

# CAMPUS & COMMUNITY

## Finding Balance With Birds

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A 2023 Gallup poll found that 66% of college students surveyed reported feeling stressed, and 51% stated they worried for much of the day. Furthermore, a Healthy Minds Study found that during the 2022-2023 academic year, 41% of students experienced symptoms of depression, and 36% experienced anxiety.

Prioritizing mental health and finding coping strategies are crucial for college students looking to improve their academic performance or overall quality of life, and one answer could be bird-watching.

New research from North Carolina State University found that nature-based experiences, particularly bird-watching, can help students improve their mental health and reduce distress.

In the experimental study, college students were assigned to a control group, a nature-walk group, or a birdwatching group. Students in the birdwatching group, who took a 30-minute walk and were asked to document the birds they found using a phone app, reported significant decreases in stress compared to the other groups.

Interestingly, as younger generations seek more low-key lifestyles, they are embracing “grandma hobbies,” traditional pastimes often associated with older generations, like gardening, knitting, and baking. These hobbies resonate with younger people who want to escape being constantly connected and need time to recharge.

In 2018, UWS opened the Pruitt Center for Mindfulness and Well-Being, which provides mindfulness and well-being resources through events, classes, and workshops for students and the community. The Center



Especially in the fall, bird migration can bring unsuspected visitors through your region.

Photo by Trey Emery | The Promethean

defines mindfulness as “the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

With that in mind, one can see how the process of birdwatching-listening to birdsongs or identifying bird feathers-could root one to the present moment, allow for deep, steady breaths, push away anxious thoughts, and put them in a state of mindfulness as they engage with nature.

While more research is required to explain why birdwatching helps people feel better, the results of the study are encouraging for college students looking for an accessible hobby to take their minds off of everyday stresses.

Birdwatching requires minimal investment. A field guide or free app like the Audubon Bird Guide is often all that is needed to get started. Birdwatching can also be enjoyed year-round, with a variety of bird species appearing each season.

Superior, which is recognized as a Bird City for making the area friendly for our feathered friends, has plenty of bird activity from city parks and green spaces to hiking trails and coastal

areas. Among several other wildlife spots in the region, the Douglas County Wildlife Area, also known as the Bird Sanctuary, has over 4,000 acres of open fields perfect for birdwatching.

It is important to recognize that some people might need additional support for their mental health. If you or someone you know is experiencing challenges, UWS offers a range of services.

The Pruitt Center for Mindfulness and Well-Being is located in room 3117 of Swenson Hall. The Center provides a space with tea, coloring options, and other resources intended to help visitors practice mindfulness through peace and reflection. Additionally, UW-Superior Student Health and Counseling Services, located in room 1729 of the Marcovich Wellness Center, offers free counseling services for on-campus and distance-learning students.

Birdwatching may not be a complete solution for mental health issues, but it is a timeless hobby that can help take your mind off of everyday problems by promoting relaxation and increasing mindfulness. Because stressing about school...well, that's for the birds.



Map of Israel and the Gaza stripe.  
Photo from iStock | The Promethean

## UWS Students Bridge The Divide With Civil Discourse

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On October 16 at 12:15 p.m., UWS students gathered in the Pope Wright Center for an event held by Bridging the Divide, a program of the Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership.

The program exists in the Universities of Wisconsin as a whole, with other Bridging the Divide programs existing on other UW campuses. Each program is dedicated to bringing meaningful discussions into students' lives.

Bridging the Divide, “is a student-led, peer-to-peer platform for civil discourse,” said Oreoluwa Sofolahan, UWS student and campus leader of UWS’ Bridging the Divide. The goal of Bridging the Divide is to bring together students with differing ideologies for civil conversations about current controversial issues.

Sofolahan shared a brief history of the region's conflict, explaining how Israel was granted statehood and how the after-effects of World War II inform current events. Then students split into two groups and discussed a series of prompts relating to the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine.

Prompts ranged from questions about social media's influence on information dissemination to ideas regarding nationality, race, and religion. Although perspectives differed between attending students, the conversation remained respectful throughout.

One question prompted students to talk about the role that religion plays in

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A student shared their opinion that the conflict was spurred on by differences in ideological values rather than religious beliefs, citing Zionism as an ideology that has ignited the conflict. (Britanica defines Zionism as a “nationalist movement with the goal of the creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine”).

Another student thought it important to mention the historical context dating back further than World War II, such as the Jewish Diaspora. Students also talked about the role that social media plays in the topic, largely agreeing that sites like X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok all feed into the spread of misinformation. One student said that getting your information from social media is like being in an echo chamber.

They also expressed that it is difficult to get objective facts from social media. Students agreed that, when it comes to information about the conflict in Israel and Palestine, the lines between media and social media seem to be blurring.

Bridging the Divide will host two more civil discourse events this semester, one on Nov. 14 from 5-6:30 p.m. and one on Dec. 4 from 12:15-1:45 p.m. Food and refreshments will be provided. For more information on discussion topics, location, and registration, go to the UW-Superior Campus Calendar at [uwsuper.edu/calendar](http://uwsuper.edu/calendar), or email [link@uwsuper.edu](mailto:link@uwsuper.edu) with any questions.

## 5 Alumni Honored at Superior Soiree

Over \$25,000 Raised for Foundation Scholarships & Funding for Current Students

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Five UWS alumni and faculty members were honored by the University of Wisconsin-Superior Alumni & Friends Foundation for academic accomplishments and contributions to UWS at the Superior Soiree on Saturday, Oct. 12.

This year, four UWS alumni and one current faculty member from UWS were recognized in the Yellowjacket Union Great

Room, filled with upwards of 100 guests. Each alum present thanked their start at UW-Superior for the success that followed their life.

“It's an huge honor,” said Alumna Dr. Carolyn Anderson, recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award. Dr. Anderson got her B.S. in chemistry from UWS in 1985 and continued her education at Florida State University, where she earned her Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry. Dr. Anderson originally

grew up in Superior and has received numerous honors for her other successes. Most recently being awarded the Georg Charles de Hevesy Nuclear Pioneer Award from the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging in June of 2024. “It's just wonderful to be back here,” said Dr. Anderson. “I am just honored and thankful.”

The James Rainaldo Outstanding Mentor Award is given to a retired or current UWS faculty member who has significantly impacted students. This year's award was given to Dr. Mary Balcer, who graduated from UWS in 1977, earning a B.S. in biology and chemistry. After receiving her Ph.D. in zoology from UW-Madison, Dr. Balcer returned to UWS as the director of the Lake Superior Field Station on Wisconsin Point.

The Edward & Betty Kosak Service Award is gifted to individuals who have made significant contributions in



Dr. Jennifer Gravrok accepting the Recent Alumni Award. After graduating UWS in 2015, Dr. Gravrok has traveled the world and wrote a book about her research regarding first-time service dog owners. She is currently working on her second book.

Photo by Drew Kerner | The Promethean



Dr. Carolyn Anderson accepting the Distinguished Alumni Award. Dr. Anderson graduated from UWS in 1985 with a B.S. in chemistry. Since Dr. Anderson has continued her education and spent her over 30 years laying the groundwork for the growth of radiometal-based agents for diagnostic imaging and targeted radionuclide therapy for cancer in the theranostics field.

Photo by Drew Kerner | The Promethean

leadership, time, and support to further the goals of UW-Superior. This year's recipient was John McNeil, who graduated from UWS in 1967 with a degree in business. “It's a real honor,” said McNeil. “My wife and I were both graduates of UWS. We have always been able to help out and give back quite a bit when we can.”

The Honorary Alumni Award was presented to UWS Recreation Program Director of Campus Recreation Krisi (KP) Patterson. KP never attended UWS as a student but has been working at UWS for nearly 20 years.

For more on the Superior Soiree, check out our latest edition of Promethean TV and our website for more information.