

BIRDING

For the love of birds — all 528

Since being hooked on birding by a scarlet tanager 50 years ago, Avon's Barlik has traveled extensively and logged hundreds of species

Avon resident Charlotte Barlik was interested in birds long before it was "cool."
 "When my friend and I started birding, folks would laugh at you if you said you were going bird watching. The bird trails at the state parks were empty except for the birds," she said. "The last time we went there were so many birders on the trail."

It all started in early 1970 when Barlik was invited on a trip to Kelleys Island.

"My friend said if I have a pair of binoculars to bring them along and we will check out some birds," Barlik said. "I had never much looked at birds other than the robins, cardinals and sparrows that came into the trees in our yard. When we got to Kelleys Island we started walking around looking for birds. My friend found one and told me to put up my binoculars and take a look."

"When I did, my mouth dropped open as I had never seen such a beautiful bird. I asked my friend what it was, and she told me a scarlet tanager."
 The migratory scarlet tanager, dipped in brilliant red with contrasting black wings, tends to have that effect on people. It has likely encouraged more than a few people to start birding, and for Barlik, that love lasted for nearly 40 years.

Barlik traveled to every state park in Ohio to see birds, observing 295 — just shy of the magic number of 300. She finds "those little warblers" to be special, and has seen all of them except the Connecticut warbler. She recalled a trip to Point Pelee in Canada on May 8, 1983, where she witnessed a weather fall out.

"Every photographer showed up to take photos as the warblers just stayed right on the ground," she said.
 Her life list is an impressive 530 birds. Each one is meticulously documented in her bird diary, where she notes not only when and where she saw the bird, but also the circumstances of the sighting. When I told her that I recently saw the brown booby, she noted that she saw one on April 29, 1988, in the Dry Tortugas.

She saw the MacGillivray's warbler on Aug. 15, 1992, at the Lewis and Clark Campground in Lolo National Park, where she noted that "persistence and patience" paid off.
 Bird No. 528 on that list is the elusive yellow rail — a small, secretive marsh bird that is notoriously difficult to find.

"When we were in Texas, the Wildlife Refuge had tours just to find the rail," she said. "There were morning and evening tours. We walked shoulder to shoulder and dragged a rope between each person. We saw the rail!"
 Her favorite bird is the ruby-throat hummingbird, which she used to get



PHOTO PROVIDED

Avon's Charlotte and Bob Barlik (pictured in 2008) have traveled all over the country volunteering with the American Red Cross and the National Park System. They were honored with the Superintendents Appreciation Award for 3,000 hours of volunteer work from 2001-09. Charlotte is also a longtime birder and used the travels to help log in 528 species. She has observed 295 in Ohio alone.

great looks at outside her kitchen window. A great choice, made more interesting when her husband found a fully intact hummingbird skeleton — which she preserved and saved — on the top of their motorhome.

But there is more to the story as Charlotte and her husband, Bob, volunteered extensively across the country, first with the American Red Cross and then with the National Park System.

"When my husband retired, we volunteered for the Red Cross," she said. "We were given a vehicle to drive to areas (that had experienced) a fire or flood, and we were flown to hurricane locations. I never realized how much the Red Cross did for those people. They provided them with a place to stay, temporary housing, food and clothes."

Then the Barliks sold their house and bought a motorhome and traveled around the country to volunteer at national parks and wildlife refuges. They named the 33-foot motorhome the "Roam Around Inn" and put nearly 90,000 miles on it. In their travels, they dealt with a frozen waterline, a smashed windshield and a blown tire that almost flipped them down an embankment.

"One day we saw a sign that read, 'Take pride in America. It's your land so lend a hand.' I called the number and told the lady that I spoke to that my husband and I were 'green' as far as park volunteers. Her reply was, 'Don't worry, we'll turn you brown.'"

The Barliks went on to receive the

Superintendents Appreciation Award for volunteering 3,000 hours from 2001-09. Some of the memorable experiences included Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico, Fort Pulaski in Georgia and The Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in Texas.

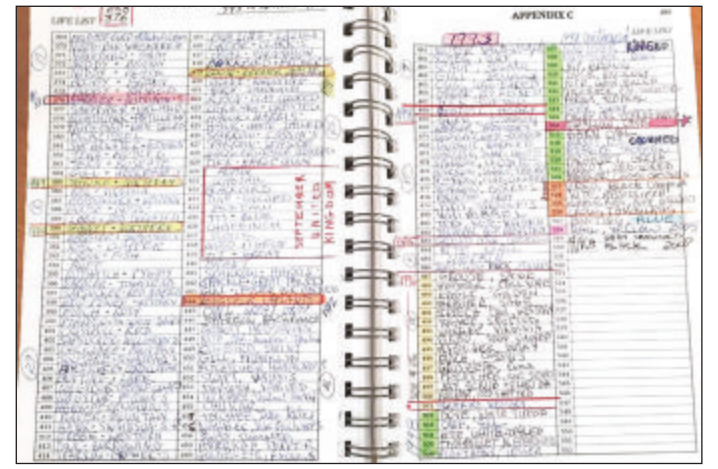
Along the way, Charlotte collected park badges and pins which she proudly displays in her home. The kitchen also features a huge map of the United States, with pins marking all the places they visited.

Indeed, times have changed and I was excited to meet her and learn more about her birding experiences. I love hearing about people's lives, particularly when we share a common passion. Her love of not only birds but also volunteering, brings perspective to the idea that you can have a checklist and also work to preserve our parks and refuges.

She had many bird books, several of which had been autographed by the authors along the way. One of the most interesting was the first issue of Bird Watcher's Digest, autographed by Bill Thompson. She wants to donate a number of books to the Black River Audubon Society so that they can be enjoyed by others.

But there were some books she plans on keeping.
 "I do like to reminiscence," she said. "My husband and I have had a wonderful life."

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ROB SWINDELL/ CHRONICLE PHOTOS

Above, Charlotte Barlik's lifetime bird sightings have filled a book. Below, The Barik's Superintendent's Appreciation Award for their volunteer work.



Above, the Barlik's sold their home and bought this motorhome they named the "Roam Around Inn" and traveled the country, logging nearly 90,000 miles. Below, Charlotte Barlik's bag is covered with patches from their journeys.



Hey Ma Nature, it's not nice to mess with the Brawl

This crazy weather! All this wind, rain and fluctuating temperatures have been wreaking havoc on local fisherman.

The winds on Lake Erie have been making the first week of the Walleye Fall Brawl difficult, with minimal opportunities for boaters. If they are able to get out, they are having a tough time finding the right fish. From what I'm hearing, the fish are there on the fish finders, but either not reacting to the baits or just aren't large enough to put in the cooler for a possible spot on the leaderboard. The winds are moving the the fish around almost daily, but the good news is those walleye are starting to move into shallower waters and are chasing schools of bait.

For those fishing from land, they'll start to see these schools roaming the shorelines soon and be able to put some very nice catches on the stringers before too long. Shore fishermen aren't limited to the walleye. There are some great fishing spots at local harbors that provide many other species. The tasty yellow perch can be found near the piers at this time of year. Panfish, catfish and even steelhead are other great choices to target right now.

If fishing for perch, I would suggest a crappie rig tight to the bottom tipped with a minnow or even a piece of night crawler. This same rig can be used for panfish and catfish. Popular rigs for steelhead would be a float with a minnow or a jig tipped with maggots set 3 to 4 feet below.

Speaking of steelhead, with the cooler weather the lure to shore for these silver bullets has been strong. I've seen guyls at various river mouths,



JEFF BURDICK

harbors or shore access areas trying their luck on these hard-fighting acrobats. Besides the bobber tactics, it's very popular to cast a blue/silver spoon like a KO Wobbler or Little Cleo in a 2/5th-ounce. By varying the speed of the retrieve, the angler will be able to cover different depths until he or she finds the fish. I have seen some really nice fish pictures across social media of some very healthy steelhead caught recently along the lake shore. I have had some friends fishing for walleye at night luck into some steelhead.

The lower river and protected harbor areas have also been hot spots for kayak anglers looking to hook into a steelhead. Trolling spoons or flash crank baits near the bottom can produce a fish or two.

This last bit of rain is going to fire up the stream fishing for steelhead. The rivers have been low with little-to-no flow for the last few weeks, causing a bunch of these fish to be staging in the lower stretches of the river and the river mouths waiting for this spike in flow to help them shoot up the streams. This is going to open up some good early fishing for those dedicated steelhead anglers. The fish will move

throughout the stream and give anglers plenty of catches.

With the water temperature still being favorable, anglers will be able to target fish with a variety of methods. Just like the shoreline tactics being used, spoons, spinners and lures will still work in the deeper areas of the river. Floats with the jig-and-maggot combo are always popular. I like a black jig for fishing like this. Floats drifted with spawn sacs below are a favorite for many as well. Fly fishers can throw a number of different patterns to entice the strike also. A minnow pattern or an olive woollybugger can get that heart-pounding strike they are looking for.

This early in the season it may require some moving around to find willing fish. Finding them is always the fun part. Putting everything together and seeing that silver fish jump clear of the water will put a smile on your face. These fish could be in deeper holes or mid-depth faster current areas. They should also be hungry and ready to bite. If you decide to catch and release, try your best to keep them in the water while removing the hook. Also, keep your fingers out of the gills and don't let the fish flop around on the muddy bank. On the other hand, these fresh run fish will provide some of the best eating of the season if you decide to keep your catch. And remember, the limit for steelhead is now two per day.

As much as I hate to keep saying this, please be respectful on the water. I see it every year though, so I will continue to preach a few things.

I'm not sure if one is any more important than the other, but they all

need to be done.

Please keep from discarding trash on the river banks and the pier/shoreline areas. Some areas get really bad. It's a great idea to take along a trash bag with you and do your part to pick up trash you see and dispose of it properly. Seek permission before crossing onto that stretch of water you want to fish that isn't public. Private property needs to be respected. Some land owners have reached their breaking point with trespassing. Finding the land owner and asking permission can yield you a nice piece of property to fish. Just ask. Be polite and respectful. Just because there may not be a sign doesn't mean you're not trespassing. Know the area and, if in doubt, don't go.

Lastly, everyone needs to maintain good behavior and etiquette on the water. Give the person next to you some space. Do your best to not encroach. Pay attention to how they are fishing and, if needed, move to the next spot. Talking to that person and asking his intentions can aid you in your next move as well. It may surprise you that they offer a few drifts on the water they have been fishing. You may even make a new friend. If you see them struggling, maybe offer advice to improve their day.

Protect a lot of water out there to fish. There's a lot of water and acting respectfully will keep it there for future generations to enjoy. We can all do our part to make it a better place. Get out there and enjoy.

Contact Jeff Burdick at flyrod11ft@gmail.com



Fall Brawl standings

ADULTS

1. Casey Powell	10.115	30.00
2. Herbert Lowery	9.570	29.75
3. Peter Murphy	9.130	30.25
4. David Katrenick	8.995	29.75
5. Shawn Randles	8.875	28.50

KIDS

1. Adam Verkin Jr.	6.485	25.00
2. Samantha Chin	5.125	24.50
3. Donovan Paes	4.620	22.50
4. Alexis J. Weaver	4.480	24.00
5. Caitlynn Scholtz	4.050	22.75