher, a caring person, and volunteer cannot be replaced. However, as we work together and strive to honor and emulate his superior qualities, I believe Mike continues to live through each of us and the future of Birdsong.

Thank you, Mike!

WHISKEY IN THE WOODS

**A Special Event brought to Birdsong by the Thomasville Arts Center's *Wildlife Arts Festival*
Saturday, November 12, 2022**

We really enjoyed being part of the Thomasville Arts Center's annual Wildlife Arts Festival last year and we are happy to let you know that their signature event, *Whiskey in the Woods*, will be returning to Birdsong in November! *Whiskey in the Woods* is a big party and open-air concert featuring an evening of music, cigar and whiskey tasting, with southern comfort food provided by John Thomas Catering. We are especially pleased to announce that Jason Byrd and his exceptional band will be returning to Birdsong to play again this year! Please see his website at <https://jasonbyrdmusic.com/>.

This year's *Whiskey in the Woods* promises to be another amazing event and we hope you will join us. Ticket purchases are all handled by and benefit the Wildlife Arts Festival. Please go online to buy tickets and learn more about this special local event at thomasvillearts.org/wildlife-arts-festival/. We hope you'll join us!

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

October 17, 2022

Weather We finally made it through the heat and overwhelming humidity of the Dog Days, and fall is finally in full swing. We have had an extended period of beautiful weather, with weeks of cooler drier air, refreshing mornings, and lots of blue sky. Our main problem now is that we've had only one rain event since September 13th with 0.93 inches on October 13th. It feels as though it never happened. The vegetation is showing the stress, especially in the wilting heat of the afternoon. The ground around the house and gardens is basically dust. There is no prediction of rain in sight, either. So, we wait. This week the overnight temperature is supposed to fall as low as 37 degrees, with highs in the mid-60's. Perhaps with a cold snap like that we may start to see some leaf color in the woods.

Wildflowers It has been quite a year for *Liatris*, or Blazing Star. *Liatris*, an aster, sends up a long, tall wand of small purple flowers. It blooms from the top down the stem and is intensely attractive to bees and butterflies of all kinds. Most years, we see a fair number of *Liatris* in bloom all around the property and they are so charismatic and photogenic that we always get very excited to see them. They are rather exotic looking. This year came as a complete surprise – there is *Liatris* everywhere. We have found it in masses in the Gin House and Lewis Field, along both sides of the trails surrounding the planted longleaf and along the south edge of Big Bay Swamp, and along the south side of the ridge trail east of the cabin. It is peaking about now, but we've let folks know about this phenomenon on Facebook and by email, encouraging them to come out and witness this. Walking along the trail by the Bay and around the pines last week in the late morning was a sensory delight – to be surrounded by waving wands of Blazing Star in all shades of purple, mixed with Goldenrod and *Pittypopsis* on both sides of the trail extending off into the trees, hearing the cool breeze in the overhead trees and the buzzing of bees...magical. These flowers were being visited by scores of butterflies, too – Gulf Fritillaries, Long-tailed Skippers, all kinds of sulphurs and other small skippers, even a Great Purple Hairstreak....flitting everywhere, frustrating anyone with a camera because they won't sit still. So many flowers, so little time! We have tried to record the bloom, and it is interesting how it started, then swelled, and began appearing in more and more places. We are assuming we'll have another great week of purple haze in the Gin House Field at a distance, and more butterflies than we can keep up with along the longleaf/Bay trail where we can experience them from inches away. It has been awe-inspiring and breathtaking and was completely unex-

pected. What a marvelous surprise for us all this year! Last year, it was a huge False Foxglove bloom. This year, Blazing Star! Who knows what next year will bring...

Also well worth coming out to see, along with all the purple flowering going on, is the gorgeous gold and pure yellow of Goldenrod, *Pittypopsis*, and more recently, Narrow-leaved Sunflower. These colors are even more brilliant and intense than the *Liatris*. Masses of these wildflowers are showing up in the House Pasture, Gin House Field, Lewis Field, around the Farm Pond and along the trail to the Listening Place. They are really making their presence known, and the bees and butterflies are responding, as are we. During the rest of the year, we don't often think about these species of plants, but now they are taking the spotlight, deservedly.

Squirrels As anyone who feeds birds at home knows, keeping squirrels from overtaking a feeding station is an ongoing challenge. People have come up with all kinds of inventive ways to keep squirrels off their feeders. For many years now at Birdsong, we have just been putting up with them. This summer though, it really got to be too much. We'd have 12 or more squirrels eating all the seed by 10:30 am; nothing was left for the birds. Lynn Brown, our talented Office Manager, and a very good birder, did some research. She began to experiment with adding cayenne pepper to the black oil sunflower seed that we put out. Apparently, the intense heat is not tolerable to most squirrels, but does not bother the birds. We are pleased to report that her technique has worked very well. We saw a rapid drop-off in squirrel numbers right away, and several individual squirrels we used to recognize disappeared. A few squirrels seem to have adapted to the new taste, or it does not bother their digestive systems enough to prevent them from ingesting the pepper, so we still see a few at the Bird Window every day. This dramatic change has made life better, at least for the birds and the birdwatchers, and we are now seeing songbirds feeding peacefully at the Bird Window all day long, unperturbed by rambunctious squirrels.

Warbles Late summer, when it is still hot and humid, has historically been a rough time for the squirrels at Birdsong because of botflies. Our squirrels become infected with parasitic botfly larvae, and it is horrifying - as bad as any science fiction movie you have ever seen. These tiny fly larvae enter a squirrel's body through the mouth, nose or a wound and make their way to a place under the skin of the upper body. They cut a breathing hole in the skin where their back end extends, hook on to the squirrel inside, feed and grow, and go through a series of instars, getting bigger as they go. They get about an inch or more long and a

half inch across. This appears as a huge lump on the body of the squirrel, with a black object extending out of the hole. These are called “warbles” and they clearly make the squirrel extremely uncomfortable – the squirrels we saw this summer had scratched their skin raw at the lump and were twitchy and itchy and nervous. Some squirrels had up to seven of the lumps on their bodies; one had one right on the top of its head like a huge miner’s headlamp – the stuff of nightmares. The poor squirrels cannot scratch the larvae out. Thank goodness, this infestation ends when the larvae unhook, leave the squirrel’s body, and fall to the ground to pupate and then emerge as an adult fly and start the cycle over again.

As annoyed as we can get with our clever squirrels, we feel truly sorry for any that get infected, and we wouldn’t wish a botfly infection on any of them. Right now, the squirrels’ wounds and lumps and torn skin are healing; the botflies have left, but you can still see the scars. I don’t know enough about these parasitic flies to know why they happen every year at Birdsong – I don’t see this infection in squirrels where I live in Tallahassee. I’m glad – it is a terrible thing to witness and there’s nothing we can do to alleviate the suffering of those squirrels. At least now we don’t have to think about it until next year.

The Bird Window We re-opened the Bird Window to visitors in September. Thanks to Lynn’s cayenne pepper treatment, we have had few squirrels and now lots of birds! We have enjoyed our year-round regulars bringing in this season’s babies to introduce them to the feeding area, and have been seeing lots of Cardinals, Blue Jays, Carolina Wrens, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and Eastern Towhees. Residents not as frequently seen at the Window include Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Mockingbirds, Brown Thrashers, White-breasted Nuthatches, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

We are now enjoying the arrival of migrant songbirds. Most of them come to the Bird Window to bathe in the pool and mist. Since September 14 we’ve had the good fortune to see several Scarlet Tanager females and juvenile males, male and female Summer Tanagers, Yellow-throated Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Parula, Swainson’s Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Phoebe, Gray Catbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, and an Ovenbird! The last sighting of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird was on October 14.

It is so nice to be able to share the Bird Window again with our visitors. It is a remarkable place, and it offers not just a wonderful birdwatching experience, but a quiet opportunity for real connection to our natural world and the wildlife within it, right up close, just as Betty intended.

Phenomenal Skies For several weeks around the end of September we began having lovely cool weather, much less humidity, and clear blue skies. On the first of October we realized that we were seeing the beginnings of what became the *Liatris* bloom. Between the cool air, low humidity, and the call of the flowers it became imperative to walk out and check on things when possible. On one such inviting afternoon on October 4th, I headed outdoors to the Gin House and could not believe the beauty I was seeing in the sky. At the entrance to the Gin House, with that wonderful wide-open vista, I could see the entire hemisphere of the bright blue sky. It was streaked with high thin white clouds in beautiful long shapes reaching all the way from west to east, arranged like the spokes of a lady’s hand-held fan originating from a point on the western horizon. It was stunning. As I walked forward, heading toward the Star Pasture, I happened to look up at the sun, and was even more surprised – there was a huge rainbow-hued circle around the sun. It was enormous and took up a big portion of the sky over the south side of the Gin House. Within the circle were four evenly-spaced rays of white light emanating from the sun out to the edges of the halo. I walked out to the Lewis Field to check on the flowers, turned around and came back and by then this sun halo had begun to disintegrate. I had never seen anything quite like this before. Our friend, Karen Berkley, saw this same rarity on the same day on St. George Island. What a marvelous spectacle. These are called sun halos (thank you, Karen) and are caused by light refraction through tiny ice crystals in those high, thin clouds. We posted photos taken in the Gin House that day on Facebook – you might want to have a look.

Autumn continues to unfold and there will be many more beautiful days to come. We expect to see some gorgeous grasses blooming soon and perhaps some leaf color in the woods. The sourwood trees near the Big Bay drain have already made a start. Please come visit – this is a nice time to enjoy the woods and Bird Window at Birdsong.

-KDB



NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Melissa and Fondren Rigsby
Charlie and Tracy Johnston
Emily Labbate

Tallahassee

Sue Stelzmann
Larry and Lucy Teich
Ryan McDonald and Liesel Hamilton
Joanna Forrester
Heidi Fox
Barbara Brandt

Other

Blue Bear Farm & Cattle Co.	Cairo, GA
Jim Crescitelli	Winter Park, FL
John Ballard	Ochlocknee, GA
Rosaline Beckham	Monticello, FL
Lura Clark	Camilla, GA
Francine Pitts	Moultrie, GA
Stancie Frazier	Meigs, GA
Carol Stiles and Pat Miller	Quitman, GA
Patricia Dudley-Gregory	Havana, FL
Sue Ruffing	Cairo, GA

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

Memorials

Wendy Leader Johnston, in fond memory of Mike Miller
Grayal Earle Farr and Helen Light, in memory of J. Michael Miller
Christine Arneson, in honor of Mike Miller
Barbara Mason White, in memory of Mike Miller and gratitude
for what Birdsong meant to him
Stacy and Zach Wheeler, in memory of Cina Smith
David Poole, in memory of Katelyn E. Poole
Susan Green, in memory of Lane Green
Barbara Jinright Altork, in memory of her mother, Betty Jinright



Birdsong Nature Center Board of Directors 2021-2022

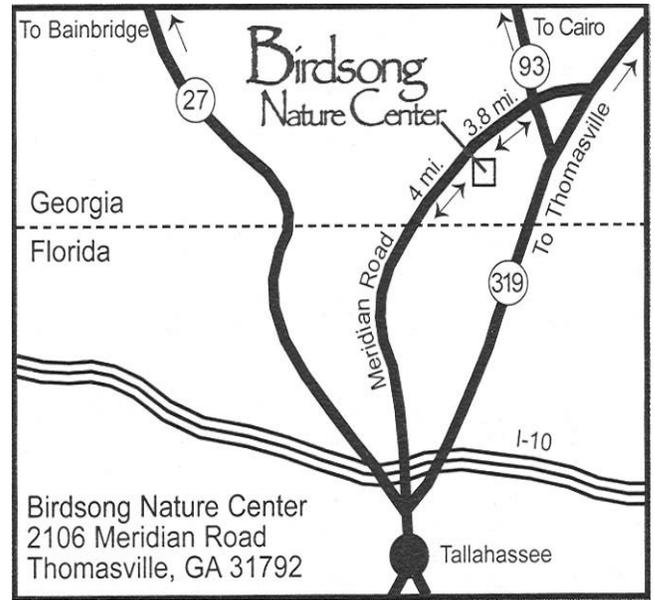
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DIRECTIONS:

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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