

By: Bonnen

H.C.R. No. 30

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The State of Texas has customarily recognized a
2 variety of official symbols as tangible representations of its
3 cultural heritage and natural history; and

4 WHEREAS, Among the most extraordinary of the state's
5 indigenous fauna is the Texas blind salamander, a small creature
6 that has been found only in Hays County, in the subterranean reaches
7 of the Edwards Aquifer around San Marcos; the vulnerability of this
8 salamander has been officially recognized since 1967, when it
9 appeared on the first endangered species list to be issued by the
10 U.S. government; and

11 WHEREAS, Though few in number, the Texas blind salamander
12 commands scientific attention because it is considered to be the
13 most highly adapted of all cave-dwelling salamanders; this
14 amphibian lives in complete darkness, unless pushed to the surface
15 by flowing water; having no need of sight, it sports only two black
16 dots as vestigial eyes; and

17 WHEREAS, About five inches long when mature, the Texas blind
18 salamander possesses a flat head, frail arms and legs, a long,
19 tapering tail, and a fringe of red external gills; its internal
20 organs are visible through its translucent skin; the top predator
21 in its habitat range, the salamander generally keeps to still
22 waters and is able to hunt by sensing water-pressure waves created
23 by its prey--tiny snails, shrimp, and other aquatic invertebrates;
24 and

1 WHEREAS, The Texas blind salamander was discovered in 1895,
2 when a well was sunk into a cavern to supply water to the Federal
3 Fish Hatchery in San Marcos; Leonhard Stejneger, curator of
4 reptiles and amphibians at what is now the National Museum of
5 Natural History, provided the original scientific description of
6 the animal, which is known variously as *Typhlomolge rathbuni* and
7 *Eurycea rathbuni*; and

8 WHEREAS, Serious collection of the Texas blind salamander was
9 begun in the 1970s and continues to the present time; salamanders
10 that are captured are turned over to the San Marcos National Fish
11 Hatchery and Technology Center, which operates a captive breeding
12 program for the animal; and

13 WHEREAS, A remarkable species, one about which we still have
14 much to learn, and a denizen of the most richly diverse aquifer on
15 earth, the Texas blind salamander is unique to the Lone Star State,
16 and it is indeed fitting that this rare creature be accorded special
17 recognition; now, therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas
19 hereby designate the Texas blind salamander as the official State
20 Amphibian of Texas.