

**Lyles-Simpson Award  
Recipient  
2025**



***Lance Robinson***

## **Lance Robinson**

It is with great pleasure that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission presents this year's Lyles-Simpson Award to Lance Robinson. This prestigious award is presented annually to an individual, agency, or organization which has contributed to the betterment of the fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico through significant biological, industrial, legislative, enforcement, or administrative activities.

Lance was born in Anniston, Alabama, and raised in Huntsville. He and his wife, Bobbie, have been married for 46 years and have one daughter, Ashley, son-in-law Brett, grandson Carson, and granddaughters Chloe and Ella. They currently reside in Pelham, Alabama.

Inspired from an early age by Jacques Cousteau's television series and books, Lance developed a lifelong fascination with marine life and became a certified SCUBA diver at sixteen. Pursuing his ambition to work as a coral reef ecologist, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Auburn University and a Master of Science degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University (New Jersey) through the West Indies Laboratory in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Upon graduation, and facing limited job opportunities in coral reef ecology, Lance accepted a position as research faculty at Auburn University's Marine Research and Extension Center in Mobile, Alabama. His research there included off-bottom oyster mariculture, bycatch reduction in recreational shrimp trawls, the influence of abiotic and biotic factors on microhabitat use by fish and shrimp, and evaluations of riverine habitat suitability index models.

In April 1991, Lance, Bobbie, and Ashley relocated to Houston, Texas, where he joined the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Coastal Fisheries Division as an ecosystem biologist at the Seabrook Marine Laboratory. His team collected fishery-independent and fishery-

dependent data from Galveston Bay and Texas's territorial waters of the Gulf of America. These efforts contribute to one of the nation's longest-running standardized fishery monitoring programs, with over 50 years of data across every major Texas bay system.

Beyond routine sampling, the Galveston Bay Ecosystem Team conducted major studies on shrimp bycatch characterization, bycatch reduction devices, nighttime flounder gigging, and non-indigenous species surveys in Houston's tidal bayous. In recognition of his leadership, Lance received TPWD's Employee Recognition Award in 1997 and completed the Department's inaugural Natural Leaders Program in 2000.

In 2002, Lance was promoted to Regional Director for the Upper Coast Region, overseeing four field stations covering Sabine Lake, Galveston Bay, Matagorda Bay, and San Antonio Bay as well as management of the Galveston Bay private oyster lease program and the Oyster Industry Advisory Committee. During his tenure, he directed the relocation of the Seabrook Marine Laboratory to a newly renovated and expanded facility in Dickinson, Texas, and oversaw construction of the Port O'Connor Marine Laboratory serving the San Antonio Bay ecosystem.

Lance also served on the National Marine Fisheries Service's Eastern Oyster Biological Review Team, which evaluated the species' status in response to a petition for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act. Following Hurricane Ike in 2008, he managed federal fishery disaster relief funds that enabled TPWD to acquire the Research Vessel Karankawa and advanced sidescan sonar equipment for oyster habitat mapping, work that evolved into the Coastal Fisheries Division's Habitat Assessment Team. That same year, the Texas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society recognized Lance with the Outstanding Fisheries Worker Award for Fisheries Administration.

In January 2015, Lance was promoted to Director of Field Operations/Deputy Division Director at TPWD Headquarters in Austin. In this role, he oversaw the Fishery Management and Fishery Enhancement Branches. The Fishery Management Branch collects fishery-independent and -dependent data from eight field stations across Texas's coastal bay systems and territorial seas. The Fishery Enhancement Branch operates three state-of-the-art marine hatcheries focused on the research and propagation of key fishery species for public release.

In this capacity, Lance contributed to the development and implementation of recreational and commercial fishery management policies and regulations through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission and the Texas Legislature. He takes particular pride in the progress made in Texas's oyster fishery management, including the creation and implementation of the Texas Cultivated Oyster (Off-Bottom) Mariculture Program.

In addition to his leadership within TPWD, Lance served as a Commissioner for the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, as the Texas liaison to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and as a member of the Bi-National Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Recovery Team.

Lance considers his greatest professional accomplishment to be the recruitment and mentorship of more than 40 employees, many of whom have advanced their careers within TPWD, other state and federal agencies, and academia.

After 29 years of service, Lance retired from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 2020. He continues to remain active in fisheries management as an Alabama representative on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Coastal Migratory Pelagics Advisory Panel.

For all of these accomplishments and his years of service the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission is proud to present this year's Lyles-Simpson Award to such a worthy recipient.















# Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

## Past Lyles-Simpson Award Recipients

|                                   |             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Charles H. Lyles</i>           | <i>1984</i> |
| <i>Theodore B. Ford</i>           | <i>1985</i> |
| <i>J.Y. Christmas</i>             | <i>1986</i> |
| <i>John Breaux</i>                | <i>1987</i> |
| <i>John Ray Nelson</i>            | <i>1988</i> |
| <i>I.B. "Buck" Byrd</i>           | <i>1989</i> |
| <i>Hugh A. Swingle</i>            | <i>1990</i> |
| <i>John A. Mehos</i>              | <i>1991</i> |
| <i>J. Burton Angelle</i>          | <i>1992</i> |
| <i>Louis A. Villanova</i>         | <i>1993</i> |
| <i>Theodore H. Shepard</i>        | <i>1994</i> |
| <i>Edwin A. Joyce, Jr.</i>        | <i>1995</i> |
| <i>Tommy D. Candies</i>           | <i>1996</i> |
| <i>Walter M. Tatum</i>            | <i>1997</i> |
| <i>Thomas L. Heffernan</i>        | <i>1998</i> |
| <i>Trent Lott</i>                 | <i>1999</i> |
| <i>James M. Barkuloo</i>          | <i>2000</i> |
| <i>Walter W. Fondren, III</i>     | <i>2001</i> |
| <i>Jerald K. Waller</i>           | <i>2002</i> |
| <i>Andrew J. Kemmerer</i>         | <i>2003</i> |
| <i>Hal R. Osborn</i>              | <i>2004</i> |
| <i>Leroy Kiffe</i>                | <i>2005</i> |
| <i>Robert P. Jones</i>            | <i>2006</i> |
| <i>Wayne E. Swingle</i>           | <i>2007</i> |
| <i>Ralph Rayburn</i>              | <i>2008</i> |
| <i>William S. "Corky" Perret</i>  | <i>2009</i> |
| <i>Albert L. King</i>             | <i>2010</i> |
| <i>Virginia A. Vail</i>           | <i>2011</i> |
| <i>R. Vernon Minton</i>           | <i>2012</i> |
| <i>Larry B. Simpson</i>           | <i>2013</i> |
| <i>Michael C. Voisin</i>          | <i>2014</i> |
| <i>Ellie Francisco Roche</i>      | <i>2015</i> |
| <i>Michael S. Ray</i>             | <i>2016</i> |
| <i>Joseph I. Gill, Jr.</i>        | <i>2017</i> |
| <i>Christopher M. Blankenship</i> | <i>2018</i> |
| <i>William Borden Wallace</i>     | <i>2019</i> |
| <i>Harriet M. Perry</i>           | <i>2020</i> |
| <i>Thomas D. McIlwain</i>         | <i>2022</i> |
| <i>Joseph A. Shepard</i>          | <i>2023</i> |
| <i>Gary L. Graham</i>             | <i>2024</i> |