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DUBKE WINNER OF ROBERT SPARKS WALKER LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Part of Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards Event

NASHVILLE – Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Commissioner David Salyers today announced Kenneth Dubke, known as “The Birdman,” as winner of the department’s 2019 Robert Sparks Walker Lifetime Achievement Award. Dubke received the honor at the annual Governor’s Environmental Stewardship Awards event.

“Ken Dubke has been a champion for the study and protection of the avian species across Tennessee for more than 60 years,” Salyers said. “His passion for birds and their future on the planet has been extraordinary, and Tennessee is indebted to his lifelong commitment to nature. He is most deserving of this honor.”

Dubke, 88, has spent much of his career in the Chattanooga area and currently lives in Signal Mountain, but his career and efforts have made an impact from Upper East Tennessee to Reelfoot Lake in West Tennessee. His work spans from his days as a student in the 1950s at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville to organizing an osprey watch camp at Camp Jordan in East Ridge, Tenn., last year. Dubke has been instrumental in the preservation of golden eagles, osprey and whooping cranes in the state.

Born in Minnesota, Dubke attended the University of Tennessee after serving in the U.S. Army and joined the Knoxville chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society while a student. He moved to Elizabethton after graduating and compiled reports on the migratory patterns of sandhill cranes. He began work with the National Park Service in Hodgenville, Ky., in 1966 but soon moved to Chattanooga, where he joined the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, and remained there until 1991, when he retired as district ranger at Point Park on Lookout Mountain.

Dubke established public hawk watches at Signal Point on Signal Mountain. He established the first formal Eagle Days program at Reelfoot Lake, which became the pivotal location for bald eagle restoration in the state. His work led to a network of Tennessee wildlife viewing areas across Tennessee. Dubke and his wife, Lil, allowed placement of one of Tennessee’s first osprey hacking platforms in their backyard on Savannah Bay of Chickamauga Reservoir. The property was purchased to provide habitat for ospreys and Sandhill cranes. Tennessee now has one of the largest inland populations of ospreys in the United States.

Dubke’s holds the largest private ornithological library in the state. His passion for wildlife continues.

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