

Winging It in the World of Birding | Swaner EcoCenter

05/04/2026

If it feels like everyone you know suddenly owns binoculars and casually says things like, "I think that's a Ruby-crowned Kinglet," you're not wrong. Somewhere between sourdough starters and houseplants, birding became a popular hobby during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, an estimated 96 million Americans—about 37% of the population—identified as birders.

The best part of this feather-filled pastime? Birding is for everyone. There's no official certification, no exclusive club, and no "right" way to do it. If you've ever paused mid-walk to watch a bird flutter through a bush, or glanced out your window to see what's snacking at your feeder, congratulations—you're already a birder!

Of course, a few tools can help deepen the experience. A good pair of binoculars brings faraway birds into focus, while a field guide can help you distinguish a sparrow from... well, another sparrow. Technology has also made birding more accessible than ever. Apps like [Merlin Bird ID](#) can identify birds by sight or sound, turning even a beginner into a confident observer. But perhaps the most important tools are less tangible: patience and curiosity.

If you're looking for a place to start (or continue) your birding journey, Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter offers an ideal setting. From protected wetlands to upland sagebrush, the Preserve provides critical habitat for a wide variety of bird species, including Sandhill Cranes, Killdeer, Belted Kingfishers, and Northern Harriers. It's the kind of place where you might set out hoping to see one bird and end up spotting dozens.

One of the easiest ways to get involved is by joining a [Saturday Morning Nature Walk](#), held weekly from 8:30–9:30 am. These guided walks are a relaxed, welcoming introduction to the Preserve and its feathered residents.

If you prefer to explore at your own pace, Swaner has you covered there, too. Visitors can borrow binoculars at the EcoCenter and head out to the back deck, climb the observation tower, or stroll along the Wetland Discovery Trail. Each vantage point offers a slightly different

perspective—and a new chance for discovery. For those looking for a more personalized experience, [private guided tours](#) provide access to additional areas of the Preserve, led by knowledgeable guides who can help you spot and identify species you might otherwise miss.

At its core, birding isn't about checking species off a list (though that can be satisfying). It's about slowing down, paying attention, and finding wonder in the everyday. So whether you're a seasoned birder or someone who just learned that "that little brown bird" has a name, there's a place for you in this community.



Pictured: A Northern Flicker standing on a branch at the EcoCenter.

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(function() { document.querySelectorAll('.carousel-control[data-slide="prev"]').forEach(function(prevControl) { prevControl.setAttribute('aria-label', 'Previous'); }); document.querySelectorAll('.carousel-control[data-slide="next"]').forEach(function(nextControl) { nextControl.setAttribute('aria-label', 'Next'); }); document.addEventListener('DOMContentLoaded', function() { // Query all images within the fourColumnCarousel inside embed-feed const images = document.querySelectorAll('.embed-feed .fourColumnCarousel .img-fluid'); images.forEach(img => { // If the image alt attribute is empty or missing, set it to "Article thumbnail" if (!img.getAttribute('alt') || img.getAttribute('alt').trim() === "") { img.setAttribute('alt', "Article thumbnail"); } }); }); // Closes the IIFE
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Location, Hours & Contact

Physical & Mailing Address
1258 Center Drive
Park City, Utah 84098

EcoCenter Hours
Wednesday – Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm

The EcoCenter will be closed on Wednesday, October 7 and Thursday, October 8.

Email

swanerecocenter@usu.edu

Phone

435-649-1767

[Directions, Parking, & Transit](#) [View Staff Directory](#)

- [Swaner EcoCenter Facebook page](#)
- [Swaner EcoCenter Instagram page](#)

Events

<script type="text/javascript" src="//www.trumba.com/scripts/spuds.js"></script> <script type="text/javascript">
\$Trumba.addSpud({ webName: "extension-swaner-ecocenter", spudType : "upcomingpreview" , spudConfig :
"SpudConfig2" , teaserBase : "https://extension.usu.edu/swaner/calendar" }); </script> [View Full Swaner Preserve & EcoCenter Calendar](#)