

By: Eiland

H.C.R. No. 31

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

23 WHEREAS, This remarkable creature is part of an inspiring
24 conservation success story; following an alarming population

1 decline that began in the 1940s, the Kemp's ridley teetered on the
2 brink of extinction and was placed on the Endangered Species List in
3 1970; it has made a heroic recovery, however, as a result of a
4 collaborative protection program begun in 1978 by the United States
5 and Mexico; this initiative has helped implement the use of turtle
6 excluder devices by the commercial shrimp fleet, which allow sea
7 turtles to escape the trawling nets that were causing large numbers
8 of deaths; another important development has been the establishment
9 of a secondary nesting colony at Padre Island National Seashore in
10 Texas, which supplements the main nesting site in Mexico; as of
11 2012, more than 100 turtle nests were identified at the national
12 seashore, with another 100 in other Texas coastal areas; and

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

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

24 RESOLVED, That the 83rd Legislature of the State of Texas
25 hereby designate the Kemp's ridley sea turtle as the official State
26 Sea Turtle of Texas.