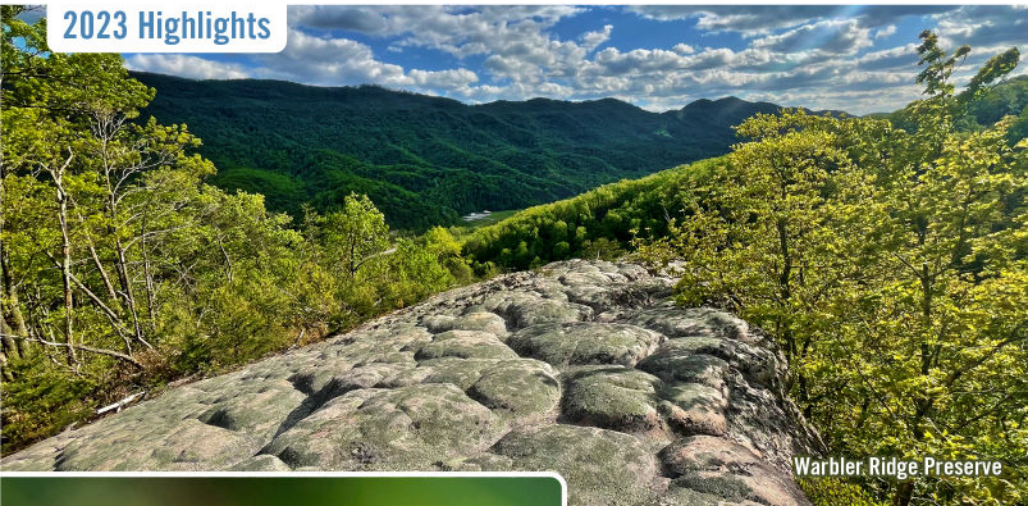


Kentucky Natural Lands Trust

2023

Protecting, Connecting
& Restoring Wildlands

2023 Highlights



Warbler Ridge Preserve



Canada warbler

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust is grateful to our supporters and partners for an impactful year of protecting, connecting and restoring wildlands.

Here are a few highlights:

- Protected 2,200 acres of wildlands that safeguard vital forests and headwater streams across Kentucky.
- Leveraged stewardship and research partnerships to safeguard biodiversity and improve land management.
- Fostered partnerships with the art community that expanded our mission and advanced conservation efforts.



Panther Gap Preserve, Cumberland Mountain

Expanding Our Conservation Actions

Kentucky Natural Lands Trusts' 2025 Strategic Plan set a bold vision for accelerating the pace and impact of our conservation efforts. The plan includes goals for broadening the geographies where we work, and fostering conservation and research partnerships. In 2023, we put these goals into action.

This year, our longstanding work in Central Appalachia has expanded beyond Pine Mountain to include efforts on Cumberland Mountain. This 97-mile forested ridge line parallels Pine Mountain to the southeast. Cumberland Mountain provides critical habitat for thousands of plant and animal species including 139 that are considered rare. The mountain is also the headwaters of the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers which are notable aquatic systems with extraordinary biodiversity.

KNLT is actively partnering on collaborative large landscape stewardship. By pooling capacity and resources with our longstanding partners the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves (OKNP), stewardship actions are being amplified to maintain healthy wildlands over the larger landscape. The goal is to

impart lasting cumulative benefits through an integrated blend of monitoring, active management, restoration and rewilding.

KNLT and OKNP have been treating Eastern hemlocks to fend off the non-native hemlock woolly adelgid. This tiny aphid-like insect has caused severe decline and mortality of hemlocks throughout Eastern North America. Together KNLT and OKNP have treated nearly

5,000 hemlocks on state, nonprofit and private lands along Pine Mountain.

Safeguarding biodiversity requires thorough knowledge of species and natural systems. **KNLT continues to partner on research projects with universities, government agencies and other nonprofits.** This year our partnerships involved a variety of biological inventory work along Pine Mountain. At KNLT's Warbler Ridge Preserve this summer, OKNP biologists documented the bee species *Melitta americana* for the first time in Kentucky!

KNLT also assisted federal and state partners with yellow-spotted woodland salamander surveys. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been petitioned to list this species under the Endangered Species Act, and these surveys help inform the listing review process. Although this rare salamander was not found during the surveys, thousands of more common salamanders such as greens, longtails and dusks were documented.



Yellow-spotted woodland salamander

Partnering with Communities

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust is a science-driven and community-minded organization whose conservation successes are made possible through the power of partnership. **Our partnerships are grounded in collaboration with local communities and local landowners, as well as our unique collaborations with the art community.**

Artists have always been part of KNLT's efforts, and in recent years they have become essential to our work. Their creativity transcends conservation science and the silos of society, and they are vital to charting the way to a more resilient, diverse, sustainable future. **KNLT's collaboration with artists has expanded our conservation horizons, broadened our reach and connected KNLT to new support.**

This fall, KNLT held an artists' retreat on Pine Mountain, the first KNLT gathering of this kind since the global pandemic and the 2022 flood that decimated parts of Eastern Kentucky. KNLT Artists' Retreats offer an immersive experiential weekend of learning in the Central Appalachia wildlands. Since 2015, more than 160 artists have attended a retreat and engaged in our work. This group, known as the Pine Mountain Collective, includes members from Appalachia, throughout Kentucky and around the United States.

“I have thought about my time on Pine Mountain almost every day since attending in 2015. Seeing firsthand the incredible biodiversity of the region and witnessing the devastating impacts of resource extraction had a profound effect on me as an artist and as a human.”

— Diana Sudyka, illustrator & printmaker



Pine Mountain Artists' Retreat



Safeguarding Wildlands of the Commonwealth

Kentucky is globally significant because our wildlands are vital to addressing biodiversity loss and climate change. **In 2023, Kentucky Natural Lands Trust conserved more than 2,200 acres of wildlands across the Commonwealth.**

In Harlan and Letcher Counties, KNLT expanded our Warbler Ridge Preserve on Pine Mountain to over 3,600 acres. The preserve connects several state lands to form nearly 9,000 acres of contiguous conserved wildlands. **KNLT also established the 426-acre Panther Gap Preserve this fall, our first preserve on Cumberland Mountain.** The new preserve is part of our commitment to broadening the geographies where we work.

In Whitley County, KNLT protected additional wildlands around Archer Benge

State Nature Preserve expanding our Laurel Gap Preserve and safeguarding a key tract that connects the state preserve to conservation efforts in Tennessee. There now are more than 8,000 acres of connected conservation lands on this stretch of Pine Mountain along the state line.



Small yellow lady's-slipper



Wildlands of Central Appalachia

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust by the Numbers:

18,000+

acres directly
purchased & protected

39,000+

acres purchased &
protected with our help

Your support will safeguard biodiversity, stabilize the climate and support communities today and for generations to come. Visit [KNLT.org](https://www.knlt.org) to donate and learn more about how you can get involved.

*Together we're making the world
more wild & wonderful!*

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust

[KNLT.org](https://www.knlt.org) | (859) 986-0744 | info@knlt.org

Photo Credits: front: Warbler Ridge Preserve ~ Tara Littlefield, OKNP | Canada warbler ~ Jennifer Honeycutt
inside: Panther Gap Preserve ~ Derrick Lindsay, KNLT
Yellow-spotted woodland salamander ~ John MacGregor | Pine Mountain Artists' Retreat ~ Lacy Hale
back: Wildlands of Central Appalachia ~ Jennifer Honeycutt
flap: Laurel Gap Preserve ~ Derrick Lindsay, KNLT | Small yellow lady's-slipper ~ Thomas G. Barnes