

No. R-225. House concurrent resolution celebrating the restoration of a wild turkey population in Vermont.

(H.C.R.184)

Offered by Representative Pritchard of Pawlet

Whereas, in the rural countryside in Pawlet, Vermont, on February 28, 1969, wildlife biologist Bill Drake of the Vermont Fish & Game Department undertook a historic and visionary act, releasing wild turkeys back into their native habitat and setting in motion the successful restoration of the species statewide, and

Whereas, by the late 19th century, wild turkeys had been eliminated in Vermont due to widespread forest clearing and unregulated subsistence harvesting, leaving generations of Vermonters without the sight or sound of this iconic bird, and

Whereas, the wild turkey restoration effort was made possible through funding from federal excise taxes on firearms and ammunition under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, supplemented by state hunting license revenues, demonstrating the enduring value of conservation partnerships, and

Whereas, Bill Drake traveled to Steuben and Allegany Counties in New York to trap and transport wild turkeys for reintroduction into Vermont, resulting in the release of 17 birds—five toms and twelve hens—between February 28 and March 31, 1969, at two sites in Pawlet, and

Whereas, subsequent releases in Hubbardton and Rockingham further strengthened the restoration effort, and these birds became the ancestors of the wild turkeys that now inhabit every region of Vermont, and

Whereas, the success of this program was confirmed in 1973 with the establishment of Vermont's first regulated wild turkey hunt in southern Vermont, during which 579 permits were issued for a twelve-day season, and

Whereas, today, wild turkeys are once again a natural and thriving part of Vermont's landscape, as emblematic of the state's forested hillsides and sugar maples, providing ecological benefits, recreational opportunities, and sustenance for Vermonters, and

Whereas, the restoration of the wild turkey would not have been possible without the cooperation and stewardship of farmers and landowners throughout Pawlet and southern Vermont, whose full-hearted participation ensured the program's lasting success, and

Whereas, this gallant endeavor is now memorialized with a commemorative marker located in the Town of Pawlet, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly celebrates the restoration of a wild turkey population in Vermont, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Pawlett Historical Society.