H.C.R. No. 31

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The State of Texas traditionally has recognized a variety of official symbols as tangible representations of the proud character and colorful heritage of the Lone Star State; and

WHEREAS, Select members of the animal kingdom, including the longhorn, the armadillo, and the Texas horned lizard, are among the species that have been formally recognized, and their designation has served to draw attention to the great biological diversity of the state's landscape and to highlight creatures who are unique to or closely identified with the state; and

WHEREAS, An especially rich natural environment is found along the Texas Gulf Coast, and of the many distinctive species found in that region, the Kemp's ridley sea turtle (Lepidochelys kempii) is particularly deserving of recognition; and

WHEREAS, Identifiable by its nearly circular upper shell, the Kemp's ridley makes its home primarily in the Gulf of Mexico, though it is also found in the Atlantic Ocean; after hatching, the male turtles spend their entire lives at sea; the females come ashore only to lay eggs, and they do so in large, synchronized groups, an extraordinary phenomenon known in Spanish as arribada, meaning "arrival"; while they are the smallest of the eight types of sea turtles in the world, they can still weigh up to 100 pounds and grow to 2.5 feet in length; and

WHEREAS, This remarkable creature is part of an inspiring conservation success story; following an alarming population
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decline that began in the 1940s, the Kemp's ridley teetered on the brink of extinction and was placed on the Endangered Species List in 1970; it has made a heroic recovery, however, as a result of a collaborative protection program begun in 1978 by the United States and Mexico; this initiative has helped implement the use of turtle excluder devices by the commercial shrimp fleet, which allow sea turtles to escape the trawling nets that were causing large numbers of deaths; another important development has been the establishment of a secondary nesting colony at Padre Island National Seashore in Texas, which supplements the main nesting site in Mexico; as of 2012, more than 100 turtle nests were identified at the national seashore, with another 100 in other Texas coastal areas; and

WHEREAS, A number of organizations and universities in the state have taken part in the campaign to safeguard the turtles, with Texas A&M University at Galveston, The University of Texas Marine Science Institute, and the National Marine Fisheries Service being central players in the initiative; and

WHEREAS, Once the most imperiled of all sea turtles, the Kemp's ridley is today becoming a more common resident of the Gulf Coast waters; its comeback is a testament to its resilience and to the admirable work of those Texans who have aided its recovery, and this noble animal is indeed a fitting symbol of the Lone Star State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 83rd Legislature of the State of Texas hereby designate the Kemp's ridley sea turtle as the official State Sea Turtle of Texas.
I certify that H.C.R. No. 31 was adopted by the House on April 11, 2013, by the following vote: Yeas 141, Nays 3, 2 present, not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.C.R. No. 31 was adopted by the Senate on May 2, 2013, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: 10 May '13

Date

Governor

FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Secretary of State