

The Maryland Department Of Natural Resources  
and  
The Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission

# Annual Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Awards

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## 2020 Recipients

Dr. Kenneth Lewis  
and  
Bernard 'Lefty' Kreh  
(Posthumous)

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## 2021 Recipients

Robert Wall  
and  
Joseph W. Brooks  
(Posthumous)

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**John G. Neely**  
Chairperson  
Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission

**2020 Award Presentations**

Dr. Kenneth Lewis, nominated by Larry Jennings

Bernard (Lefty) Kreh, nominated by John Neely

**2021 Award Presentations**

Robert Wall, nominated by Letha Grimes  
and Mary Helen Sprecher

Joseph W. Brooks, nominated by John Neely



# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

## 2020 Recipient

### Dr. Kenneth Lewis

*Nominated by Larry Jennings*

Kenneth Lewis, currently presiding in Cockeysville, MD. While a lifelong fisherman, Ken was a member of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) and Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association's Perry Hall chapter (MSSA) for several years, before he retired as a cardiologist in 2000. At that point, Ken became much more active in fisheries management in Maryland and served as Chairman and Government Relations Committee Chair in CCA MD as well as coordinating legislative affairs for the MSSA chapter. From his home base in Baltimore County, Ken began coordinating, supporting and donating to a whole range of activities from government relations, habitat projects, and sustainable fisheries management education all the way to kids' fishing events. From his early understanding of the importance of ecosystems-based fishery management and habitat, Ken took on a problem facing recreational anglers in the upper Bay. That was the very significant degradation of their fishing caused by the dredging of buried oyster shell for the Oyster Repletion Program that destroyed habitat and spread sediments 5 miles in each direction on the tides. Doggedly tracking down the dredging activities and permit renewal hearings, he organized opposition and educational efforts that ultimately contributed to its ending in 2005.

When the Oyster Advisory Commission came into existence, Ken was named to it and remained a member up to 2019. As a former medical professional, he consistently focuses on the science and its use in making fisheries management decisions for the resource and not the political winds. He understands the importance of oysters to our estuary and their importance to a diverse and abundant marine ecosystem in the Chesapeake Bay. He has also continued efforts to protect Bay habitats by gaining both bi-partisan and watermen support to protect Man O' War Shoal from the dredging of buried shell. He has championed educating and supporting our youth with the MSSA scholarship program that has recently moved to CCA, cleanup events with these organizations as well as the Back River Restoration Committee, and kids fishing events. He has supported reef ball programs to improve habitat as well as efforts to measure the improvements in fishing made by adding reef balls as part of the Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative (MARI). Recognizing the decline in the yellow perch fishery, Ken was highly involved in CCA's efforts to demonstrate the importance of sustainable, science-based fisheries management.

This long-term effort of monitoring spawning results, and the unlimited catch of yellow perch by commercial fishermen, led to the Sustainable Yellow Perch Fisheries Act in 2007 that monitored the stock annually to project a sustainable harvest for both commercial and recreational fishing that has shown a large rebound in the stock that remains abundant with active management to this day. Ken has recognized the importance of educating our legislators on sustainable, science-based fisheries management that puts the fish first as the resource, and forces DNR to manage the resources for both the commercial and recreation sectors. He works tirelessly throughout the General Session and year-round to educate members of the committees so that they understand the issues from both sides to make decisions on legislation. Not only does he testify at many legislative hearings every year, he also tracks court cases for repeat violators of fisheries regulations and has testified on behalf of recreational interests to get appropriate judgments and penalties when repeat violators are caught stealing (poaching) our common property resources in Maryland. With his efforts and financial support of fisheries education, Bay restoration efforts, spreading the joy of fishing at kids fishing events, scholarships, and reef ball builds and bringing sensible, science-based fisheries management forward, I wholeheartedly recommend Ken Lewis for the Sport Fisheries Achievement Award.

# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

## 2020 Recipient

### Bernard ‘Lefty’ Kreh (posthumous)

*Nominated by John Neely*

Bernard “Lefty” Kreh (1925-2018), a native son and lifelong resident of Maryland, was an American fly fisherman, photographer and fly casting instructor. Lefty Kreh was most known for being one of the pioneers of saltwater fly fishing, and his book, *Fly Fishing in Salt Water*, is considered the seminal volume on the subject. Kreh is the author of many other books, he served as a columnist for numerous publications, and because of his contributions, he was the most famous sport fisherman in the world. His wife Evelyn died in 2011 and they had two children, and also many grand and great grandchildren. Lefty’s father died when he was eight, and Lefty was charged with bringing home fish that he caught for meals.

Lefty served in the Battle of the Bulge, and he said that he barely ate, and was always cold. At the conclusion of the war, he contracted anthrax, and barely survived. The strain he contracted was subsequently named for him BVK-1. In 1947, Lefty moved to Miami, where he became director of the Metropolitan Fishing Tournament. Writing for various publications, he became known for the Catch & Release ethic, as an early advocate for fisheries conservation, and developed a new style of casting, which is used today by modern saltwater fly anglers. In the 1950’s, he developed the famous Lefty’s Deceiver, arguably the best known saltwater fly pattern in the world. In 1991, the US Postal Service honored Kreh’s creation with a postage stamp. In 2010, while living in Hunt Valley, he created the Lefty Kreh Fly Fishing Challenge Course, incorporating dry land, still water and moving water into various casting stations. In other words, he included real world casting situations.

His casting instruction and life teaching have been recorded and are published by Fly Fisher’s International. Lefty, with retired news anchor Tom Brokaw, co-hosted the Outdoor Channel show *Buccaneers and Bones* to focus on the efforts of the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, a conservation and research organization. Kreh received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Sportfishing Association, been honored with the Lifetime Contribution Award by the North American Fly Tackle Trade Association, and is also in the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame. In 1997, he was named Angler of the Year by *Fly Rod and Reel Magazine*. In 2003, Kreh was inducted into the International Gamefish Association Hall of Fame. He served for many years as an advisor to Trout Unlimited and the Federation of Fly Fishers. On a personal note, Lefty Kreh was very helpful to me as a fly fisherman, and as a commissioner and chair of the Maryland Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission.

# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

## 2021 Recipient

### Robert Wall

(Bob received two nominations.)

*Nominated by Letha Grimes*

Growing up in Baltimore, Bob Wall started going to the Patterson Park Recreation Center at age 11. By the time Bob was 14 years old, he had already volunteered over 3,000 hours to the Patterson Park Recreation Center. Bob started his career with the Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP) in 1974 as a part-time recreation aide at the Patterson Park Recreation Center and after 45 years, retired in 2020 as Director of Baltimore City Parks and Recreation.

Although Bob's work entailed providing all types of recreational sports for Baltimore's youth and adults (BCRP offers 20 sports programs and 200 youth leagues and 112 adult leagues), his true passion is fishing. When meeting Bob, it is obvious to see his passion and commitment to teaching youth. Finding fishing access in urban areas can be a challenge, however Bob has fully maximized the few areas in Baltimore City to promote recreational fishing.

The Patterson Park Boat Lake is one of the true gems of Baltimore city. Bob was instrumental in the resurrection of the Patterson Park Boat Lake. After a 35-year absence, Bob reintroduced fishing to the Patterson Park Boat Lake in 1997, with over 150 children participating in the first of many fishing events at the lake. Bob set up the Family Fishing Fun Program where the first Thursday during the months of April through October, families can gather to fish with all equipment and bait being provided. He started the First Fish Program where any child catching their first fish was presented with a medallion. Bob expanded the BCRP fishing programs to the Therapeutic Recreation Division, which organizes fishing programs for special needs individuals. All of these fishing programs are free of charge to children and their families. It is not unusual to hear a native Baltimorean say of the lake, "That's where I caught my first fish".

Bob has worked with many organizations and programs over the years to increase youth fishing in Baltimore, these include: Trout Unlimited (TU) and their "City Catch" Program; Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) to introduce a unique fishing experience for area youth called "Kid's Catch", a fishing tournament in tidal waters at the Canton Waterfront; Environmental Fishing Camp Program; and annual fishing rodeo events at Herring Run and John Carroll School Pond. In addition, Bob secured the National Recreation and Parks Association grant for Baltimore to become one of 10 cities to participate in a Youth Fishing Pilot Program. When the Pilot Program expanded, Baltimore was selected as an Anchor Agency. As an Anchor Agency, BCRP assisted other county recreation and parks departments and local agencies to start/expand their fishing programs. Baltimore was recognized that year as a top urban fishing city in Field & Stream Magazine for the opportunities provided to the youth of the city, primarily due to Bob's efforts. Bob has also worked with the Patterson Park Public Charter School to establish an elective fishing class for the middle school. This program is still on-going during the spring and fall each school year.

I can honestly say I have never met anyone who has more passion and commitment to providing the youth (and adults) with recreational fishing opportunities. He once told me he will not quit until every kid has the opportunity to catch a fish. His compassion and patience with the children is to be admired, and I am honored to nominate Bob Wall for the Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award.

# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

## 2021 Recipient

### Robert Wall

*Nominated by Mary Helen Sprecher*

Bob Wall for years served as the director of the Baltimore City Parks & Recreation Department. During that time, he introduced countless underserved children to fishing at the Patterson Park Boat Lake. He had the lake stocked with trout each year (I worked for the local newspaper at the time and he would always give me a heads-up so that I could come down and take a picture to stir up interest).

When the Boat Lake needed repairs, Bob was instrumental in rescuing and moving the aquatic turtle population for the duration of the renovations. (He also trapped and relocated the nasty snappers prior to the first bulldozer coming in - certainly a yeoman's job!) He also kept the kids updated on what was being done (dredging, etc.) and why it was necessary. When the Boat Lake reopened, he presided over the grand opening, including releasing the aquatic turtles back into the Boat Lake with everyone cheering and waving to them. (I know this is true because I was there.)

During each fall, spring and summer Fishing Rodeo that he presided over (for more than 25 years), Bob taught kids not just about fishing but about fish. About the water. About the plants in the water. About the aquatic birds and turtles and dragonflies and everything else that made its home in and around the Boat Lake. He taught them to respect the water and to respect the life that grew there. He taught them how fun fishing could be, how to bait a hook, how to cast out, how to reel in and how to remove a fish from the hook. You haven't lived until you've seen inner-city children beaming from ear to ear while they hook bluegill, crappie, bass and trout.

Knowing most kids in the city didn't have their own tackle, Bob worked with Tochterman's Tackle, located near Patterson Park, to provide bait, and he and Tochterman's collected enough poles for every child who showed up to be able to fish, and fish proudly. He would take pictures on his phone of kids as they caught their first fish, and I think he was as happy as they were. Bob has long been a staunch proponent of fishing and of conservation. He retired recently from the city, but he still gets involved on a volunteer basis, making sure the next generation of anglers is just as excited as their predecessors.

Maryland is better because of Bob. It's better because of his passion and his love for the sport of fishing, and for his great wish to pass on his enthusiasm to kids who might never even know about fishing without his intercession. The sport of fishing is better because Bob is in it. His care and dedication are unmatched when it comes to conservation and to ensuring the waterways are available to generations to come. And children in Baltimore City are better because of Bob. His dedication to them, just by doing something simple like teaching them how to bait a hook and hold a pole, has taught many of them about the outdoors and about the importance of keeping the outdoors in good shape for future generations.

I wholeheartedly recommend Bob Wall for the Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award. He is the finest example of what Maryland has to offer. Maryland is better because of Bob. It's better because of his passion and his love for the sport of fishing, and for his great wish to pass on his enthusiasm to kids who might never even know about fishing without his intercession. The sport of fishing is better because Bob is in it. His care and dedication are unmatched when it comes to conservation and to ensuring the waterways are available to generations to come.

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# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

## 2021 Recipient

### Joseph W. Brooks (posthumous)

*Nominated by John Neely*

Joe Brooks (1901-1972) was an American fly fisherman and popular writer about the sport of fly fishing during the mid-twentieth century. He was born in Baltimore, MD in 1901 and died in Rochester, MN in 1972 from a heart attack. He wrote for leading fishing and outdoor magazines of the day and was the outdoors editor for the Baltimore Sun. He also wrote ten books about fly fishing, several of which are still considered leading authorities on the subject today. Publications have listed him as one of the ten most influential fishermen ever. The IGFA is on record as stating that he did more to popularize and expand fly fishing than any other individual.

Brooks was born into a family owned business but quickly discovered that he had no interest in business. Rather he wanted to become a full time writer and fly fisherman. He started writing for a number of small Maryland publications, and as his popularity grew, he became a national writer for publications such as Field and Stream, The Fisherman, and Saltwater Sportsman. Shortly thereafter, he became the outdoors editor for the Baltimore Sun. In 1953, he began writing for Outdoor Life, one of the most prestigious sporting magazines at that time, and in 1968 became their outdoors editor. Joe Brooks was a mentor and the person who introduced Lefty Kreh to fly fishing, last year's initial Lifetime Achievement Award posthumous recipient. Kreh always credited Brooks with introducing him to fly fishing, encouraging him to start writing about the subject, and placing him in the paid position of the Metropolitan Miami South Florida Fishing Tournament.

Joe Brooks pioneered saltwater fly fishing and targeting species that were thought impossible to catch with a fly. He was also the first person to pioneer "adventure fly fishing" by traveling to remote places around the world that had never been fly-fished before. He was the founder of the Order of the Jungle Cock in Thurmont, MD, an organization dedicated to bringing the joys of fishing to disadvantaged youth, with a particular emphasis on conservation. A monument is dedicated to Brooks on the banks of Big Hunting Creek. In 1964, he collaborated with Curt Gowdy of ABC Sports to found the American Sportsman television show that focused on outdoor sports such as hunting and fishing. The show ran for more than twenty years and was one of the most popular Sunday afternoon shows. He was a regular on the show during those years. Brooks received many awards, a few of which are fishing Halls of Fame for the International Game Fishing Association HoF, the Freshwater Fishing HoF, and the Fly Fishing Hall of Fame. Though Joe died in 1972, his contributions to recreational fishing and the outdoors are lasting



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