

Birdsong Nature Center

May-June 2024

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

Hours: Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays 9 to 5

Sundays 1 to 5

May

Thurs. May 2 Butterfly Garden Workday
Sat. May 4 Free Family Day
Thurs. May 9 Land Management Workday
Sat. May 11 Ephemeral Wetland Exploration
Sat. May 18 Take a Child Outside and Get Wet
And Muddy!
Thurs. May 23 Land Management Workday

June

Sat. June 1 Free Family Day
Thurs. June 6 Butterfly Garden Workday
Land Management Workday
Thurs. June 20 Land Management Workday

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

Please, no pets on Nature Center property.

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

Dear Friends,

We had beautiful days at Birdsong on Saturday, March 23rd and April 6th, our Spring Plant Sale days this year. We greatly appreciated all the wonderful people who attended the sales and generously supported Birdsong with their purchases. We hope you enjoyed those two special days as much as we did and will take great pride and pleasure in watching the special plants you chose thrive in your home gardens. Thank you for your support and we hope you will visit Birdsong again one day soon.

We also want to say a special "thank you!" to Birdsong's Plant Sale Chair, June White. We couldn't begin to count the many important ways that June has supported Birdsong over its 38 years as an organization. The "Old-Timey Plant Sale" is just one shining example of how Birdsong has benefited from June's creativity, tireless efforts, and kind intentions. June was the creator and remains the driving force behind the Plant Sale, which today is in its 17th consecutive year. We couldn't be more grateful to June for all that she does and has done for Birdsong, especially for the great benefit that the Plant Sale has brought to the organization. We also want to extend our sincere thanks to our incredible Plant Sale volunteers. Whether working throughout the year preparing offerings for the next Sale or focusing on helping us set up and manage the event itself, these kind people provide an invaluable service to Birdsong and we can't thank them enough. Thank you, June! And thank you, our awesome Plant Sale volunteers!

It is shaping up to be a beautiful spring and early summer - the fields and forests are vibrant green with new growth and abounding in cheerful song of avian denizens. We hope that you will visit the Nature Center one day soon and enjoy many peaceful hours in this very special place.

Sincerely,
Joe Peresich, President
Birdsong Board of Directors

A SPRING PLANT SALE THANK YOU!

Our 17th year of spring plant sales was a success. After the disappointing wash-out of the Metcalfe Spring Festival due to stormy weather we hastily planned an additional sale at Birdsong. Thanks to all who helped spread the word about our evolving schedule. Our workers were able to be flexible and the plant shoppers showed up for both days. These sales were excellent fundraisers for Birdsong, and we truly appreciate our customers' support.

Our sales are entirely at the mercy of the weather. We fretted for days over the forecast of stormy rain for the March 23 sale. But it turned out to be one of those spectacular, dramatic spring days, with dark clouds, a few minutes of misting rain, then sun shining through thinning clouds. The April 6 sale day was perfect — bright, cool, and sunny.

We accidentally learned something because of this weather delay. Some plants that were just coming out of dormancy at the first sale were fully leafed out or in bloom by the second sale two weeks later. We will consider this in scheduling next year's spring sales.

As always thanks to all who grew and donated plants. We loved receiving cardboard boxes of mysterious bulbs and robust cuttings of easy to root plants. We especially appreciate donations of native plants that have been rescued from road work or changing land use. Remember we can take these gifts whenever you have them. We have a greenhouse in winter and a watering system in summer.

Of course, we thank our plant sale workers most of all. We could not do this without you.

- June White
Plant Sale Chair

THANK YOU, PLANT SALE VOLUNTEERS!

These spring plant sales, with their extraordinary results, happen because Birdsong has a remarkable group of volunteers who contribute their time, talent, energy, expertise, and good cheer to the cause. We offer our sincere thanks to everyone who has helped us this spring:

Carole Hayes
Beth Grant
Yvonne Stinson
Ute Schorn
Dan Miller
Sherry Nichols
Scott Ball
Alan Parker
Julia Sawyer
Jan Bordelon
Mark Phillips
Brenda Coy
Faith Hazelip
Mike Weed
Kristine Dougherty
Lynn Brown
Sue McFadden
Stanton Beazley
Barbara Jinright Collins
Sharon Kindred

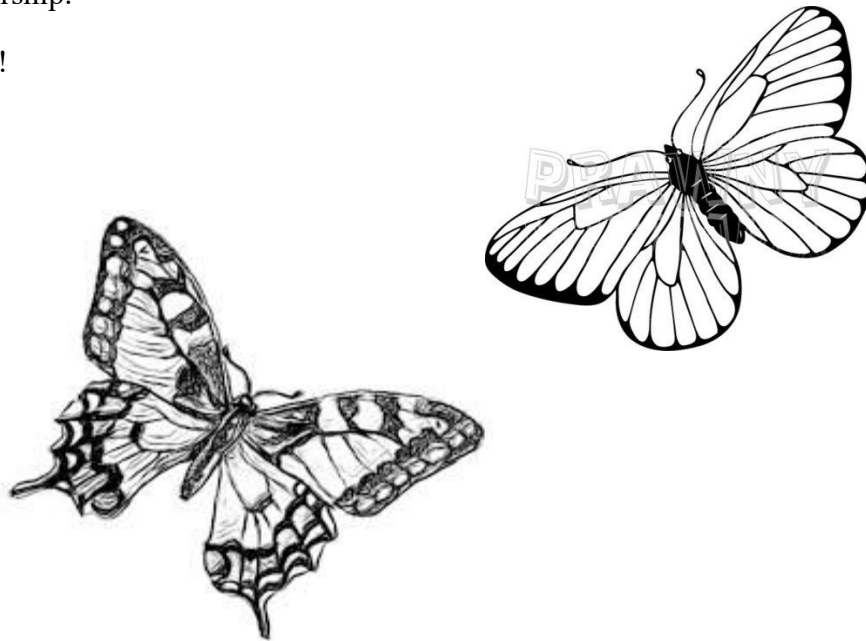
Gunilla Trull
Ken Misner
Carolyn Cohen
Ben White
Lisa Reeves
Gail Sloane
Rick Cantrell
Sharman Franklin
Betty Esco
Jonae Favors
Karen Berkley
Daphne Owens
Marilena Panagiotou
Melissa Rigsby
Britt Martinez
Albert Harrison
Mike Carter
Joe Peresich
Buddy Holshouser
Margaret Tyson

Lynette Hitt
Ellery Sedgwick
Ruth Ziegler



We want to offer a special thank you to June White, our Plant Sale creative director, visionary, and expert botanist. June has deep knowledge and appreciation for every wonderful plant we offer, she grows and procures them, and she is the person who designs and writes the beautiful and informative plant signs made for each variety. She creates the interesting sale layouts and is present at each sale to answer questions and advise on growing. June wants to make sure that every customer gets just the right plants and all the information they need to take their new plants home and help them thrive so they can love and enjoy their plants as much as June does. She keeps our volunteer team well-directed and happy, and we all appreciate her leadership.

Thank you, June!



BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAYS
First Thursdays, May 2 and June 6
9 to 11 AM

In March, the butterfly gardeners and a couple of employees from Native Nurseries spread compost, put down new sod in areas left bare by sod webworm damage and planted over 100 diverse and colorful wildflowers in concentrated patches. Purple Coneflower, Black-eyed Susan, Coreopsis and Gaillardia are just a few of the species that were added. The additions are growing well and we eagerly anticipate their bloom.

In April, it was time to cut back perennials that had put out new growth, remove invasive plants, and weed and thin the berm that showcases native woodland species such as wild indigo, phlox, columbine, and Indian pink. A few of these woodland perennials were still in full bloom.

We also welcomed a new gardener in April – retired teacher Patti McMullen. Patti stays busy monitoring local eagle nests through Audubon’s EagleWatch Program but was eager to reconnect with Birdsong and learn more about the garden and the pollinators it attracts.

Come join us in May and June. Volunteers are always welcome on the first Thursday of every month to plant, weed, chat, and enjoy this quiet corner of Birdsong. No gardening experience is necessary, just a desire to work alongside friendly folks and pick up a wealth of plant and pollinator knowledge at the same time.

The next workday is Thursday, May 2, from 9 to 11 am. Contact Donna Legare (dlegare@comcast.net) if you have any questions.

-Ann Morrow
Butterfly Garden Volunteer

EPHEMERAL WETLAND EXPLORATION

Saturday, May 11

9AM to noon (might run long)

Join ecologist Rebecca Means of the Coastal Plains Institute to explore Birdsong's ephemeral wetlands! Rebecca has over 20 years of experience studying ephemeral wetlands in our area and is engaged in research projects locally as well as training interested volunteer citizen scientists.

After a brief introduction we will ride out on the trailer to several Birdsong wetlands to experience them first-hand. We will learn amphibian larvae identification and sampling techniques as well as general natural history of wetland plants, reptiles, invertebrates and much more. This program is geared towards citizens of all ages, including young ones, but there will be walking and possibly wading involved, and because we get excited about what we are discovering, the program might run long. All equipment will be provided. Plan to get wet!

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE. There is a class limit of 12 people. Please contact us by noon on Friday, May 10th to reserve your space. Dress for the weather and be prepared for walking; wear shoes you can get wet; bring water and a snack. You are welcome to bring a picnic and have lunch after the program; you may want to bring dry clothes and shoes for the ride home.

\$10 member adults, \$13 non-members, children half-price.

TAKE A CHILD OUTSIDE AND GET WET AND MUDDY!

Saturday, May 18
9:30AM - Noon

Celebrate summer at Birdsong with your favorite child or children. Leaders Sandra Sallee, Carolyn Cohen, and Executive Director Kathleen Brady will take you to discover the underwater inhabitants of the Farm Pond and Upper Pond. We'll observe the many fascinating adaptations that plants and animals have for living in an aquatic environment.

Please bring a clean dishpan or bucket that has had no chemicals or soap in it, a dip net if you have one, boots, waders or old tennis shoes for wading in, a change of clothes for the ride home, and sun protection. Bring lunch if you want to stay and picnic afterward. Enjoy learning something new and have a special experience with your child in the great, wet outdoors!

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE, so we know how many to prepare for. Please sign up by noon, Friday, May 17th.

\$6 Friends, \$9 nonmembers, children half-price. Includes a handout and resource list for year-round outdoor activities with children.

FREE FAMILY DAYS First Saturdays: May 4 and June 1

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, hike the trails, and visit the Bird Window and Butterfly Garden.

Admission: free



NEW TRACTOR UPDATE

April 2024

The new tractor is now on site and Alan is getting familiar with all the new technology and features of this powerful new machine. I won't get too deep in the weeds telling you the details of this long story, but the tractor we received back in late-February was not actually a brand new one; there had been an error somewhere in the delivery process, so we used it as a loaner for three weeks while waiting for our actual purchase to arrive. Alan did a great job learning how to operate this tractor and we assembled a good crew and did our first burn on March 14th. It went very well, and Alan got some first-time experience using the tractor with the water tank attachment and learned a lot.

The brand new for-real tractor arrived on March 1st and we are now very pleased. The accelerator, gears, and panel of dials, etc., on this 2024 model are all in different locations and work very differently from the old 1963 3010 John Deere Alan is used to, but he has gotten very good at operating it. We have two burns planned for next week, so we are hoping to make up for lost time and are thrilled to be able to plan a burn and not worry about potential equipment problems. What a luxury! We have all of you to thank, for donating so generously to the tractor appeal, and enabling us to buy some excellent equipment that will last a long time and make our land management work easier and more effective. Thank you!

LAND MANAGEMENT WORKDAYS

Thursdays: May 9 and 23; June 6 and 20
9am to noon

We have lots of land management projects to work on this late spring/early summer and could really use your help. Many of these projects are in support of our burn program. If you enjoy working outdoors with good-natured companions, we have opportunities for you. Alan Parker, our land and site expert, will take us out to work on projects such as raking and clearing around trees and snags prior to burning; removing unwanted shortleaf saplings, sweet gums and other hardwoods from the longleaf pine site; and clearing the trails and fire lanes of any fallen trees and overhanging limbs.

Be prepared for the weather and bring work gloves. If you have a favorite pair of loppers, a saw, or other tools, you are welcome to bring them, but we do have tools on site. There will be water and a snack on the truck; bring a sandwich if you want to have lunch together and we'll provide drinks and dessert.

If the weather is good for burning, we will pivot to a burn day and that means meeting at a different time, so please do let us know if you are planning to attend so you can be informed of the time change. It will also help us prepare for lunch in case you want to join us. Please contact us at 229-377-4408 or email kathleen@birdsongnaturecenter.org.

NOW HIRING: A GREETER

Currently, our two Greeters, Lynette Joye Hitt and Sherry Nichols, share greeting duties on the days and hours we are open: Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday 9 to 5, and Sunday 1 to 5. We are interested in hiring a greeter to replace Sherry, who recently has been working on Wednesdays and Sunday afternoons and is reducing her work hours in anticipation of leaving in the next few months. The new greeter may also be needed to fill in on other open days; weekly scheduling will be discussed.

The position pays \$10 per hour. An ideal candidate would enjoy meeting and working with people; is available during Birdsong hours; likes an outdoor work setting; is comfortable making financial transactions; has experience with or could learn to use Square for processing credit card payments; is physically able to feed the birds, tidy the restrooms, water plants, and manage other light duties. Training will be provided for all aspects of the position.

Please contact Kathleen Brady, Executive Director, at (229)377-4408 if you have questions or wish to apply. We will want to learn about your work history and any applicable experience you may have had. Three work and personal references will be required.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

April 12, 2024

Weather Winter gradually morphed into spring with some good cold snaps and a few series of oddly hot days. Blooming and greening happened early this year; all of it was beautiful and we enjoyed the cool weather and the changes we experienced every day. We had a few good rains in March with a total of 4.14 inches for the month, with one overnight downpour of 2.16 inches. So far in April we've had one nice easy rain with .38 inches, and then we had an impressive storm two nights ago. A huge band of stormy weather blew through in the middle of the night, with wild thunder and lightning rolling on for well over an hour. At Birdsong we got 5.81 inches of intense rain. The next day there were trees down and the ground was completely saturated. We still have pools of standing water on some trails, and the drains are flowing and full. At the Upper Pond spillway there was sufficient flow and force to move our two heavy wooden boardwalks into the middle of the spillway. Water pouring through the Farm Pond spillway is just under the level of the footbridge, normally about two feet lower. You can hear the roar of the water flowing downhill into the slough, where it is making a huge pool thanks to the beavers damming up the creek. At Big Bay Swamp, about a foot of water is flowing over the beaver dam and through the cement spillway, only a foot from the top of that 2.5 foot deep structure. I have not seen this much water moving through our spillways in years. In addition, the winds have been intense and gusty these past two days after the storm. With the ground so saturated and constant high afternoon winds, plus gusts of over 25 mph, Alan will no doubt find more trees blown over as he checks all corners of the property.

Spring It has been a fast-moving early Spring! Some years we get to enjoy a leisurely progression of the trees leafing out, going from a pale green haze up in the branches and taking a nice long time to deepen and darken into a canopy overhead. This year the greening has happened fast – I drive to work on Meridian Road, and I could actually tell the difference between morning and late afternoon. It has all been beautiful; it just seems so sudden. The Carolina Jessamine, our early bloomer, was in full flower across the property by the third week in February, offering a cheerful mass of color climbing over still-brown shrubs and trees. Wild azaleas got an earlier start than usual too – the bank of *Rhododendron canescens* Betty planted in honor of her friend Rodie White was filling the air at the Butterfly Garden with scent, attracting delighted early swallow-tails and bees and peaking by mid-March. The Azalea Garden down by the Big Bay Swamp drain was gorgeous this year as always. The native *R. canescens* started in early March, fragrant and pale pink, and Dan

Miller's planted *R. austrinum*s and *R. flammeum*s along the trail were absolutely stunning, each with their own distinctive spicy scent and colors ranging from gold to salmon, peach, and flame. Beyond lovely and covered with butterflies. A sensory experience to savor. Thank you, Dan.

The old pear tree is one of our most obvious and reliable harbingers of spring. Like everything else this year, it went from bare branches to white blossoms then tender bronze leaves to full-on rich green - all in a matter of weeks. The blooming started around February 21 and the tree was bride-like, covered in delicate white flowers within three days. On February 28th we had a windy day, and the petals were falling like snow, swirling through the air and covering the ground, bronze leaves gleaming in the light. By March 6th the tree was completely leafed out, bedecked in spring green. As of today there are already tiny pears being formed. The deer and woodpeckers and rabbits have something to look forward to.

Purple Martins We are observing the beginning of another atypical martin breeding season. A few birds arrived on February 15th, and that number has fluctuated, but as of now we seem to have at least 8 birds here most of the time, investigating the gourds. With the plant sales going on we haven't had much time to martin-watch, and it is kind of hard to tell what is going on. It appears that there is at least one bonded pair that has claimed the upper left gourd and is in the process of building a nest. There are at least three males present, and a lot of movement by all the birds in and out of all of the gourds. They seem to enjoy spending time in a certain gourd and then they go visit another. We assume this will all sort itself out and we'll be able to see distinct pairs attached to certain gourds. For now, the female of the pair that has clearly chosen a gourd has been seen flying down to the grass nearby and selecting fallen brown water oak leaves. She will pick one out, watched by the male nearby on the ground with her, then fly up to the gourd with the leaf in her bill. She moves around inside, evidently arranging it to her liking, while he observes from the crossbar. Yesterday, they did this three times, three different leaves, and then she emerged at the doorway with a leaf, leaned out, and tossed it into the air! The leaf fluttered away, apparently not up to her interior decorating standards. We'll keep observing when we can. We hope that at least 4 pairs of birds will nest. Unfortunately, this is two fewer than last year, and we are on a downward trend. We do not know why.

Bats She's back! The little female Eastern Pipistrelle came back. As mentioned in the last newsletter we had not seen her for weeks and weeks and feared that something had happened to her, but on February 29th on one of our near-daily bat checks, there she was!

We are sure it is the same bat – she has distinctive coloration and behaviors. She is a little larger than the male, paler gray on the furry body and pinker on the limbs, and as usual, had her wings stretched out. She was her active self, too; she looked around, turned her head, and moved her small claws at the joint of the wing where she holds on. All this in contrast to her companion, who typically keeps his dark wings folded and remains completely still. She is a very endearing creature, and it was a relief to see her again. She comes and goes; we have seen her on March 1, 2, 30, and April 6th. He is there by himself often, but we have noticed that neither bat is there on the morning after a warm night or a rainy night. With the temperatures warming in general, we do see more activity – the bats will vibrate when we show up, look around, and he will occasionally move his wings – from being wrapped around the front of his body like a nano-sized flying fox to a more pleated position off to his sides exposing his tail curved up over his belly. One thing they both have done in our presence, which is devastatingly cute, is yawn. Their little mouths go wide open for a moment, long pink tongue out, and teeth and tiny fangs exposed. Too much! It is a privilege to witness these two small creatures during this stage of their lives. We expect them to leave when it gets warmer and go on with their year; she is probably pregnant now and will join a group of females and raise her young over the summer. We'll keep you posted with any news.

Land Management The land management crew has been doing some regular preparations for burning and has us in good shape for spring burns, especially with raking around snags anywhere close to the firelanes or trails. This really helps on burn days and makes things go a lot faster. We are so fortunate to have a great team that helps with not only burning, but the hard work of getting ready to burn: Alan Parker, Russ Barrett, Scott Ball, Karen Berkley, Carolyn Cohen, Sandra Sallee, Bill Carroll, Mike Weed, returning volunteer Stanton Beazley and new volunteer Marilena Panagiotou.

We did our first burn of the year on March 14th. Alan had been getting used to the new (loaner) tractor, so this was also his first burn using the new equipment. We chose the section behind the barn for this experimental burn, and it went well. The southeast wind was very gusty, so we had to watch the north line near the barn closely, but it burned well and we are pleased with the result. We are particularly pleased that it burned better than usual into the wooded west edge where it scorched some *Ardisia* nicely, so that was a plus. Alan did a great job, as always, and is getting used to the new technology of a 2024 tractor, so very different from the old 1963 3010 Diesel. We are very happy to have this powerful new machine, and again we wholeheartedly thank each of you who donated to this purchase. It is making a huge difference to have dependable equipment

with so many excellent features.

The Bird Window The Window has been a busy place lately! The locals visit every day to eat and bathe: Carolina Wren, Cardinal, Titmouse, Brown Thrasher, Blue Jay, Eastern Towhee, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Carolina Chickadee; and the American Crows come in to commandeer the suet and corn dish. We still have a lot of less common local birds and winter residents: White-breasted Nuthatch, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Chipping Sparrow, Pine Warbler, House Finch, and a few now-rare American Goldfinches. The migrants and summer residents are showing up, too: Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Parula, Cedar Waxwing, and Indigo Bunting. Yesterday the Gray Catbird, normally very shy (unless he is accepting suet crumbs directly from Lynn) was right by the Window enjoying Mahonia berries that really do look like grapes, unconcerned with being observed from only a few feet away. The White-throated Sparrow that has been here for several months has molted into his bright courtship plumage: pure white throat and bands on the head, with a brilliant yellow lore. We know this means he'll be leaving soon, heading north for his nesting grounds.

A few days ago, the pair of Black Vultures returned to the Bird Window. This will be their fourth year and it makes us very happy to see them again. It is a wonderful shock to walk into the Bird Window at a peaceful time of the day and be confronted with two enormous black birds, perched calmly side by side on the Betty feeder branch, gazing at us inside the house, completely unperturbed. They let us get very close – right up to the glass. We assume they may be a mated pair – they do a lot of preening with their huge hooked bills, nibbling on each other's neck and face and toes. They are easy to tell apart – one has a darker face and feet and is a little bit less active. Their posture is slightly different too. They both have beautiful faces, with a very serene expression. They have what looks like a helmet on the head and neck, featherless gray skin but fuzzy. Their eyes will occasionally be illuminated by the sun, and they are a soft brown, very alert. We are happy they are back, and we hope you get to see them over the next few weeks. Having a face-to-face encounter with two giant vultures from three feet away is a wonderful reason to visit – we hope you'll take the opportunity!

-KDB

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

Kim McCray
Warren Bauer
Mary Landrum
James Wiggins, Sr.
Edd Richardson
Nate & Kelli VanDuyne
Mat Willey
Wiregrass Electric, Inc.

Tallahassee

Diann Schultz
Victoria Heller
Melanie Hines
Deborah Marion
Donald M. Kelly
Cristin Beshears
Tim & Ingrid Walker
Kathy Folsom
Rita & Dallas Johnson
Donald Bourassa
Carrie Martin

Other

Wendell & Laura Craft	Donalsonville, GA
Wayne Redden	Cairo, GA
Pam Bridges	Donalsonville, GA
Breanna Plank	Pelham, GA
Elizabeth Kimball	Havana, FL
Catherine Jewell	Quincy, FL
Reesa Yarborough	Havana, FL
Richard, Heather, & Linda Wise	Cairo, GA
Jonathan Hickox	Cairo, GA
Nicole Cannon	Bainbridge, GA
Roger & Kathleen Lawrence	Whigham, GA

BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In memory of Sam and Anita Cohen who encouraged me to love nature:

Carolyn Cohen

In memory of Rosalynn Carter:

Florrie P. Crapps

Special Financial Gifts:

Carl Tomlinson
Rambler Rose Garden Club
Tom Strazulla
Donna Legare & Jody Walthall
Wendy Loquasto
Carole Hayes
Rad Cook
Cheryl Burnett & Roland White
Sandra Sallee
Kristine Daugherty
Freddy Kaye
David Larbalestier
Janeen Key
Community Foundation of South GA, Inc.
Julien B. and Margaret Watt Roddenbery
Charitable Fund

Birdsong Nature Center Board of Directors 2023-2024

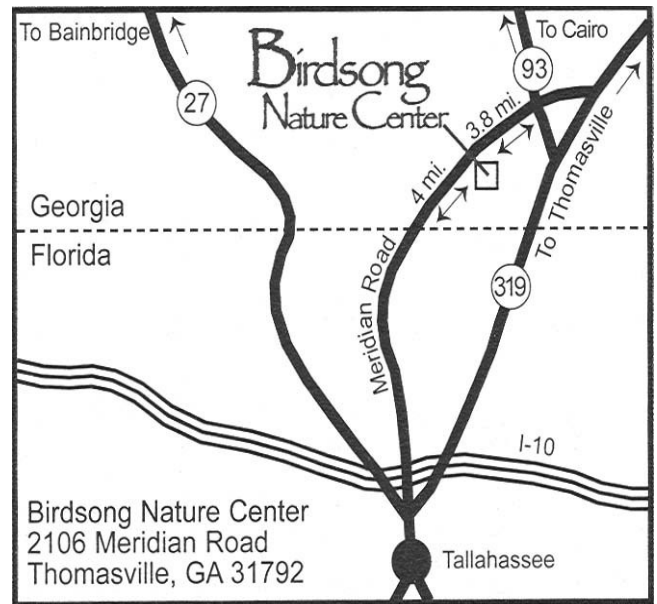
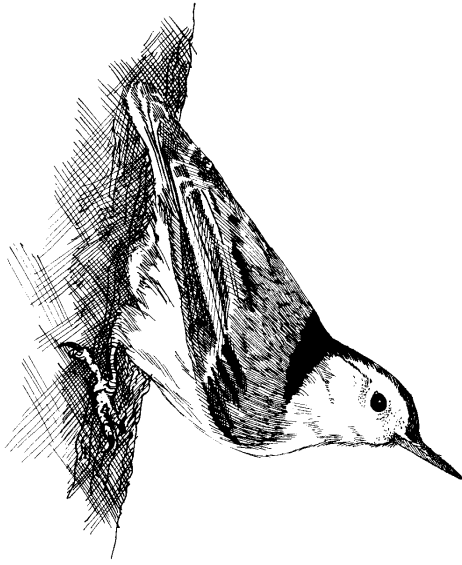
President	Joe Peresich
Treasurer	Bill Preston
Secretary	Margaret Tyson

Directors

Jim Antista	Ellery Sedgwick
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
Wiregrass Electric, Inc.



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*