



# 30 Years of Wildlands Conservation





# Kentucky Natural Lands Trust

## *Protecting, Connecting & Restoring Wildlands*

Our mission at Kentucky Natural Lands Trust is simple – protect wildlands. We accomplish this with a science-based and community-minded approach that embraces the power of partnership. We understand that the pressing challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change and fragmented communities must be addressed holistically to ensure the future and health of the planet.

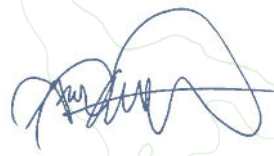
Together we have safeguarded tens of thousands of acres of wild places over the years. As we celebrate 30 years of conservation we are poised to reach 100 square miles (64,000 acres) of protected wildlands with the completion of a few more projects this fall.

Although much has been achieved we know at this time far more is needed particularly in globally significant areas such as our home place. This is why we are scaling our efforts to enable the protection of even more wildlands at a faster pace. Our conservation work is a local action with a global impact that supports the flourishing of nature, people and the planet.

We're both very proud of the conservation movement we are shepherding and are ready for the work ahead.

**Kelly Bartley**, KNLT Board Chair

**Greg Abernathy**, KNLT Executive Director



**KNLT protects wildlands** by purchasing them from willing landowners and ensuring their conservation value is maintained forever.

**KNLT connects wildlands** by acquiring lands that expand and adjoin existing conservation areas forming a protected corridor.

**KNLT restores degraded wildlands** to viable habitats that foster and support the health of natural and human communities.



# An Ancient Forest Led to a Conservation Movement

## Saving an Old-growth Forest:

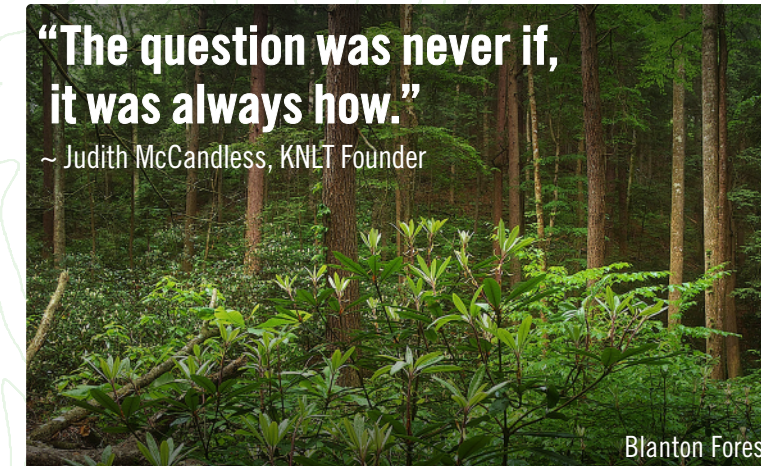
Kentucky Natural Lands Trust is celebrating 30 years of conservation this year, but our story begins with seedlings that took root centuries ago and have since grown into a flourishing forest filled with plants, animals and fungi. Over time as nearly all the Eastern Forest was cleared, this forest was spared and grew to become a rare old-growth forest.

In the early 1990s an ecologist with the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission “discovered” this 2,000-acre forest on Pine Mountain – the largest remaining old-growth forest in the Commonwealth. This discovery led a group of friends to form KNLT. In partnership with the state, they protected the land and established Blanton Forest.



**“The question was never if, it was always how.”**

~ Judith McCandless, KNLT Founder



Blanton Forest

## Spurring a Conservation Movement:

One KNLT founder described the early days saying: “When it came to protecting the old-growth, the question was never if, it was always how.” This commitment to save wild places has been a guiding force all along. The founders’ success with Blanton Forest set in motion a conservation movement.

KNLT’s work has since expanded to include a wildlands corridor that spans all of Pine and Cumberland Mountains. We also protect lands in Kentucky’s Western Knobs, collaborate with partner projects statewide and support regional conservation initiatives. Since 1995, KNLT has safeguarded nearly 64,000 acres of wildlands through the power of partnership, ensuring that these areas remain forever wild.



# Our Pillars

## BIODIVERSITY

Wildlands are vital to maintaining biodiversity, the foundation for all life on Earth.

## CLIMATE

Wildlands are an essential nature-based solution to climate change.

## COMMUNITY

Wildlands are woven into the cultural and economic health of communities.



Blackburnian warbler



Great Eastern Trail



Warbler Ridge Preserve, Pine Mountain

**Kentucky Natural Lands Trust protects wildlands with a commitment to safeguarding biodiversity, sustaining the climate & supporting communities**



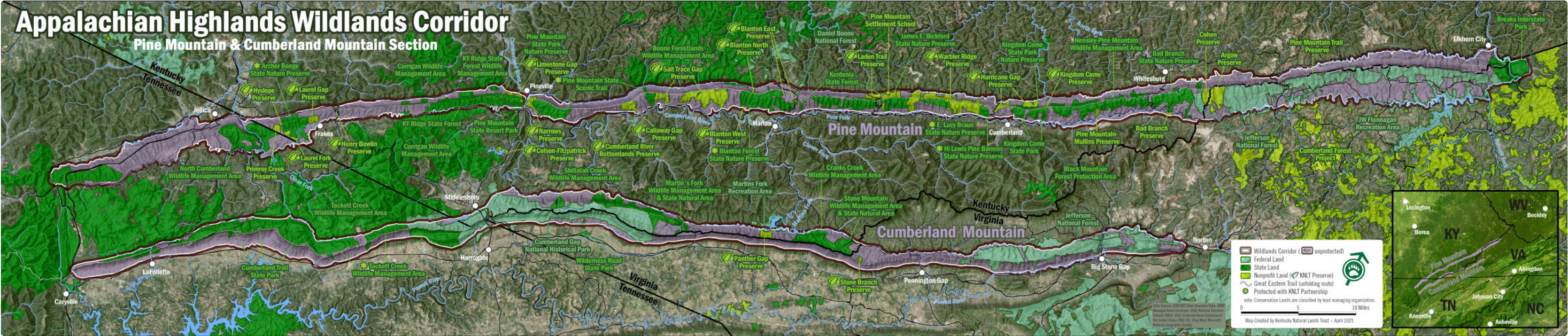
# Our Conservation Priority Areas

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust protects wildlands with a goal of adding landscape connectivity. Our large landscape conservation efforts safeguard biodiversity and maintain ecosystem functions, store and sequester forest carbon and support local communities.

Our conservation efforts stretch from Central Appalachia to the Western Knobs and beyond with a primary focus on the Appalachian Highlands along Pine and Cumberland Mountains.

The Appalachian Highlands Wildlands Corridor is home to globally significant biodiversity, forests that offer a nature-based climate solution, and communities undergoing a transition to a more sustainable future. KNLT is connecting landscapes and communities through wildlands conservation that is science-based and community-minded.

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust has safeguarded nearly 100 square miles of wildlands since 1995





# Our Vision

Globally, threats to the planet and humanity are pressing. Biodiversity loss and climate change are rapidly accelerating. In response, Kentucky Natural Lands Trust must increase the pace of our work to address these urgent challenges for the future and health of our planet.

We believe we must act now by expanding our conservation actions across the region. Building on the knowledge and success of our first three decades, we aim to protect another 25,000 acres of wildlands in the coming years. These wildlands will safeguard biodiversity, stabilize the climate, and support communities now and for the future.

We are committed to wildlands conservation in the place we know best: our home. Kentucky and Central Appalachia are within one the most biodiverse temperate regions globally. The wildlands found here sustain ALL LIFE on Earth. Safeguarding these wildlands is a local action with global impact.

**Local Action** ✱ **Global Impact**

## SAFEGUARDING BIODIVERSITY

Protected wildlands in Central Appalachia provide habitats essential to safeguarding globally notable biodiversity.

Canada warbler

## STABILIZING CLIMATE

Protected wildlands in Central Appalachia secure & sequester forest carbon that aids in stabilizing the global climate.

## SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Protected wildlands in Central Appalachia foster physical, cultural & economic health essential to supporting communities.

Green salamander

When I look at the record, and the map, of the good work of Kentucky Natural Lands Trust, I am happy for two reasons: first, because so much land has been taken into our care already; second, because I'm seeing what we humans can do when we get our minds properly made up and are properly led.

~ Wendell Berry, farmer, writer & KNLT Advisor



# Power of Partnership

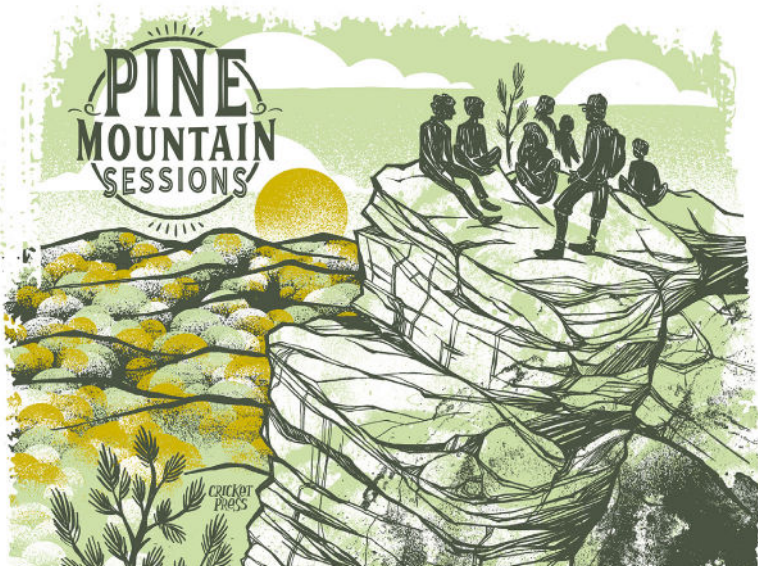
The power of partnership is foundational to Kentucky Natural Lands Trust’s wildlands conservation successes. Our diverse partnerships range from landowners and community members to government and nonprofit organizations to researchers, volunteers and artists. Our funding partners span from individual donors to foundations to businesses. TOGETHER we are working towards a more wild future.

## Imperiled Bat Conservation Fund

IBCF is a partnership between U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Kentucky Field Office and KNLT that uses a combination of funding to focus resources on bat, forest, and at-risk terrestrial species conservation. The Fund has provided transformational funding that has resulted in the protection of tens of thousands of acres.

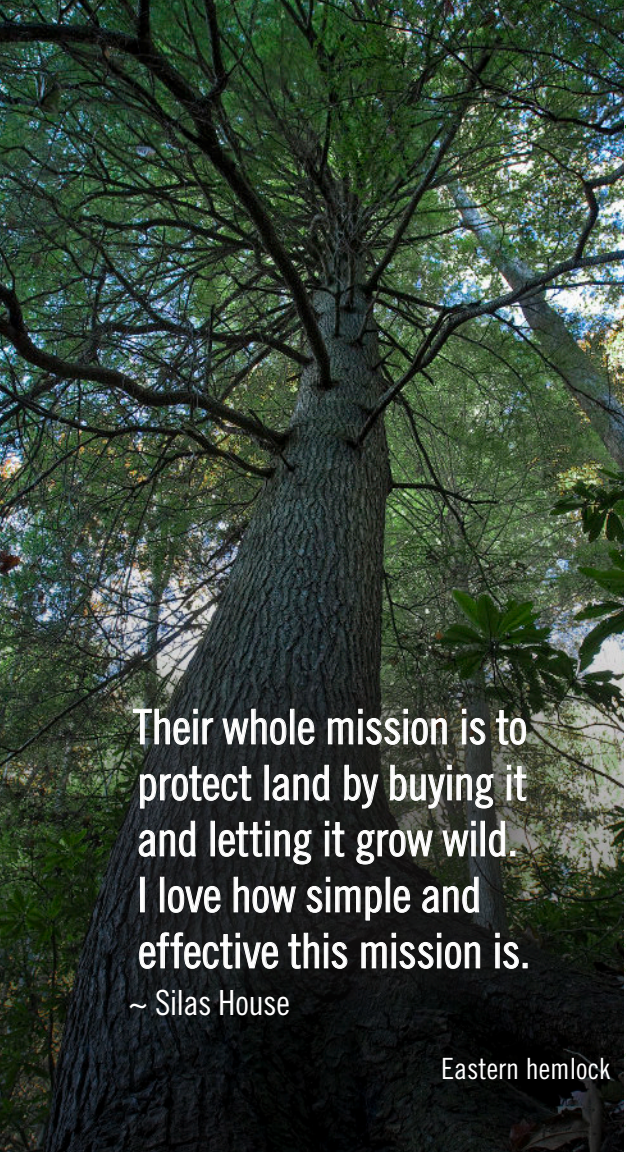


Indiana bat



## Art & Conservation

Artists have been involved in our work from the beginning and represent a portion of our board leadership. Art informs science, transcends the silos of society, offers new perspectives and fosters appreciation of wild places. Partnering with artists has led to the Pine Mountain Sessions, the Wildlands Social Club series and so much more - all of which has contributed notably to our efforts.



Their whole mission is to protect land by buying it and letting it grow wild. I love how simple and effective this mission is.

~ Silas House

Eastern hemlock

# Our Team

We are grateful to our leadership team of Board of Directors, Director Emeriti and Advisors as well as the stellar staff leading our on the ground efforts to ensure a more wild and healthy future.

|       |   |
|-------|---|
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|                   |  |
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|                   | Joseph Guthrie                         |

|       |   |
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| STAFF | Greg Abernathy<br><i>Executive Director</i>                 |
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|       | Nicole Breyette<br><i>Development Director</i>              |
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|       | Megan Naseman<br><i>Administrative Specialist</i>           |
|       | Jess Slade<br><i>Conservation Manager</i>                   |
|       | Tara Littlefield  |
|       | Erik Reece  |
|       | Julia Taylor  |

**Special thanks to the artists whose works are in the report:** Reid Abernathy, Patrice Bouchard, Thomas G. Barnes, Jim Brighton, Marc Evans, David Herasimtschuk, Jennifer Honeycutt, Gerry James, Ellis Laudermilk, John MacGregor, Will Seiter, Jeff Servos, Price Sewell, Guenter Shuester, Mark Tidwell, Sara Turner/Cricket Press, Antonio Vizcaino & Ted Wathen (Wildlands Philanthropy)





[KNLT.org](https://KNLT.org)

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