

Birdsong Nature Center

September-October 2023

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

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

September

- Sept 6 Center reopens after summer break
- Sept 7 Butterfly Garden Workday
- Sept 9 Free Family Day
- Sept 16 Fall Migration Bird Walk
- Sept 23 Golden Triangle Georgia Adopt-A-Stream
- Sept 30 Take A Child Outside at Birdsong

October

- Oct 4 Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Nest Box Installation
- Oct 5 Butterfly Garden Workday
- Oct 7 Free Family Day
- Oct 7 Fall Migration Bird Walk
- Oct 21 Hands On Thomas County
- Oct 28 Golden Triangle Plant Identification for Children

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

Dear Friends,

On July 5th, 2023, Birdsong and Tall Timbers jointly announced the successful finalization of our combined efforts to place 440 acres of Birdsong's property into a conservation easement with Tall Timbers, and we could not have been more pleased to share this good news. The goals of this four-year-long project, which began in the Fall of 2019, had been achieved: the entirety of Birdsong's 565-acre property would be permanently protected, including 125-acres previously placed into easement with Georgia Wildlife Federation; and Birdsong would receive significant financial support for protecting its lands and natural resources, thereby helping to ensure the Center's long-term sustainability. More information about the easement appears in this newsletter.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to Tall Timbers' leadership: Dr William Palmer, President/CEO, and the Tall Timbers Board of Directors, for their decision to engage in this project and commit the organizational resources of their Land Conservancy to its implementation. It would be difficult to overstate how important the project's success is to Birdsong, its members, and the regional community served by the Center. We will have much more to share regarding the significance of this project and the supportive individuals who played such noteworthy roles, but we wanted to acknowledge here our sincere appreciation to Dr Palmer and the Tall Timbers Board for their inspiring support.

We hope you will visit Birdsong one day soon to enjoy this special place and share with us the joy of knowing these beautiful forests, meadows, ponds and wetlands are now protected in perpetuity. We look forward to seeing you again soon!

With warmest regards,
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

This announcement was jointly released by Birdsong Nature Center and Tall Timbers to the Cairo Messenger, and was published on Wednesday, July 5th, 2023.

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER LAND PERMANENTLY PROTECTED THROUGH COLLECTIVE EFFORT

Thanks to the collective efforts of conservation-minded voters and elected officials, along with public and private funding support, the long-term vision for Birdsong Nature Center has finally come to fruition. The entire 565 acres located on Meridian Road in Grady County are now permanently protected.

In June 2023, parties from Birdsong and Tall Timbers – a nonprofit organization based between Thomasville and Tallahassee – signed a conservation easement agreement to limit the development of the land permanently and to protect its natural resources. This agreement is attached to the land and will remain in effect regardless of future ownership.

Tall Timbers is an accredited land trust with a successful history of land conservation in the Red Hills region of South Georgia and North Florida. Currently, Tall Timbers holds over 156,000 acres of conservation easements.

“Placing the entirety of Birdsong’s land under the permanent protection of a conservation easement has been a goal since our inception”, said Birdsong Executive Director Kathleen Brady, “Our founders, Betty and Ed Komarek, would be very pleased.”

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act, which received 83% support from Georgia voters in 2018, provided significant funding through sales tax from outdoor recreation stores for the conservation easement. Tall Timbers and other conservation organizations in Georgia advocated for the Act as a dedicated funding mechanism to protect lands critical to wildlife, clean water, and outdoor recreation.

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program, which implements the Act, selected the Birdsong easement project proposal from statewide applications to receive a “Conserve Georgia” grant totaling \$635,620. The proposal was highly competitive thanks to additional funding from Grady County Commission, the Grady County Joint Development Authority, and financial support from the Conservation Fund, EJK Foundation, Alexander and Vann, LLP, and Tall Timbers.

Funding sources secured a total of \$800,000, with approximately 75% from public and 25% from private sources, to acquire the future development rights on approximately 440 acres of Birdsong. It's worth noting that the remaining 125 acres had already been placed under a conservation easement by the Georgia Wildlife Federation in 2008.

Individuals who choose to protect their land from future development with a conservation easement can receive compensation for the value of the rights held in the conservation easement through Federal tax deductions, state tax credits, direct funding or a combination. Compensation is calculated based on the difference between the assessed value of the land with and without the conservation easement in place.

In Grady County, the conservation easement on Birdsong is compatible with the county’s Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA). Many rural landowners apply for the 10-year covenant, which reduces county property taxes for agricultural, timberland, and environmentally sensitive lands.

The new revenue from their development rights is a big opportunity for Birdsong Nature Center. Executive Director Kathleen Brady explained, “This conservation easement permanently protects the lands we know and love as Birdsong while also providing financial resources that we can set aside to ensure the long-term existence of Birdsong as an education and recreation asset for the region.”

The relationship between Birdsong Nature Center and Tall Timbers is not new. In 1958, Betty and Ed Komarek played essential roles in founding and running Tall Timbers as a research station dedicated to understanding fire and natural ecosystems. In 1938, the couple acquired the Birdsong property, eventually leading to the establishment of Birdsong Nature Center as a nonprofit organization in 1986. The center provides public and youth educational opportunities, complementing research and advocacy efforts at Tall Timbers.

“We are so excited to have Tall Timbers and Birdsong working together to permanently protect this special piece of the Red Hills. Additionally, we are honored that the project supports the conservation and outdoor recreation goals of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program and the other public and private partners who made this happen,” noted Shane Wellendorf, Land Conservancy Director at Tall Timbers.

Feel free to call if you have questions:

Kathleen Brady, Executive Director at Birdsong Nature Center, kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org; 229.377.4408, www.birdsongnaturecenter.org

Shane Wellendorf, Land Conservancy Director, Tall Timbers, swell@talltimbers.org; 850.893.4153, x231, talltimbers.org

THANK YOU

It took the support and hard work of many people and organizations to complete the grant and easement project and we will report in more detail on this in an upcoming newsletter. We are very thankful for the significant support received from Tall Timbers: from its leadership, including the Board of Directors, Executive Director Bill Palmer, the Finance Committee and the Conservation Easement Committee. We especially thank recently retired Land Conservancy Director Kevin McGorty, who originally recommended that we pursue the Georgia DNR grant, and most of all the new Land Conservancy Director Shane Wellendorf, for his tireless work over 4 years to shepherd the complex grant process with DNR and help move the easement process through Tall Timbers. We are very grateful for Shane's professionalism and persistence and that of his staff. We also appreciate his willingness to help us develop legal language and agreements that were pleasing to both parties. The entire grant/easement project took patience and commitment from all involved and we are very happy with our new partnership with Tall Timbers.

We also thank all parties that provided financial support for this project that enabled Birdsong to receive the full value of the sale of future development rights: the Conservation Fund, The EJK Foundation, Tall Timbers, the Grady County Commission, the Grady County Joint Development Authority and Alexander & Vann.

As mentioned, there are many more people to thank for their assistance and support in making the easement project a reality and they will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.

About the easement funding:

We want to thank our many members who have responded with such appreciation upon learning that the entirety of Birdsong's land is now completely protected in perpetuity. It has been very touching to hear all the well wishes, the sense of deep relief for the long-term protection, and other happy comments and congratulations. We are extremely pleased too and feel very hopeful for the future of this special place.

The Birdsong Board of Directors would like to let our members know what has been planned for the \$800,000 in funding that was obtained to fund the conservation easement for the remainder of the Birdsong property.

For Birdsong, this is a great deal of money – we've never had funding like this before. It might surprise our members to learn just how little money Birdsong has been managing to get by on over the 37 years it has been in existence, since our incorporation in 1986. Our founders were not wealthy and did not leave us an endowment. We have worked hard all this time to keep Birdsong going and to be good stewards of all our resources. We have been very fortunate to have many kind and committed supporters who care about Birdsong and have given generously to this special place. Receiving these new funds gives us great hope for the future and, finally, the beginnings of a sense of security.

Even though there are currently many ongoing needs at Birdsong, both capital and operating, the Board has decided at this time to set aside the entirety of this funding in a special investment account. A percentage of the account's annual interest will be allocated to funding operations for the Center in the future. Just as the conservation easement will ensure the protection of Birdsong's land in perpetuity, this associated funding will now help to provide for the future financial security and sustainability of the organization and its land management. We feel this is an appropriate role for these funds.

It will take time before any interest accrues to significantly support operating expenses, so Birdsong will continue its ongoing fundraising and other efforts for basic operational needs. Our members will be hearing from us soon about our annual fundraising appeal and other ongoing requests for support.

You are welcome to call if you have any questions.

- Joe Peresich
Board President

FALL PLANT SALE

November 4, 2023

9am to 1pm

This dreadfully hot and humid summer is reminding us gardeners why fall planting is better than spring for most plants. We love our exciting spring sales, but the poor plants you took home in March have had a rough time with the early summer drought and now months of brutal heat before they've had a chance to settle in. We hope you've managed to keep everything alive.

The fall sale on November 4th will be a much happier event from the point of view of the plants. They will have six months of cool temperatures and frequent rain before their first challenge – the usual May drought. We won't be selling any tender plants that will be hurt by freezing temperatures (remember mid-December 2022!) so no Pentas or salvias in full bloom. We'll have many native shrubs and trees including a great selection of wild azaleas and several good oaks, as well as some tough perennials whose tops may die back in a freeze, but they will re-emerge in spring from well-established roots.

The fall sale is always more relaxed and leisurely than the crowded and competitive spring sales. You'll be able to take time to go for a walk and enjoy the Birdsong mid-fall woods. Maybe our best fall foliage trees will be starting to turn color – black gum and sourwoods. You will be inspired to take one of these young trees home after seeing mature specimens in the Birdsong woods with the low light shining through their red and gold leaves.

- June White
Plant Sale Chair



BIRDSONG BUTTERFLY GARDEN: The Power of Firebush, Passionflower and other Native Plants

September is the top month to visit the Birdsong Butterfly Garden (October is good, too). Wildflowers are blooming and nurturing both resident and migratory butterflies. Be on the lookout for Gulf fritillaries. These bright orange and black migratory butterflies have silvery undersides. Females lay eggs on passionflower leaves; watch for orange caterpillars with black spikes. The gorgeous purple passion vine flower is a favorite of bumblebees. It is easy to grow in a home garden either on a trellis or rambling along amongst the wildflowers. Also watch for migratory cloudless sulphur butterflies, bright yellow, wafting above the orange flowers of firebush. The Butterfly Garden is also a popular fueling-up spot for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds this month on their migration back to Central America.

If you want to learn about butterfly gardening while volunteering once a month to maintain the garden, contact Donna Legare (dlegare@comcast.net). We meet the first Thursday of each month from 9 – 11am.

- Donna Legare
Butterfly Garden Volunteer

FALL MIGRATION BIRD WALKS
Saturdays, 8am to 11:30am
September 16 and October 7
with Janell Cleveland and Adam George

Please join us on a fall bird walk. The weather may still be hot, but the birds are on the move! The summer breeding birds will be moving south, and we hope to catch a glimpse of returning winter birds such as Palm Warblers, American Goldfinch, Black-and-White Warblers, and Ruby Crowned Kinglets. Fall is a great time to observe birds that aren't normally seen here but use Birdsong as a stopover on their way further south. We can hope to see Rose Breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers, and Yellow Warblers amongst others. You never know what you'll see at Birdsong!

The walk will be led jointly by Janell Cleveland, an avid birder and founder of the Red Hills Birding Club, and Adam George, a certified Master Birder who works for Georgia Audubon on their educational outreach programs. If you'd like to learn more about the Red Hills Birding Club, you can reach Janell at 229-726-9056.

Please save your space and RSVP by emailing birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org or calling 229-377-4408 by noon on the Friday before the Bird Walk, September 15 and October 6. The maximum number of participants for these walks is capped at 15. Please bring binoculars if you have them and be prepared for hiking through the fields and woods around Birdsong. Wear muted colors.

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



RED-COCKADED WOODPECKERS:
NEST BOX INSTALLATIONS
Wednesday, October 4th 10am or 12noon

Come see conservation in action as Woodpecker Conservation Specialist Robert Meyer demonstrates how biologists climb the pines wielding chainsaws to make new homes for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Private land partnerships through the Safe Harbor program have been critical to recovery efforts for the species. Find out more when you come visit Birdsong Nature Center to observe the installation of special nest boxes in some Birdsong pine trees.

Robert Meyer is the woodpecker conservation specialist with the Tall Timbers Research Station. With over 8 years of experience with the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, this research scientist can tell you the latest in bird research while showing you how it's done.

Rob will be installing two nest boxes this day, so you may join us for either time (or both!). Meet at the registration desk at 9:45 or 11:45 and we will walk out to the site where Rob has selected pine trees in habitat that may entice RCWs to investigate and, hopefully, decide to nest here.

No charge for this program, but please RSVP so we know you will be joining us: 229-377-4408 or birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org. Dress for the weather and walking off the trails. Bring binoculars. You are welcome to stay and hike, visit the Bird Window, and bring a picnic lunch.

TWO FALL PROGRAMS FROM GOLDEN TRIANGLE

We are extremely pleased to welcome our friends at Golden Triangle RC&D back to Birdsong this fall. Julie Shutters, Implementation Manager, and Matt Bradley, Forestry Technician, will be offering two programs; see details below. Please have a look at the Golden Triangle website at goldentrianglercd.org to learn more about the many ways Golden Triangle works to improve water quality, conservation, land management, and community development in 15 counties in southwest Georgia.

GEORGIA ADOPT-A STREAM

Chemical Certification Workshop for Volunteers
Saturday, September 23 11:30am to 1:30pm
Lunch provided

The quality of our water directly impacts our quality of life, so state-wide long-term monitoring programs can provide extremely helpful data. Georgia's Adopt-A-Stream program is looking for volunteers who can help with monitoring streams in southwest Georgia and will be establishing water quality monitoring sites in the area. This workshop is designed to train new volunteers to conduct four basic water quality tests: temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and nitrates/phosphates. If you would be interested in learning how to monitor water quality and are willing to volunteer for regular monitoring, please join us!

Julie Shutters will provide an introduction and testing instruction. After a lunch break the group will go out in the field to an aquatic site at Birdsong for hands-on practice of our chemical testing protocols. Birdsong and other areas near Thomasville are under consideration as possible testing sites, so if you are interested, please sign up. We are very curious to learn about Birdsong's water quality!

REGISTRATION: There is no charge for the program, but *please RSVP by Wednesday, September 20th* to reserve a space. There is a 25-person class limit. **Call Golden Triangle directly to register at (229) 995-2027.**

PLANT IDENTIFICATION FOR CHILDREN

With a Halloween twist!
Saturday, October 28 11:30 – 1:30pm
Lunch provided

Matt Bradley will provide a plant identification program for children and their families – with a Halloween twist! Kids are welcome to arrive in Halloween costumes for the program. Matt will give an introduction and take the group out in the field to identify flowers, plants, and trees and learn all about the great south Georgia outdoors in fall. Late October is still a nice time for fall wildflowers, so a walk in the woods with Matt will be fun. Lunch is provided and there will be a special Halloween treat for dessert!

REGISTRATION: There is no charge for the program, but *please RSVP by Wednesday, October 25* to reserve a space. There is a 25-person class limit. **Call Golden Triangle directly to register at (229) 995-2027.**



VOLUNTEERS: FALL WORKDAY WITH *HANDS ON THOMAS COUNTY!*

Saturday, October 21, 9 AM – noon

Please join us for a busy volunteer event at Birdsong. This is a big day for **Hands On Thomas County** – every fall they send teams of hard-working volunteers to non-profits in need of help and we are one of those fortunate organizations on their list. We can use many more hands to spruce up the House Garden, remove problematic shrubs and plants, and help with invasive plant removal. You will get to meet a lot of nice people - HOTC volunteers are the best! So please come on out, bring your work gloves, loppers, shovels, and enthusiasm and help give Birdsong's garden a fall makeover. Thank you, Angela Kiminas, Executive Director of HOTC for including Birdsong in this wonderful community improvement day. Please sign up with HOTC at handsonthomascounty.org in September. Call or email Birdsong for more information: 229-377-4408 or birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org.

TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE AT BIRDSONG
Saturday, September 30
9:30 – 11:30am

If you are a parent, grandparent, or friend of a child please join us to celebrate *Take A Child Outside Week* and take your favorite child on a natural adventure at Birdsong. We will explore the trails and look for evidence of deer, coyote, or other wildlife; see butterflies face-to-face; search for doodlebugs; and watch birds go about their daily activities at the Bird Window. We will practice using all our senses as we explore what nature has to offer. This program is geared for children and accompanying adults who want to learn how to better share the wonders of nature with their favorite young ones. Children may collect natural items along the trail for keepsakes and/or to use to make a craft when we return to the Barn. Resource material on outdoor activities for children will be provided.

\$5 Friends, \$7 nonmembers, children half-price. **RESERVATIONS PLEASE:** we ask that you register by phone or email so we know how many adults and children to prepare for.

BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAYS
Thursdays, September 7 and October 5
9 to 11AM

Birdsong's Butterfly Gardeners meet on the first Thursday of each month from 9 to 11am.

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.

FREE FAMILY DAYS
First Saturdays: September 9 (second
Saturday) and October 7

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 the trails, get to know the property, and visit the Bird Window and Butterfly Garden. Please note that we are closed on the first Saturday of September, so this month's Free Family Day will be on September 9.

Admission: free



GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

We know it is early, but here is something to keep in mind for 2023 holiday gift-giving: a Birdsong Nature Center membership!

Birdsong memberships make excellent gifts: for a very reasonable fee your recipient will have access to this beautiful natural haven for an entire year whenever we are open; receive our newsletter with its Wildlife Management Notes every other month; receive discounts on our nature programs, some of the best in the region; and receive guest passes to share with others. In addition, you, the giver, have the assurance that your funds go toward preserving and managing this beautiful and historically significant land for the benefit of native plant communities and their associated wildlife, and help make it available for all to enjoy.

If you would like to give a Birdsong membership for the holidays or for any other occasion, please contact us at birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org or call 229-377-4408 and we can help you. We will send your recipient a card informing them of your gift and acknowledging you, the giver. A member packet including a membership card, a newsletter, guest passes, and the nature center reciprocal agreement link will be sent out shortly afterwards. A Birdsong membership is a gift that lasts an entire year!

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

August 5, 2023

Weather Heat. Rain. Humidity. That about sums it up. The last few months have been intense and exhausting. We are now 5 weeks past the summer solstice and finally seeing a glimmer of change in the angle of the light; the shift toward fall has begun. This week the afternoon heat was not quite as overwhelming as it has been and there were very welcome breezes blowing past. There is still a long way to go until cooler weather arrives, but at least we know it is on the way.

We have had a lot of rain: 11.47 inches in June and 6.46 inches in July. This included two storms that brought us 2.5 and 2.8 inches of rain and one that brought 3.10 inches. That is a lot. The water levels in the ponds and swamp have been fluctuating every few weeks and the woods and fields (and trails) are verdant and flourishing. The beavers are no doubt ecstatic and have had plenty to keep them busy. This year they have created an entirely new “park” south of the Farm Pond Dam. They have dammed the creek in several places and have flooded the wooded drain, creating a new habitat. They are clearly having a really good time back there! We think it is part of their master plan, to take over the property, and they’ve been biding their time for years for exactly this kind of rain.

Land Management So far this year our land management plans have been thwarted repeatedly, in spite of our best intentions. We didn’t get to complete our burning because of the unusually high rain and humidity in May and June, and our tractor has had major problems and has spent a lot of down time in the shop for repairs. We had planned to do some substantial mowing of brush this summer, so that hasn’t happened. Right now we can’t even keep the trails properly mowed because the power take off (PTO) broke down and can’t drive heavy attachments like the Brown mower Alan uses to mow. Very frustrating. We have been fortunate to have Mr. Rayford Harrell of Whigham come over with his tractor and mower and help keep the trails managed for our visitors. If the grass on the trails has looked high to you, this is why. We are working on it.

Purple Martins In the last newsletter we told you about the happy fledging of two full nests of Purple Martins just before June 9th. On that day, we saw nesting behavior from a pair and we were very concerned that they might be preparing for one more brood. The weather was already so hot and overwhelming, we just couldn’t imagine a pair trying to raise a brood over the coming month in that kind of miserable heat. All the other Martins left, and within a week we understood that this pair and another juvenile had stayed behind to

raise another brood. This was disheartening to Lynn and myself because last year we dealt with babies bailing out too early in the heat, and that was a first brood, month-of-June situation, not July. In past years, when we used to have predictable weather and predictable nesting behavior it was not uncommon for several pairs out of the usual group of 10 pairs of Martins to raise a second brood and still be gone by July 4th. These were always difficult for all concerned because of the intense heat and often, drought, in late June. For those final broods the parents would have difficulty keeping the babies fed, and the little ones would bail out too early because of the heat and be lost. So we watched this year’s remaining pair of Martins with some trepidation.

We felt a little sorry for them at first, because it appeared they’d been left behind by the rest of the colony. Fortunately, every day, they would have visitors – usually 4 to 7 other birds including males, females, and juveniles. These birds would fly over, circle, and perch on the crossbars or the nearby cherry snag and visit and chat up a storm. We do not know if these birds were former colony members or others from nearby colonies. We were just glad our nesting pair had some company.

We observed the entire process of nesting, the female sitting on eggs, and then the several weeks of feeding until the tiny birds were big enough to lean out of the gourd doorway. Every day, we watched and wished them all well in that sweltering heat, keeping our fingers crossed that this saga would end well. Fortunately, this was a consistently rainy series of weeks, so the afternoons were often cloudy and there weren’t that many days in a row of searing heat to contend with. Finally, the babies got bigger, more active, started really leaning out of the doorway, so we got to watch them develop from that dinosaur-like unfeathered state to bright-eyed, curious, well-feathered and beautiful little Martins. We have enormous respect for those two parents who kept hard at it in that heat, feeding them bigger and bigger insects, making forays all day long.

We knew it was getting close, and on Tuesday, July 25th we came in to work and all the Martins were gone. Over the following several weeks, we’d see a few Martins flying over, perching for a while, and moving on. One day there were 4 Martins flying over the Farm Pond. And then there were none. They are very much missed. Martins are charming, charismatic birds and they make us very happy while they are here. It was quite an achievement, raising that brood so late, and a first – they left 5 weeks after last year’s departure date.

It is our profound hope that next year we see an increase in the number of Martins nesting here. We hope this year’s successful parents all come back again and

bring their friends, so we have a full house next February!

The Pear Tree The most fun we've had lately is at the old farm pear tree. It has had another prolific season of fruit production. The branches are weighed down, loaded with tough-skinned small round pears. They showed up in June, green and hard, and are now turning yellow and beginning to ripen. That has not mattered to our woodpeckers and other wildlife. They just love these pears! For the last 6 weeks this tree has been our entertainment. Any time of day you go by there, there are woodpeckers: Red-bellied, Red-headed, and Pileated, all enjoying the pears! I've seen up to 8 birds at a time, all contentedly working away, some hanging on nearly upside down to get just the right angle for digging a good hole in a pear. They let us get really close which is unusual for our woodpeckers. There has been no squabbling at all – there is so much fruit on this tree there is plenty to go around. The local gang of American Crows will congregate in the tree, and take off cawing if they see us approaching from a distance – very different from the unflappable woodpeckers who don't care if we get close. The deer have been eating not just the fruit that has fallen, but the leaves on the lower branches – and they are nearly bare. Our beautiful tame rabbit will let you get quite close while it nibbles a pear on the ground. Who knew an old pear tree would be a wildlife mecca and one of the best places to observe woodpeckers on these hot days!

Fox Squirrel On the afternoon of July 15th I went for a walk after work. It was overcast and very hot and humid. I was heading back on the trail that leads through the House Pasture, uphill towards the Barn and Pear Tree. I had just reached the cluster of loblollies at the south edge of the Pasture and looked up to see a beautiful Fox Squirrel, right in the middle of the trail, about 40 feet ahead of me. He (or she, I don't know) caught sight of me, and stood up on his haunches, rather like a kangaroo with his powerful-looking chest, arms at his sides and his large paws and long claws at rest. It was an odd place for a fox squirrel to be – out in the open away from any trees. He was obviously not expecting company like me and immediately started analyzing his options. He began looking around, clearly considering how on earth he could get around me to the nearest trees, which were directly behind me. I was right in his way. He looked all around, got down, moved a few inches over, stood back up, turned around, turned back, still in the middle of the trail, kept looking from side to side, undecided about what to do but obviously really wanting to get to those trees. They were the only nearby option for getting off the ground. He obviously didn't want to struggle through the thick brush and briars on either side of the trail. When I understood what he needed, I slowly moved over as far as I could go to give him more room and then stayed perfectly still so he could pass by me. He immediately started towards me on the trail and got closer and closer. I could see his bright, intel-

ligent, jet black eyes, still checking all his options with every step. He managed to get within about 12 feet of me on the trail before being that close to a human became too much and he bounded into the field. He made 5 or so leaps through the underbrush until he was next to the first tree and then jumped up and climbed up the center of the tree in leaps, in full view, until he got to the first branch about 30 feet up. He settled on his belly on this branch for a few moments, where I could still see him and he could see me, and then he moved off into the greenery and I lost sight of him.

This was extraordinary. Fox Squirrels typically are extremely shy and secretive and very good at not being seen. I could not believe how close he was willing to come. I of course loved getting to see his many impressive qualities at such close range. He was very large, and his tail was enormous, very floofy and bigger than his body. His entire face and head were solid black like a luchador mask and his nose was silver. The rest of his body looked silver from a distance, but the hairs must have been partly black because as he moved there was a shimmering effect and a salt-and-pepper look to him. His tail had very long hair, and it too appeared to be partly black with silver tips. When he leaped his tail moved in a beautiful silvery arc behind him. He was magical.

Walking up to the Barn after this encounter, I thought yet again how important it is that we have placed Bird-song's land under easement for the long run. This magnificent Fox Squirrel and his descendants through time will have a safe place to live their lives and have babies and climb those very pine trees he ran to today. Someday years from now another fortunate person walking this trail may get to meet a beautiful Fox Squirrel face to face, one of his lineage, silver and black and bright-eyed.

We will look forward to seeing you in September, when we expect a little relief from the heat and will enjoy welcoming the first signs of fall. We already see the beginnings of a good *Agalinis* and goldenrod bloom in the Gin House Field, so we will have something wonderful to share with you! Meanwhile, we'll all try to stay as cool as we can.

- KDB



NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Mary and Keith Bruning
Seth Bigelow
James Wiggins

Tallahassee

Sharon Peacock
Teresa Mussetto
Rob Parrott and Claire Moschel

Other

Billie John Barwick, Jr. Boston, GA
Rayford Harrell Whigham, GA
Scott Copeland Midway, FL

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In Loving Memory of June Cruce Diehl:

Patrick Twyman
Donna Legare and Jody Walthall
Ginger Cox

In Memory of Erik Peterson:

Dennis Peterson

In Memory of Jimmy Ragans:

Ramona Bowman

In Honor of Alice Honea:

Deborah and David Schmitz

THANK YOU, MAGNOLIA CHAPTER Florida Native Plant Society

The Magnolia Chapter has donated an electric chainsaw to Birdsong. Our assistant land manager, Alan Parker, got it running right away and is very pleased. It is perfect for a number of his land management tasks. We are gradually moving to electric tools and equipment, so this is an ideal gift! Thank you!



Birdsong Nature Center Board of Directors 2022-2023

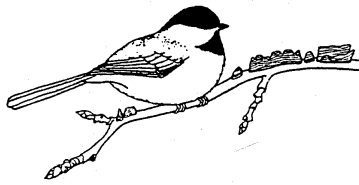
President	Joe Peresich
Treasurer	Bill Preston
Secretary	Margaret Tyson

Directors

Jim Antista	Ellery Sedgwick
Michael Brezin	Scott Ball

BIRDSONG'S CORPORATE SPONSORS

Native Nurseries
Trillium Gardens Nursery
Carroll and Company, CPAs
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



Birdsong Nature Center

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Date _____

 New Renewal Credit Card Check Cash PaypalCredit Card Account #

Exp. Date ____ / ____ Amount Authorized \$ _____ Authorization No. _____

Cardholder Signature _____

Name (Please print clearly) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Primary (____) _____ Alt (____) _____ EMAIL _____

Place of Employment: _____ Job Title: _____

Training, experience, interests: _____

How did you learn about Birdsong? From a member of Birdsong, the news media, word of mouth, our newsletter, etc?

Please be specific: _____

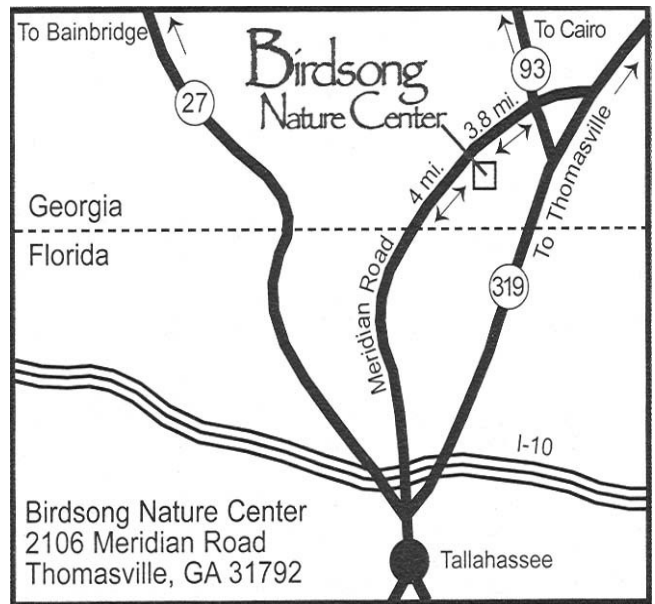
I would like to join the Friends of Birdsong in the following category:

- Individual Friend \$30 Bird Window and Nature Trails free during open hours.
Two free one-time guest passes.
Member discount on scheduled programs.
10% discount on items at the Chickadee Corner Gift Shop.
Bimonthly newsletter. Reciprocal general admission at
participating nature centers nationwide (call for list).
- Family/Friends \$45 All of the above benefits for each member of the immediate
household. Four free one-time guest passes.
- Friends of the Cardinal \$60 Five free one-time guest passes in addition to above.
- Friends of the Chickadee \$100 Six free one-time guest passes in addition to above.
- Business/Corporate Friend \$100-\$1,000 One free one-time guest pass for each \$10 of membership
(ie., 25 passes for \$250) and recognition in newsletter.
Call for more information.
- Friends of the Hummingbird \$250 Hummingbird feeder in addition to above.
- Friends of the Bluebird \$500 Bluebird nesting box in addition to above.
- Birdsong Naturalist \$1,000 Personal tour of Birdsong with Executive Director and/or Board Chair
for up to 6 people. Call for more information.
- I do not wish to receive any (above) benefits with my membership and would like the whole amount tax deductible.

 I would like to support Birdsong by volunteering to help as follows:

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Window Instructor | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial/legal guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Serve on Board of Directors | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising | <input type="checkbox"/> (please submit resume) | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greeter | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (birds, nature walks, | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift Shop Assistant | stars, etc.) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program Development | | |

Memberships are renewable one year after the sign-up date. Members can upgrade to a higher category membership by sending the balance within the year. Memberships are deductible in part, depending on the value of goods and services received. Please call for information. Receipts stating the value provided and the deductible amount will be sent to those joining at the \$100 or higher level.



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
 Address Service Requested*