



Dec. 09, 2022

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Kentucky Natural Lands Trust Protects Wildlands Next to Blanton Forest

Berea, KY Dec. 09, 2022 – This fall, Kentucky Natural Lands Trust (KNLT) protected an additional 68 acres of wildlands along Pine Mountain in Harlan County. The mountain is home to towering forests over 100 feet tall that provide habitat for thousands of plants and animals, some of them found nowhere else on the planet.

The newly acquired land contributes to a 7,000+ acre complex of conservation lands around Blanton Forest, the largest old growth forest in Kentucky. These safeguarded wildlands provide summer habitat for the endangered northern long-eared and Indiana bats as well as headwater protection of the spectacularly diverse Cumberland River.

The newly protected land includes the original location of the old Mount Aire Motel, the once-iconic lodge that operated in the 1960s. The motel is long gone, and the land has now become part of the protected forests within the iconic Pine Mountain Wildlands Corridor.

Conservation efforts in this area began in 1995 when KNLT partnered with the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves to protect a 2,000-acre old growth tract that is now known as Blanton Forest State Nature Preserve. The preserve has since grown to 3,510 acres and is buffered by land owned by KNLT.

This conservation success is made possible by the power of partnership. KNLT is very grateful for support from individual donors, foundations, and partners. This particular project was made possible by the Imperiled Bat Conservation Fund (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kentucky Field Office).

About Kentucky Natural Lands Trust

KNLT is a nationally accredited nonprofit working to protect biodiverse and climate resilient landscapes in ways that benefit communities. Through partnerships with government agencies, nonprofits, corporations and private individuals, KNLT has protected more than 55,000 acres of wildlands throughout the Commonwealth. For more information on how you can help KNLT protect wildlands, visit KNLT.org.