

Naturally Kentucky

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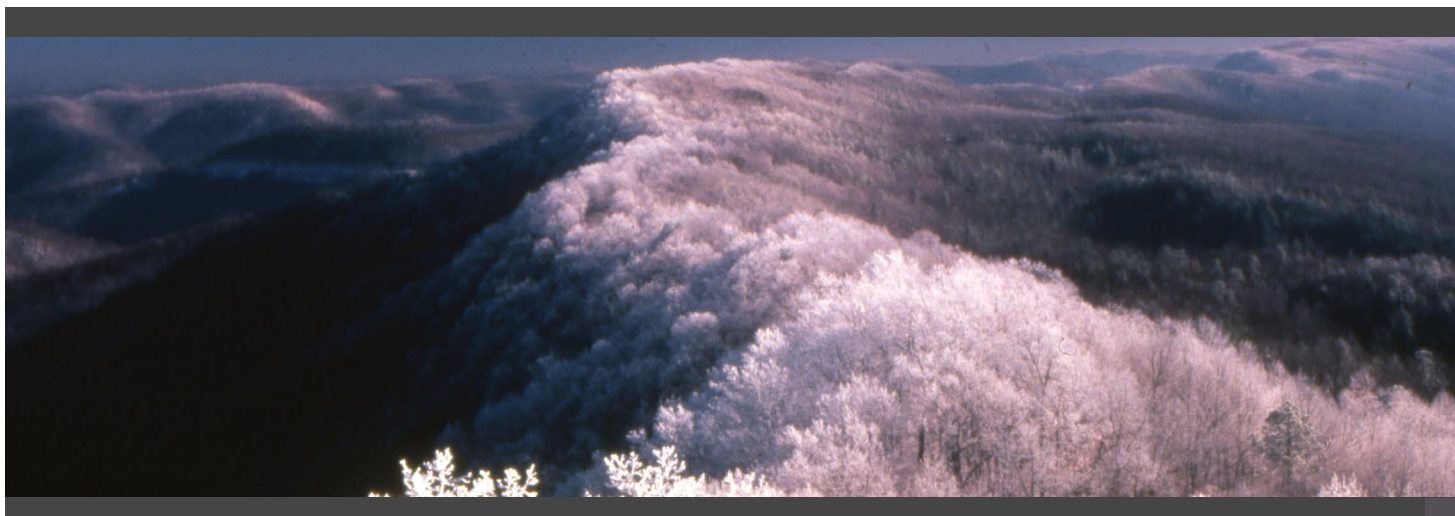
KSNPC Latest News: KSNPC is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. The Commission, which started in 1976 with a director and three employees has grown to a current staff of 22, and includes a nature preserve system that encompasses over 21,589 acres of ecological communities and natural habitat for rare species.

☞ Opportunities to hike through two beautiful preserves will be available in May. Preserve Manager Kyle Napier will conduct a hike through Kentucky's largest old growth forest, Blanton Forest State Nature Preserve, in Harlan County on May 13. Some of the trees at Blanton are over 300 years old. On May 14, Kyle invites you to Bad Branch State Nature Preserve in Letcher County where a 60-foot waterfall as well as numerous cliffs, rock shelters and mountaintop formations await you. More information is available online at www.naturepreserves.ky.gov/stewardship/passiverec.htm.

☞ 186.6 acres of land have recently been added to the state nature preserve system. The additional acreage has been dedicated as part of Bad Branch State Nature Preserve in Letcher County. (Complete story on page 8).

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Pine Mountain Hoar Frost (Harlan County) ~ Barry Howard

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

By Don Dott, Executive Director

“Partnership” is not just a buzzword when your statutory mission is to protect the biological diversity of the Commonwealth and your entire staff (of really dedicated people!) is only 22. Partners are a necessity and we are fortunate to have so many. The Commission is one of a handful of organizations in the state that acquires and manages land to be preserved solely for its biological values. However, with about 93 percent of the state’s 25 million acres in private ownership it is not possible to accomplish our mission through land acquisition alone, and this is where our many partners come in. Some are private individuals - we manage three state nature preserves and three conservation easements on private lands. Some are public – we have seven jointly dedicated state park nature preserves, three state natural areas/ wildlife management areas, one nature preserve on a state forest, and six state nature preserves owned or managed with non-profit organizations.

Our main partner for land acquisition – our funding source – is the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Board. The Heritage Land Board funds five state agencies – the Commission, the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources (KDFWR), Kentucky Division of Forestry, the Kentucky Wild Rivers program and Kentucky Department of Parks. Heritage Board funds are also available to local governments and other agencies, and the board has a track record of projects in 59 counties with purchases of over 23,000 acres. The Commission receives 10 percent of the funds garnered by the Heritage Land Board that can only be used for purchasing and managing natural areas. The money we receive, which averages \$300,000 to \$400,000 annually, is not sufficient

for our land purchase needs. Enter another partner, the Kentucky Conservation Committee (KCC). This past year the KCC’s steering committee devised a proposal to establish a sustained source of funding to protect natural lands across the Commonwealth. With only 0.9 percent of Kentucky in state ownership, we have less state-owned land than is found in any of our seven neighboring states. More is needed to provide increased public access to the great outdoors.

The KCC is a private, non-profit organization that monitors environmental issues and has a lobbyist to work with the Legislature. KCC’s bold plan reaches out to engage more partners, creating a broad based constituency and giving its proposal widespread support. In this era of tight budgets it will be an uphill battle and may take several years to create a sufficient and stable funding mechanism. One of the four targets for additional funding under KCC’s *Conserve Kentucky* plan is the Heritage Land Conservation Board, with its five designated recipient agencies and ability to make grants to local governments. The second major program targeted for increased funding is PACE (Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements) within the Kentucky Department of Agriculture. Its purpose is to prevent the loss of farmlands to non-farm uses, typically residential sprawl. The other two targets of the KCC proposal are partners already mentioned – KDFWR and the Kentucky Division of Forestry. The KDFWR needs an increased source of funds to purchase or lease more lands to provide more hunting, fishing and outdoor recreational opportunities for Kentucky’s citizens. With sufficient funding, the Forest Stewardship



Stone Mountain State Natural Area - Stone Mountain was originally acquired by Harlan County using HLCF funds. In 2004 the property was transferred to state ownership and is now jointly managed by KSNPC and KDFWR. ~ Marc Evans, KSNPC



program will enable the Division of Forestry to provide cost-share assistance for landowners to improve their management of privately held forest lands in the state.

KCC presented the need for a large, sustained funding source for this purpose to the interim committee of the legislature, where it was well received. The key to the KCC initiative will be the funding source. Methods used in other states provide multiple examples of funding for similar conservation initiatives. They run the gamut from an earmark of one-eighth of 1 percent of the state sales tax, as adopted in Missouri and Arkansas, to lottery proceeds being used in Colorado and bond sales used by several other states. This is not to promote any of these as the way forward for Kentucky, but to generate some creative thought of possible funding sources. A combination of sources, rather than a single source, will most likely provide the answer. This is not a novel approach, as the Heritage Board is funded by a combination of environmental penalties, unmined minerals taxes and environmental license plate sales. Be sure to keep your eye on the 2006 General Assembly. If you see a bill promoted by KCC to fund natural areas purchases, please contact your legislators and express your support.

Perhaps our oldest and closest working partner is the Kentucky Natural Lands Trust (KNLT). This private non-profit was created in 1995 to help the Commission raise funds for the purchase of Blanton Forest State Nature Preserve. This was in the years before the Heritage Land fund, and most land acquisition dollars came by direct appropriations from the General Fund, which are very difficult to obtain. Having successfully raised over \$3 million to acquire the old growth at Blanton Forest, KNLT is extending its protective reach to the rest of Pine Mountain. Pine Mountain is a migratory corridor for both animals and plants and is one of the largest, most intact landscapes in the state. KNLT has created the Pine Mountain Legacy Project, and its goal is to create a continuous protected ecological corridor the length of the nearly 120-mile long mountain ridge (for more information visit www.knlt.org). With a small staff of three, KNLT currently has over 1,400 acres under option, and is working on a 1,000- to 1,200-acre tract. KNLT is also working to develop (with its partner Mountain Association for Community Economic Development, or MACED) a sustainable forestry program that can demonstrate ecologically beneficial forest management to private landowners on the mountain. With roughly a third of the mountain already in public ownership (nature preserves, state forests, wildlife management areas, state parks, a wild river corridor and a national forest), the corridor has an excellent start. Yet there is much work to be done. The new Pine Mountain Trail State Park with the Pine Mountain Trail Confer-

ence share a common goal of creating a hiking trail the length of the mountain ridge that will travel from Breaks Interstate Park to Pineville, connecting with Cumberland Gap National Park on the Tennessee and Virginia borders.

The Kentucky Chapter of the Nature Conservancy (TNC) is one of our most important partners in protecting the Commonwealth's biodiversity. In true partnership spirit, TNC devoted the 2005 Spring-Summer edition of its magazine *Conserving Kentucky* to publicizing the Heritage Land Conservation Board. It highlighted natural land purchase projects by the five designated agencies and competitive grant projects by local governments. It also began with a message from Governor Ernie Fletcher expressing his support for the important work of the Heritage Land Board and KY-TNC in protecting some of Kentucky's outstanding natural areas.

To promote the formation of partnerships with an aquatic focus, the Commission recently convened a meeting of the Natural Lands Protection Conference. This conference concept was initiated several years ago by the Commission to bring together those organizations engaged in biodiversity protection. The conference encourages these organizations to exchange information and ideas and to update each other on current activities. The theme for this year's meeting was land acquisition to benefit aquatic species and their habitats. In the United States, Kentucky ranks third and fourth, respectively, in the diversity of fishes and freshwater mussels. The southeastern United States is a global center for aquatic biodiversity, making the preservation of aquatic species in this region all the more important. Unfortunately, aquatic organisms are among the most endangered animal groups nationally with mussels leading this unfortunate list. While land acquisition *alone* will never achieve watershed protection, as watersheds are simply too big, it is a key tool. Protected lands along critical streams can also help focus attention on the underappreciated aquatic treasures found in Kentucky waters.

Many individuals, local, state and federal agencies and non-governmental or non-profit organizations are our partners in conservation as well. I cannot possibly name them all in a single article. Maybe you can be a new partner! Take a look at the volunteer opportunities listed on our Web site. You might find something that fits your schedule, your interests and our shared goal – protecting the unique biological resources and treasures of the Commonwealth.



BAD BRANCH

By Kyle Napier, Southeastern Preserve Manager

I will never forget the first time I laid eyes on the area that would someday become the Bad Branch State Nature Preserve. At that time, I was barely 7 years old and following closely behind my 18-year-old brother. We pushed our way up the steep north face of Pine Mountain through what seemed to a young boy to be at least three feet of snow, but in reality was probably only about a foot. After passing through Ran Polly Gap we finally reached the top of the mountain, and there we witnessed the most spectacular winter scene that I can ever remember. The great hemlocks and rhododendron that existed in the upper watershed of Bad Branch were completely snow-covered, creating a total whiteout. We continued on and reached High Rock a short time later. Looking out onto the distant snow-covered hills and hollows I thought without a doubt we had reached the top of the world. Everything seemed so peaceful out there on what I would later learn was called the Cumberland Plateau. The only evidence of any kind of life to be seen was the many small smoke plumes escaping from houses in the hollows below. I realize now that we had traveled only about three-quarters of a mile up the mountain from our house in order to reach this remarkable place, but at the time it seemed so far away.

After visiting High Rock, we pushed our way through the snow-covered rhododendron, and continued on the barely visible, snow-laden logging road on the south side of the mountain. This road simply followed the two main branches of Bad Branch and made a complete circle in the upper gorge, and had long ago been dubbed the "circle". Here, I first laid eyes on the pristine mountain stream I had always heard of but until this day had never seen. The sparkling, fast-moving water caught my eye, and I couldn't help but be amazed with its power as well as its clarity when it settled into the many deep pools. I especially remember, except for the powerful stream rushing over and around boulders, the area appeared to be remarkably quiet. My brother pointed out the spot where a trail led to the top of the waterfall, and I begged him to please take me there. He explained that it was too far and too dangerous. Over the next several years I visited the High Rock area quite often with family and friends, but never saw the waterfall until seven years later when I was 14 and discovered it accidentally by myself. However, that is another story for another time.

Although I made many more visits to the area through the years, none linger in my mind as much as the first. Even at age 7, I realized something was special about the area and have always had a great affection for it. I think that visit went a long way in imprinting the need and desire to choose the career path I have followed. However, in my wildest dreams I

had no idea that Bad Branch would be a significant part of that career.

Today Bad Branch is one of the most important nature preserves in the system, harboring one of the highest concentrations of rare species in the state. Since 1985, the Commission and The Nature Conservancy have worked in a partnership, each owning property in the Bad Branch watershed. The preserve currently consists of 2,374 dedicated acres and is the state's second-largest nature preserve. Due to its outstanding water quality and ecological and scenic values, Bad Branch was designated a Kentucky Wild River in 1986.

The importance of Bad Branch as a treasure of natural wonders was documented as early as 1935 when first visited by Dr. Lucy Braun. She found several ecological communities containing many rare and unusual plant species. Although the area was harvested for timber during World War II, many of these rare plants remain, and contemporary studies indicate the properties of a strong and diverse natural system.



Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) ~ Gary M. Stolz, USFWS

A combination of the cold mountain stream and the narrow, shaded gorge have helped to maintain the conditions necessary to support a large assemblage of species more typical of northern climates or higher elevations. Some plant species such as the matricaria grape fern (*Botrychium matricariaefolium*), rose pogonia orchid (*Pogonia ophioglossoides*) and Canada burnet (*Sanguisorba canadensis*) have only been found at Bad Branch and nowhere else in the state. Also, the state's only known pair of nesting ravens (*Corvus corax*) inhabits the stately cliffs that make up the lower gorge.

The Bad Branch gorge has been a favorite destination of local people for a long time. Before video games and cable TV, many locals would use the area for hiking, camping, hunting and huckleberry gathering. With the area now a dedicated nature preserve, the latter three activities are no longer permitted. There is now a well-manicured hiking trail system for public use. This trail system begins near the confluence of Bad Branch and the Poor Fork of the Cumberland River along KY 932. From this point, a moderate one-mile hike will allow you to visit the well-known Bad Branch Falls. For the more serious hiker, the trail continues upward. The trail will take you to the upper gorge where you will find a loop trail that eventually takes you to the crest of the mountain at High Rock. The trail system is designed in the shape of a lollipop, and the entire round-trip hike is 7.4 miles.



DR. RONALD L. JONES RECEIVES THE COMMISSION'S 2005 BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY PROTECTION AWARD

By Deborah White, Botanist / Heritage Branch Manager

Dr. Ronald L. Jones, whose *Plant Life of Kentucky* is considered the definitive work on Kentucky flora, was presented the 2005 Biological Diversity Protection Award during the Commission's meeting on December 7. Secretary Lajuana S. Wilcher of the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet presented the award which annually recognizes someone who has made a significant contribution to the discovery and protection of Kentucky's biological diversity. Dr. Jones has taught biology at Eastern Kentucky University since 1981 and is curator of the university's herbarium. He serves the Commission as a technical adviser and was instrumental in founding the Kentucky Native Plant Society in 1986.

Dr. Jones' remarkable work on the flora of Kentucky, *Plant Life of Kentucky, An Illustrated Guide to the Vascular Flora*, was 10 years in the writing before its publication in February 2005. It was the first comprehensive guide to all ferns, flowering herbs and woody plants of the state. It provides identification keys for 2,600 native and naturalized vascular plants with intriguing notes on botanical history, human and wildlife uses of plants, poisonous plants and medicinal herbs. *Plant Life of Kentucky* is a research



Dr. Ronald Jones and Secretary Lajuana Wilcher ~ Shauna Dunham, KSNPC

tool for biologist and a resource for students, amateur naturalists and anyone interested in understanding and preserving Kentucky's rich botanical heritage.

ROBERT DUNLAP RECEIVES THE 2005 VOLUNTEER STEWARD AWARD

By Joyce Bender, Nature Preserves and Natural Areas Branch Manager

Mr. Robert Dunlap, an amateur naturalist who monitors three state nature preserves in the Jackson Purchase of western Kentucky, received the 2005 Volunteer Steward Award.



Metropolis Lake State Nature Preserve ~ KSNPC Staff

Bob, who is from Paducah, began volunteering for the Commission in 1998 as preserve monitor for Metropolis Lake State Nature Preserve in McCracken County. He also has assisted in monitoring conditions at Axe Lake Swamp State Nature Preserve in Ballard County and Three Ponds State Nature Preserve in Hickman County. As a naturalist, Bob has identified previously unknown native plants, flowers, land snails and fresh water mussels at the preserves. His dedication and service have been of great benefit at all three natural areas.

KSNPC is very grateful to Bob for his time, willingness to help and wonderful attitude. Volunteers like him are a gift to our Stewardship program. Without them we would be hard pressed to meet the myriad management needs of our system of nature preserves.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: KENTUCKY'S RARE SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES

Villosa ortmanni

Kentucky Creekshell

KSNPC STATUS: Endangered

USFWS STATUS: Species of Management Concern

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: A 2-3 inch long freshwater mussel, one of more than 100 kinds known from Kentucky.

HABITAT: Stream bottoms of small- to medium-size streams in sand and gravel among cobbles and boulders.

RANGE: Restricted to the upper Green, Rough, Nolin and Barren Rivers in Kentucky.

REASON FOR PROTECTION STATUS: Habitat degradation and loss.



Photo by KSNPC Staff

Thamnophis sauritus

Eastern Ribbon Snake

KSNPC STATUS: Special Concern

USFWS STATUS: None

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: A slender snake with clean, light stripes that extend the length of its body. Similar to the common garter snake, but with more uniform dark-and-light stripes and a more slender body.

HABITAT: Semi-aquatic, occurring primarily in marshy or swampy habitats where it preys on small fishes, frogs and salamanders.

ACTIVITY SEASON: Hibernates below ground, probably in animal burrows; found above ground from late March through early November.

RANGE: Eastern United States.

REASON FOR PROTECTION STATUS: Seldom numerous, suggesting generally low population levels; wetland habitats are relatively limited and somewhat threatened in Kentucky.state.



Photo by Mark W. Gumbert

KEY TO KSNPC STATUS CATEGORIES:

ENDANGERED: A taxon in danger of extirpation and/or extinction throughout all or a significant part of its range in Kentucky.

THREATENED: A taxon likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant part of its range in Kentucky.

SPECIAL CONCERN: A taxon that should be monitored because (1) it exists in a limited geographic area in Kentucky, (2) it may become threatened or endangered due to modification or destruction of habitat, (3) certain characteristics or requirements make it especially vulnerable to specific pressures, (4) experienced researchers have identified other factors that may jeopardize it, or (5) it is thought to be rare or declining in Kentucky but insufficient information exists for assignment to the threatened or endangered status categories.

HISTORIC: A taxon documented from Kentucky but not observed reliably since 1980 but is not considered extinct or extirpated.



Talinum calcaricum

Limestone Fameflower

KSNPC STATUS: Endangered

USFWS STATUS: None

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: A succulent, diminutive, perennial herb in the purslane family.

HABITAT: Open, rocky glades.

FLOWERING PERIOD: Mid-June to mid-September.

RANGE: Tennessee (Central Basin) and south-central Kentucky.

REASON FOR PROTECTION STATUS: Very few populations (fewer than five known), habitat highly specialized and limited in extent.



Photo by Steve Baskauf

Appalachian Bog

KSNPC STATUS: Endangered

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Appalachian bogs form where water seeping out of the bedrock remains on or near the surface for much of the year. This creates a unique type of bog habitat that harbors a specialized assemblage of wetland organisms, some of which are very rare in Kentucky.

Appalachian bogs in Kentucky range in size from about a quarter-acre to 3 acres. They are usually dominated by cinnamon fern and sphagnum moss. They also provide habitat for more than 70 other species of plants.

RANGE: Central Appalachian Mountains. In Kentucky they are restricted to the Appalachian Plateau and the Cumberland Mountains.

REASON FOR PROTECTION STATUS: Intact examples of this community type are very rare. Existing remnants are small, isolated and sensitive to disturbance. Therefore, Appalachian bogs are one of the most endangered natural community types in Kentucky.



Photo by Marc Evans, KSNPC

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

KSNPC Species and Community Information ~ www.naturepreserves.ky.gov/inforesources/SpeciesCommunityInfo.htm

NatureServe Explorer ~ www.natureserve.org/explorer/

USFWS Endangered Species Program ~ <http://endangered.fws.gov>

KEY TO USFWS STATUS CATEGORIES:

(US) ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973

ENDANGERED: "... any species ... in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range ..." (USFWS 1992).

THREATENED: "... any species ... likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range" (USFWS 1992).

CANDIDATE: Taxa for which the USFWS has "... sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threats to support proposals to list them as endangered or threatened" (USFWS 1999).

SPECIES OF MANAGEMENT CONCERN: Species the USFWS believes are in need of conservation management.



LAND PROTECTION REPORT

By Ron Scott, Land Protection Specialist

At the most recent meeting of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission on Dec. 7, 2005, the commissioners voted to dedicate an addition to our Bad Branch State Nature Preserve in Letcher County. The 186.6-acre addition encompasses the majority of the drainage of Pine Branch, a high-quality tributary of the headwaters of the Poor Fork of the Cumberland River on the south face of Pine Mountain. The property was acquired initially by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's Department of Highways to satisfy stream impact mitigation requirements resulting from highway improvements made to U.S. 119 as it crosses Pine Mountain. The Department of Highways and the prime construction contractor for the road improvement project, Bizzack, Inc. of Lexington, used several subcontractors, including Eco-Tech, Inc. of Frankfort, QK4 of Louisville and American Consulting Engineers of Lexington, to design and implement this particular project, which was only one component of Bizzack's overall mitigation plan. As a condition of the Section 404 permit issued to Bizzack, Inc. by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Pine Branch property was to be acquired and transferred to the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission. The subcontractors were dealing with two parcels of land owned by separate families and were limited to working with willing sellers only. With some additional complicating factors, the actual acquisition took more than two years to complete. However on Oct. 12, 2005, the Commission took title to the property, which will now be managed and perpetually protected as part of the 2,639-acre preserve.



Bad Branch Falls Ice Crater ~ Joyce Bender, KSNPC

We were also pleased to come to an agreement recently with the owners of ecologically significant properties in Christian County and in Franklin County. In the former instance, the owner agreed to sell the commission a conservation easement encompassing 40 wooded acres surrounding a bat cave. The cave is a vertical entrance shaft and constitutes a summer colony site for federally endangered Gray myotis (*Myotis grisescens*) and KSNPC endangered Southeastern myotis (*Myotis austroriparius*). In addition,

it is a significant hibernaculum for federally endangered Indiana bats (*Myotis sodalis*) and Southeastern myotis. The owner of the Franklin County site agreed to sell the commission roughly 65 acres of land along the Kentucky River north of Frankfort that supports Braun's rockcress (*Arabis perstellata*), an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act, as well as Globe bladderpod (*Lesquerella globosa*), a KSNPC endangered species and candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. We are pursuing several other tracts of land from individuals who have expressed a willingness to consider an offer to purchase at

Thompson Creek Glades SNP in Larue County, Obion Creek SNP in Hickman County and Blanton Forest SNP in Harlan County.

In addition to working to acquire additional lands for the state nature preserve system, we recently convened a meeting in Frankfort, attended by more than a dozen state and federal agencies and private nonprofit conservation organizations, to discuss land protection strategies aimed at conserving aquatic animal species, such as fishes, mussels and crustaceans. Held on Dec. 14, 2005 at the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' Salato Wildlife Education Center, the meeting began with a roundtable discussion of each of the participants' accomplishments, current activities and future plans regarding conservation of aquatic animal species. In the afternoon, there were formal presentations regarding various analytical conservation planning tools that have been developed, the Fees

in Lieu of Mitigation stream restoration program and The Nature Conservancy's experiences working on a watershed-level scale to conserve aquatic species in the Green River. A great deal of useful information was exchanged during the course of the day, which hopefully will help lead to improved understanding, coordination and cooperation between the participating agencies and organizations involved in efforts to protect what are collectively our most imperiled groups of animal species.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

By Don Dott, Executive Director

Where did 2005 go? It's a common lament from those over 30. About the only thing we can do to slow the rush of time is to pause for a look back to see what happened.

Governor Fletcher appointed two new KSNPC Commissioners this year. We have welcomed to the commission Joy Hawkes, of Louisville, a retired teacher, and Nancy Grayson, of Boone County, an attorney. Both appointments represent the state-at-large. I wish the best to two departing commissioners, Dr. Eunice Johnson and David Wright, both at-large representatives whose insight and guidance for the commission's staff was of great importance and will be much missed.

Biological inventories continued on our state nature preserves this year, demonstrating their importance. At least five insect species new for the state were discovered on preserves. In statewide inventories, a rare, undescribed *Papaipema* species (a moth) was found this year, and though it is already well known to biologists, it hasn't been formally described yet. It is considered a sensitive species. Biennial surveys in early 2005 of Indiana bat hibernacula revealed the first population increase in these tiny mammals in nearly 20 years. Though no reason for the increase has been identified, it is certainly welcome news.

The state nature preserves system continued to grow in 2005. Vital additions were made to Bad Branch, Blanton Forest, Jim Scudder and the Pilot Knob preserves. Perhaps the most significant addition was Murphy's Pond, a 175-acre tract in Hickman County owned by Murray State University. Worthy of being a preserve in its own right, it was actually an addition to the adjoining Obion Creek SNP as part of this landscape complex of bottomland hardwood forests, cypress swamps and wetlands.

I also want to recognize our two annual award recipients for 2005. Dr. Ronald Jones, of Eastern Kentucky University, received our Biological Diversity Protection Award, and Robert Dunlap, of Paducah, was given our Volunteer Steward Award. Without dedicated partners like these two gentlemen, we would find our jobs much more difficult. My sincerest thanks and appreciation go to both of you!

Swinging the focus back to the present, the commission is directed by the Rare Plant Recognition Act to provide a report to the Governor and the Legislature every four years on the status of our state's rare flora. The second of these reports will be submitted in January 2006, and will be available on our Web site. The state list of endangered and threatened plants associated with this legislation will also be updated for the first time in 2006. One positive change is the delisting by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of Eggert's sunflower (*Helianthus eggertii*) in August, thus removing it from the federal list. This action was based largely on surveys indicating it is more widespread than previously known and recovery actions that resulted in several protected populations. However, as most of the populations found since the original listing in 1997 occur in Tennessee, for the present the plant will remain listed as threatened by the Commission.

Also on the flora front, the commission is considering legislation to provide a level of protection to state-listed rare plants. The Rare Plant Recognition Act, as originally passed, contains a provision that the listing of a plant cannot be used to impede any landowner activities or development activities. Without altering that, there are some additions we would like to see adopted that would increase public awareness of our state listed plants and work for their protection. One of these steps would be to make the collection of listed plants from public lands or private lands without landowner permission a specific violation. A second provision would be to license nurseries engaged in the sale of state-listed plants. This would help us gather information on the collection and commercial sale of native plants, and hopefully increase public awareness. For example, ginseng is the best-known native plant subject to decline from over-collection, although this plant is already regulated by the Department of Agriculture and would be exempt from any additional regulation by the commission – if a proposal is enacted by the Legislature.

Looking back, 2005 was a busy year, and 2006 promises many new opportunities. The commission looks forward to continuing its work with our many partners and furthering the appreciation and conservation of the Commonwealth's outstanding biological diversity.



TAX CHECKOFF

Donations to the Nature and Wildlife Fund made through the State Income Tax Checkoff Program are divided between the Non-game Division of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and the Nature Preserves Commission.

The Commission uses checkoff program donations for two purposes -- land acquisition and nature preserve management. The Commission has used checkoff donations to help acquire:

- Bad Branch State Nature Preserve in Letcher County,
- Brigadoon State Nature Preserve in Barren County
- Metropolis Lake State Nature Preserve in McCracken County
- Pilot Knob State Nature Preserve in Powell County

Additional funds have been used for land appraisals and legal surveys for several other acquisition projects. Checkoff donations have also been used to construct public visitation facilities at a number of nature preserves. In previous years, the Commission used checkoff donations for trail maintenance and habitat management at several nature preserves, and to assist in the purchase of Blanton Forest, a large old growth forest in Harlan County.

The Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission is grateful to every Kentuckian who has chosen to contribute to the Nature and Wildlife Fund through the Kentucky Income Tax Checkoff Program.



DON'T FORGET TO DO SOMETHING WILD ON YOUR STATE INCOME TAX RETURN AND USE THE CHECKOFF BOX TO DONATE TO THE NATURE AND WILDLIFE FUND!

KENTUCKY STATE NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

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Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission

Quarterly Public Meeting

March 8, 2006

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Time to be Determined

How to contact the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission:

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E-mail: naturepreserves@ky.gov

Visit us online @ www.naturepreserves.ky.gov

It is the mission of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission to protect Kentucky's natural heritage by: (1) identifying, acquiring and managing natural areas that represent the best known occurrences of rare native species, natural communities and significant natural features in a statewide nature preserves system; (2) working with others to protect biological diversity; and (3) educating Kentuckians as to the value and purpose of nature preserves and biodiversity.

The Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion or disability and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodations including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in all services, programs and activities. To request materials in an alternative format, contact the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission at 801 Schenkel Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601-1403 or call 502-573-2886. Hearing-impaired and speech-impaired persons may contact the agency by using the Kentucky Relay Service, a toll-free telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD). For voice to TDD, call 800-648-6057. For TDD to voice, call 800-648-6065.

