

Birdsong Nature Center

July-August 2024

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

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

July

Sat. July 6 Free Family Day
Sat. July 6 Ephemeral Wetland Exploration
Sat. July 20 Early Morning Nature Walk

August

Sat. Aug. 3 Free Family Day
Sat. Aug. 10 Early Morning Nature Walk

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

SUMMER BREAK SCHEDULE
Closing on Sunday, August 18th
Re-opening on Wednesday, September 4

Dear Friends,

The pleasant weather we had been enjoying in April and May has certainly made a dramatic change, with the previously temperate outdoors often now feeling more like the interior of an oven. Temperatures in the 90s and humidity in the 70s are not the most comfortable conditions for people venturing outside. Much of our wildlife seems just fine with it, though – thriving, in fact. A particularly engaging and handsome example are the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, frequent visitors to the Bird Window feeders and Lynn's feeder near the office. Lynn keeps the hummingbirds quite happy with the good care and feeding she provides. Another special warm-weather example is the Swallow-tailed Kites, many of them often sighted now near Big Bay Swamp. There are more of these beautiful birds here now than we can ever remember. Hummingbirds and Kites are so exquisite in their appearance, and mesmerizing in flight - each in its unique manner, completely opposite to one another. Big Bay Swamp has been a busy venue for nesting avians such as Anhinga, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets and others. Most are nearing completion of their brood-raising mission.

For those of us brave enough to wander out into the muggy air, there are still interesting adventures to enjoy. Just remember to bring water, bug spray, hat, and cell phone, and be mindful of your well-being. We hope that you will visit us and share the adventure with your many other warm-weather friends at Birdsong one day soon.

Sincerely,

Joe Peresich, President
Board of Directors

A CAUTIONARY TALE

Alan was greeted by a beautiful and arresting sight at the burn pile at Birdsong in May. Months earlier in cleaning up after a sale, we had dumped some dead plants and dirt from pots onto the pile. One of the pots contained a dormant but healthy “hidden ginger” rhizome. It made its way through the sticks, limbs, and leaves of the piled-up debris and when it touched the ground it rooted, grew, and thrived. After the pile was burned it sent up its gorgeous pink and magenta flowering stems. This is what Alan saw in full bloom in the black ashes.

It was a beautiful sight (Alan took photos) but this is a cautionary tale. This plucky ginger is an example of how invasive non-native plants can escape into the wild and take over from native plants. Be careful how you dispose of non-native plants, even seemingly dead ones!

We will dig up and pot the ginger for a future sale, but we will include a warning, “Do not let this plant get away from you!”

- June White
Plant Sale Chair



EPHEMERAL WETLAND EXPLORATION

Saturday, July 6

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, July 5th 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 bring a picnic and have lunch after the program; you may want to bring dry clothes for the ride home.

\$10 member adults, \$12 non-members, children half-price.

EARLY MORNING NATURE WALKS

Saturdays, July 20 and August 10

7:30 – 9:00AM

Birdsong is a lovely place to be in the early morning. Join Executive Director Kathleen Brady for an easy-paced walk through a variety of wildlife habitat. We will discuss the current nesting season, our ongoing land management, and look for whatever birds, wildflowers and animal sign Birdsong may have to offer on a summer morning. Bring sun protection, binoculars and wear waterproof shoes and long pants; the grass trails will be wet early in the day and we may go off-trail. We will visit the Bird Window and Butterfly Garden upon our return.

RESERVATIONS, PLEASE. *Please call/ email by noon* on Friday, July 19th and August 9th.

\$7 Friends, \$10 nonmembers, children half-price.

“FEATHERED FRIENDS” QUILT

Raffle prize

We are pleased to let you know that the beautiful quilt donated by our friend and volunteer Faith Hazelip was raffled off at the March 23rd Spring Plant Sale and it brought in \$750 for Birdsong! This throw-sized quilt featured four repeating images of songbirds with a green and gold border. The winner was delighted. Thank you, Faith!

BUTTERFLY GARDEN WORKDAYS

Taking a summer break in July and August

Birdsong’s Butterfly Gardeners typically meet on the first Thursday of each month at 9am. This summer, the Butterfly Garden volunteers are planning to take a break. In July, the first Thursday is July 4th, Independence Day, so they do not plan to meet on the holiday. In August most members will be out of town on vacation, so there will be no scheduled workday. It is also just plain hot this summer, so a break will be welcome!

The team will be back to their normal schedule in September, so please watch for the next newsletter for updates.

For more information call Donna Legare at (850)386-1148 or Birdsong at (229)377-4408.

FREE FAMILY DAYS

First Saturdays: July 6 and August 3

On first Saturdays admission is free and we will offer a \$5-off membership special. If you know of any families who have never been to Birdsong, please let them know about this opportunity. This is a nice chance for first-time visitors to enjoy the trails and get to know the property.

Admission: free

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.

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 regarding pay and any other information you need. 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. We look forward to hearing from you!

IN MEMORY OF WOLFGANG ADOLPH

Our dear friend, Wolfgang Adolph has passed away. Wolfgang and his wife, Winnie, have been wonderful supporters of Birdsong for decades. They managed our gift shop and volunteered at the Bird Window for a number of years prior to Covid. Wolf and Winnie's home is in the Los Robles neighborhood in Tallahassee, and they have many dear friends there. Daniele Dixon, daughter of Birdsong volunteers Don and Hazel Dixon, wrote a beautiful obituary notice for the neighborhood association and she graciously agreed to let us print it for you here.

Wolfgang had many friends here at Birdsong too and was known for his enthusiasm about birding and bird photography; his enjoyment of seeing any first of season Summer Tanager or brand-new fledgling Bluebird was endearing and contagious. He and Winnie did a beautiful job managing our gift shop – the shop had never looked so nice or been so inviting. Wolfgang was also very good at helping visitors enjoy their experience at the Bird Window. Our hearts go out to Winnie - she and Wolfgang were a wonderful couple and were delightful to be around. Wolfgang is deeply missed by all who knew him. Thank you, Daniele.



Remembering Wolfgang Adolph: A Los Robles Legend

Dear Neighbors,

It is with deep sadness that I share the passing of Wolfgang Adolph on Monday, May 20th. Wolf was diagnosed 12 years ago with cancer and lived in good health until last year.

Wolfgang was born in East Germany near Weimar in 1944. Around 1955, under the family reunification program, Wolfgang and his mother, Hanna, were able to join his father, Walter, in Giessen, West Germany. In 1966, he came to the United States to teach German at FSU in Tallahassee, Florida. Determined to advance his career, Wolfgang pursued his Doctorate at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where he met the love of his life, Winnifred (Winnie). They married in 1972 after meeting at a seminar on the romantic tale of "Tristan and Isolde."

The couple moved to Los Robles, initially renting a 1931 English cottage before purchasing it in 1975. Both Wolfgang and Winnifred taught German at FSU. Wolfgang also served as the IT person for the Department of Modern Languages. They were active in the Los Robles Neighborhood Association (LRNA), helping to prevent the expansion of Thomasville Road and serving as officers for many years.

Wolfgang had a passion for birds and was a dedicated volunteer at Birdsong Nature Center in southwest Georgia. He worked with Don Dixon to install bluebird boxes in the Los Robles Park to help increase their population in the neighborhood.

Wolfgang is survived by his wife of 52 years, Winnifred, and his 99-year-old mother, Hanna Adolph, who lives in Germany. He passed away on his and Winnifred's 52nd anniversary. Wolfgang was a cherished friend to many, especially to Don Dixon and Mike Miles.

Per his wishes, there will be no ceremony or obituary. To honor his memory, donations can be made to the Birdsong Nature Center at <http://www.birdsongnaturecenter.org/Donate/>.

Thank you,

Daniele Dixon

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT NOTES

June 14, 2024

Weather It's hot and humid. Summer is here. The prediction for tomorrow is 99 degrees, with a heat index of 102. In May we had a lot of rain, with showers almost every other week, with a total of 9.52 inches. On May 10 an extremely destructive storm came through our area, with tornadoes dramatically impacting south Tallahassee. Damage to trees and homes and neighborhoods was extensive. We have a number of friends who suffered life-altering damages and we feel for them, losing their long-established landscape. Being well north of the tornadoes' paths, Birdsong's buildings and land were not impacted. We did get 5.15 inches of rain that weekend.

So far in June there has been no appreciable rainfall and the woods are gradually drying out as the days go by. Often the rain predictions do not materialize, or the showers are fleeting. These high temperatures are beginning to show – the vegetation is looking thirsty.

Land Management Our intrepid volunteer burn crew has been busy. We burned one area in March, then we had our two big fundraising plant sales on March 23 and April 6. Once we got past those events, we got back to burning as much as we could. Burning in the spring and early summer is very challenging, especially in our circumstances, where we are trying to burn through green brushy understory in mixed pine and hardwood forest. It requires a decent wind and low-enough humidity to carry the fire and it can be hit or miss once you get out and get started – the weather may be quite different than predicted. Nevertheless, our team was able to conduct burns through the rest of April and May and most were very effective. Some were frustrating – we'd get out there and the humidity would be higher than expected and the fuel was reluctant to burn. Overall we're very pleased with the progress we made; these burns have made a difference. We are still watching for good conditions and hope to get another burn or two in before the humidity and green growth prevents us from doing any more. We are particularly pleased with the burns that went through the planted longleaf pines, and several of the burns in areas that we couldn't get to the last several years, such as the northeast corner. We were also able to burn the enormous brush pile in the south House Pasture, below the Pecan Grove. This is where Alan and Mike Carter and our land management crew pile brush, logs, and branches from all over the property when cleaning up after a tree fall on the trails, or when removing pines from our fields, etc. The pile had been building up for several years, so it burned really hot and was quite impressive.

Please see June White's article about a surprise we got about 4 weeks later, on page 2.

We accomplish this burning thanks to our dedicated burn crew. These folks are willing to get out in the intense heat and humidity, set fire to the woods and work hard all afternoon in 90-degree weather to help us take care of Birdsong's land. They have a range of experience and all are eager to learn, cooperative, work well together, and somehow make getting sweaty and dirty and exhausted fun. We are very fortunate to have their help. Each person brings something of great value to each burn and collectively they are extraordinary. Thank you: Russ Barrett, Karen Berkley, Carolyn Cohen, Sandra Sallee, Bill Carroll, Scott Ball, Mike Weed, Stanton Beazley, and Marilena Panagiotou. We also want to thank Alan Parker. He works hard in advance of a burn to prep the site by making sure the firelanes are clear and that fuel is reduced along the trail edges. He takes care of all the burn equipment and vehicles. He also operates the tractor with the water tank during the burn and makes sure we have a good secure line after we're done. We couldn't do it without him. Thank you, Alan and crew!

Purple Martins I'm not sure where to begin, or how to tell you what I have to tell you. We have lost our entire Purple Martin colony. All of our birds have disappeared, almost overnight. We think it had to be white oak snakes.

In the last newsletter we reported that, as best we could tell, we had 4 pairs of Martins busy around the gourds. There would occasionally be a few more than 8, sometimes fewer, and we were watching and waiting for the birds to sort themselves out and choose mates and gourds and get to nesting. They did, and by May we appeared to have 6 pairs nesting. We got to see a fair bit of nest building in progress, with leaves and pine straw being delivered to various gourds, all with the usual cheerful chortling and chatter that Martins bring. It has been a busy springtime for our staff, and we didn't take the usual time to go and watch for 20 minutes here and there to help us understand how many pairs there were and what stage they were in. The last time I went to sit and really observe the Martins was on May 28th and there was a lot of activity, with parents feeding young in at least four gourds, and with adults investigating or inspecting all eight. Last week, on June 6th I went to sit and watch and was confused, because only one pair was busy feeding babies; no other martins were in sight – very unusual for this stage of nesting in the colony. Alan comes to work very early, when the Martins are usually very talkative and busy, and I asked him what he'd been seeing. He told me he hadn't seen much activity at all, that there hadn't been the usual noisy

bustling of Martins when he arrived at work just after dawn. Lynn and I talked and both of us realized we had not been hearing the usual cheerful noise from down at the martin pole for at least several days. We came back from the weekend, our staff's week starts on Tuesday, to find no Martins at all at the pole. Not one. Silence. Usually, during a normal nesting season, when there are no adults present at the gourds, we can approach the pole and, within seconds, adult martins come flying in from a distance to check on us and buzz and scold. They are always watching out for their babies. This didn't happen. At this point we were of course very alarmed. Yesterday, Alan winched the rack of gourds down so we could look inside to try and figure out what had happened. There were clearly used nests inside 6 of the gourds, the seventh had a partly-built nest – maybe a bed for sleeping – and one gourd was completely empty. The lower right gourd, where I'd seen the last nesting activity, was a well-built nest, full of pine straw and oak leaves. It had obviously been home to a brood of babies.

This was a heartbreaking discovery. We think that our entire colony has been taken by white oak snakes. Apparently, the parents will typically sleep in the gourds with their young and we think that each family was taken. There is a predator guard on the pole, so we thought we were safe, but looking at it yesterday we realized that a really big snake could indeed get up and over it and easily proceed up the pole, helped in part by the winch cord that runs up the length of the pole. We had a successful brood last year with the new pole and guard, so we weren't considering the danger of predation by snake. We will be reviewing all of this and plan to install additional guards on this pole. We just can't have this happen again. We are now also worried that since this colony was taken, who will come back next year? Typically, mature birds will often return to their place of origin to nest.

We are bereft of our beautiful Martins. They are a source of pure joy, entertainment, and fascination from February to July. We always learn something new from them every single season, and they are infinitely capable of cheering us up with their amazing flying abilities, their beautiful chortling and intense scolding, and their devoted pairing and parenting. The sky is empty of martins flying and calling and the silence is unnerving. The pole is empty. We feel very sad. We will be grieving this loss for a very long time.

Rattlesnakes and Cottonmouths White oak snakes are not at all unusual at Birdsong, but for the last 30 years it has been rare to see a rattlesnake. We see the occasional cottonmouth here and there. This year, our burn crew got to see two different full-grown diamond-back rattlers on different burns. In both cases, they were deliberately moving away from the fire and heading for safety. In the first case, over by the longleaf pines, the snake moved into an area we had no plans

for that day, but in the second case, we decided to hold off on burning the place where the snake was headed so he'd have plenty of time to get away. Our crew members in each vicinity all got to get a good look at them. Both were about 3.5 feet long, in beautiful condition, with that stunning pattern and velvety look. On two other occasions, we found two cottonmouths. Unfortunately, one snake succumbed to the smoke and we moved him off to an unburned area; the other was encouraged to move to safety by our crew members.

We are pleased to know that our rattlesnakes are coming back. Long ago we used to see at least one each year, then we went for decades with no sightings at all. Always be observant on your walks at Birdsong. If you see any type of snake, please just leave it alone and go on your way. When you return to the registration desk, please let us know of any sightings.

The Bird Window The pair of Black Vultures continues to visit on a regular basis. They seem to feel quite at home at the Bird Window and out in the open near the green metal furniture. They avail themselves of the pool for a bath almost every day, which is quite an undertaking, and will then preen and preen and walk around the corner to spread their wings in the sunshine. It is always a surprise to see birds that large at the Window among their small songbird friends. The other birds do not mind the Vultures' presence at all; the Chickadees, Cardinals, and Hummingbirds just go about their usual feeding routines, looking completely comfortable with the huge visitors in their midst. The Vultures do bring us a reprieve from the squirrels; apparently the squirrels are intimidated by them and won't approach at all. The Vultures continue to be very affectionate towards each other and preen each other's faces, necks and toes, which is adorable to watch. We have become very fond of them.

Other recent sightings include our regulars: Cardinal, Blue Jay, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee, Eastern Towhee, American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, and Mockingbird. We've also gotten to see male and female Indigo Buntings, Summer Tanager, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Brown Thrasher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Mourning Dove, Northern Parula, and White-eyed Vireo. Final sightings of Gray Catbirds happened on April 14th, and our last record of the White-throated Sparrow was on May 4th.

It is hot these days, but a lot is going on at Birdsong. The Eastern Bluebirds are having a great nesting season, and we have had many regular sightings of 4 to 8 Swallow-tailed Kites soaring and kettling over the Gin House Field and Big Bay Swamp – we assume they are nesting nearby. If you come out sometime soon, you may still get to see the Black Vultures up close - you might just fall in love with them like we have!

-KDB

NEW FRIENDS OF BIRDSONG

Thomasville

James Karas

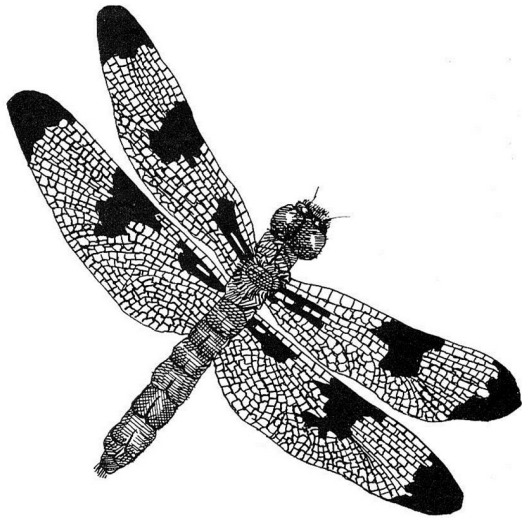
Tallahassee

Michael and Christine Parrish

Broward and Binky Greene

Other

Susan Tessororf Rhinelander, WI



BIRDSONG NATURE CENTER WISHES TO THANK:

In memory of Wolfgang Adolph:

Martha Lindsay Hardy

Martha Hartsfield

Daniele Dixon

Joe Peresich

Kathleen Brady

In memory of Wolfgang Adolph, a long-time and cherished resident of our neighborhood:

Los Robles Neighborhood Association

Special gift in support of land management:

Anonymous

Special Financial Gifts:

Ed and Marylyn Feaver

Linda and Stewart Fleming

Joe Peresich

Cheryl Burnett and Roland White

BIRDSONG'S CORPORATE SPONSORS

Native Nurseries

Trillium Gardens Nursery

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.

**Birdsong Nature Center
Board of Directors
2023-2024**

President

Joe Peresich

Treasurer

Bill Preston

Secretary

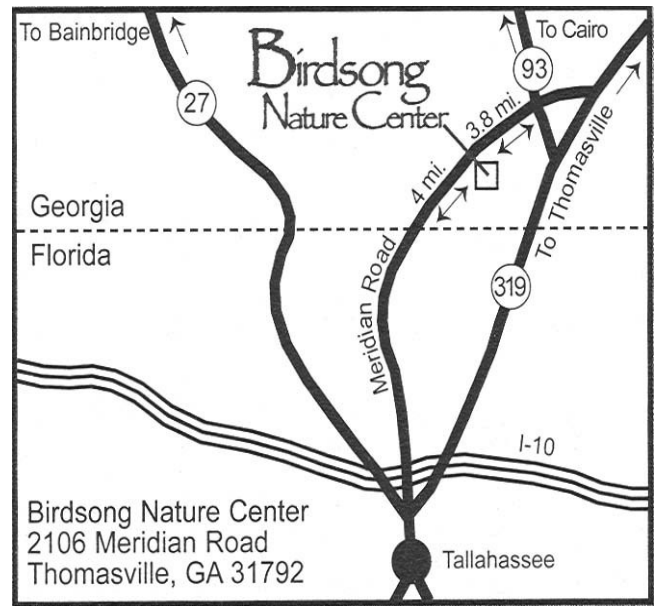
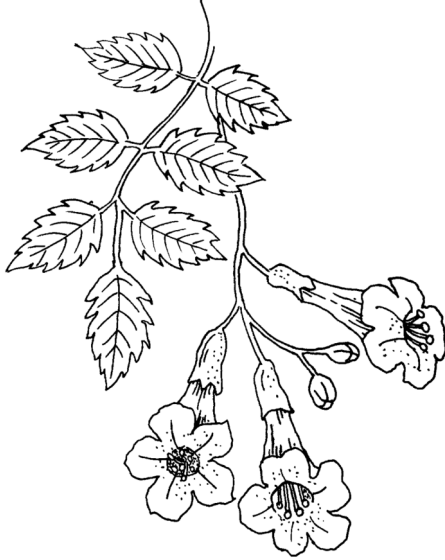
Margaret Tyson

Directors

Jim Antista

Ellery Sedgwick

Scott Ball



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*