

A SYMPHONY OF NATURE: KANSAS WETLANDS EDUCATION CENTER UNVEILS MUSICAL POLLINATOR GARDEN

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INTRODUCTION

The Kansas Wetlands Education Center (KWEC) has introduced an exciting new feature to its landscape—a musical pollinator garden aptly named Melody Marsh. This interactive installation, nestled within the Center’s existing pollinator garden, is designed to invite visitors of all ages to explore sound and nature in harmony. Opened in September 2024, Melody Marsh combines the beauty of local flora with the magic of outdoor musical instruments, all inspired by the wetland’s surrounding environment.

Located in central Kansas, the KWEC plays an instrumental role in creating awareness about wetland ecosystems and the critical role they serve. Situated near Cheyenne Bottoms and the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, the KWEC is dedicated to educating the public on wetland biodiversity and the need for conservation and restoration. Curtis Wolf, the Center’s director, spearheaded this innovative project, envisioning it as both an educational tool and an interactive experience for visitors.

BRIDGING SOUND AND NATURE

The concept of Melody Marsh was inspired by the KWEC’s need to rejuvenate its existing pollinator garden. Wolf and his team sought a way to infuse this natural space with an element of interactivity and creative engagement, all while staying true to the Center’s educational mission. The answer came in the form of musical instruments specially designed for outdoor spaces by Percussion Play, a company renowned for its durable, inclusive outdoor musical instruments that enhance public spaces around the world.

INSTRUMENTS IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Melody Marsh features a selection of Percussion Play’s most iconic outdoor instruments. Each instrument in the garden has been carefully selected to reflect the



Figure 1. Cattail Chimes.
(Courtesy of Kansas Wetlands Education Center)

surrounding flora and fauna, providing a sense of place and echoing the natural beauty of the Kansas wetlands. At the heart of the installation are the Cattail Chimes—this striking instrument stands tall like its namesake plant (Figure 1). It produces a gentle, resonant sound when played.

Further enhancing the garden’s sense of place are the Sunflower Petal Drum and Harmony Flowers (Figure 2). The Sunflower Petal Drum captures the essence of Kansas’s famed sunflower fields, with each “petal” producing a unique note when struck. The Harmony Flowers, meanwhile, add a vibrant splash of color to the garden while inviting hands-on interaction with petal-like chimes that harmonize with each other. These instruments are designed not only to be accessible and enjoyable but also to reflect the pollinator-friendly plants that attract butterflies, bees, and other crucial species to the area.



Figure 2. Sunflower Petal Drum and Harmony Flowers.
(Courtesy of Kansas Wetlands Education Center)

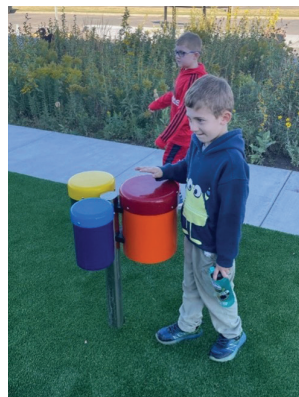


Figure 3. Rainbow Bongos.
(Courtesy of Kansas Wetlands Education Center)

These instruments engage the senses and create an immersive experience that celebrates the beauty and biodiversity of the wetland.

To round out the musical experience, visitors can also enjoy playing the Rainbow Bongos and the Cyclone, instruments that offer a lively and colorful addition to the garden (Figure 3). The Rainbow Bongos, with their bright colors and rhythmic sounds, are especially popular with younger visitors, providing an irresistible invitation to play. These

For more information about the KWEC, visit www.wetlandcenter.fhsu.edu.