

## **Built for the little ones Hummingbird Park in Natomas has a new kids' play area as well as features to lure tiny things with wings**

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Page: B1

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--It matters not at all to little Daniel Zachreson that no hummingbird, no butterfly, not even a solitary bee is in sight in Sacramento's newest neighborhood recreation spot.

In the lyrically named Hummingbird Park, almost-4-year-old Daniel and his almost-2-year-old brother Brodrick romp on fresh, untrampled turf and play on a jungle gym modeled and painted to resemble plants and insects.

"They love open spaces," said the boys' mother, Kelly Zachreson, last week. She was wrapped in a coat, fending off winter's bite.

It will take a warm day, if not a good dose of spring, to attract the flying critters Hummingbird Park was designed to host. Even then, they're not expected to take up permanent residence on this bit of green in Natomas, south of Arena Boulevard, in view of Interstate 5.

Hummingbird Park, designed by city associate landscape architect Tin-Wah Wong, is the latest in a series of themed parks in Sacramento. Wong previously worked on the remodeled play structure at Southside Park, dubbed "Solar Galaxy" and designed for disabled access.

A skate park and off-leash dog park opened at Granite Regional Park off Power Inn Road a few weeks ago.

"We've been trying in the last two, three years to develop unique spaces in each neighborhood -- to get away from the cookie cutter," Wong said.

The new park on Duckhorn Drive pays homage to nature in name, in style and in vegetation, with plantings of lavender, rosemary, butterfly bush and other shrubs that grow nectar-rich flowers.

But Wong knows a 4.4-acre park in the suburbs can do only so much for the birds and the bugs.

"This is more of a resting spot -- not a permanent habitat," Wong said. "It would have to be a lot larger, with a lot more diverse plant materials, to sustain that."

Arthur Shapiro, an evolutionary ecologist and butterfly expert at the University of California, Davis, agreed.

"This garden, while quite attractive, and I applaud the idea, is not going to attract any more butterflies than someone's backyard," Shapiro said. "I don't think it will augment butterfly numbers."

Sprinkled in with the bird- and bug-friendly plants is a collection of 17 whimsical sunflower sculptures made out of concrete, steel, ceramic tiles and glass by a husband/wife art team called Faducci in the Sierra foothill town of North San Juan. In keeping with the city's commitment to incorporate public art in all new parks, Wong said, the sunflowers were included in the park's \$593,000 construction budget. The butterfly/hummingbird garden also sports six functional birdhouses gaily painted to resemble human houses, with wood-shingled roofs, screen doors, chimneys and miniature flower boxes.

While probably not the kind of place a hummingbird would nest in, the houses may lure other types of birds, Wong said.

Another feature of the park borrowed from nature is a dry streambed formed with rounded rocks.

And while it appears the park is destined to attract more children than hummingbirds, visitors seem to appreciate the effort.

"I really like it," Zachreson said. "I think it's unique. It brings us something different than just a play structure."

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