

A RESOLUTION recognizing and commending the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission upon the celebration of its 40th anniversary.

WHEREAS, 40 years ago the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 155, which created the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission benefits all Kentuckians by searching out and conserving the Commonwealth's most outstanding natural lands and wildlife, and provides opportunities to experience "Nature's Finest" in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, since the first nature preserve was dedicated on March 19, 1979, the preserve system has expanded to 63 state nature preserves encompassing 27,897 acres found across Kentucky, from the banks of the Mississippi River to the Pine Mountain border with Virginia; and protecting prairies, forests, glades and barrens, bogs and seeps, cypress swamps, hemlock gorges, mountain summits and more, including Blanton Forest, Kentucky's largest old-growth forest and estimated as the 14th largest east of the Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the state nature preserves provide habitat for 235 different rare or listed species in 471 distinct populations, preserving in perpetuity 29 exemplary natural communities; and offers trail systems for everyone from Kentuckians to visitors from foreign countries, providing an unparalleled natural experience for an estimated 25,000 visitors annually; and

WHEREAS, in 1977, the Commission signed an agreement with The Nature Conservancy, becoming one of the first states in the nation to adopt the rigorous Natural Heritage Methodology as our standard. Today the Kentucky Natural Heritage Program is a network partner in an international biological database extending from Canada to parts of Latin America. The Kentucky Natural Heritage Program has built a conservation information database of 12,665 natural community and rare species field locations and is the official aggregator of data and information on all of Kentucky's conserved lands and

managed areas. These information resources are used internally, shared with partners, researchers, and the public, providing cost-effective, timely, scientific, and unbiased conservation information for decision making on land conservation, planning projects, and wildlife conservation; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky is one of only 15 states with a voluntary Natural Areas Registry Program to encourage private landowners to provide informed stewardship for biologically significant lands and natural features. The Registry includes 69 registered sites encompassing 8,259 acres in 48 counties, aiding the conservation of ten natural communities and at least 40 listed species; and

WHEREAS, the Commission conducts the only botanical program in state government, officially recognized by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and which received an award from the USFWS for over 20 years of work to restore white-haired goldenrod, a Kentucky endemic known only from the Red River Gorge region, enabling the USFWS to propose in 2015 that it be removed from listing as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has expanded its focus on surveying and protecting pollinators, especially Kentucky's native bees, butterflies, and moths; and in 2016 partnered with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to coordinate the statewide Monarch Summit; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has compiled and made available a series of seven scientific and technical publications on varied plants and animals to much acclaim, published *Kentucky's Natural Heritage: An Illustrated Guide to Biodiversity* in 2010 through the University Press of Kentucky, and with a grant from the Owsley Brown Charitable Foundation, has provided this comprehensive resource book to every public middle and high school in the Commonwealth;

NOW, THEREFORE,

***Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of***

***Kentucky:***

➔Section 1. The Senate does hereby recognize the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission on the occasion of its 40th anniversary in the year 2016 and commends the Commission for the invaluable services it provides to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

➔Section 2. The Clerk of the Senate is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to Senator Julian M. Carroll for delivery.