

# NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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The NW PA Fishing Report is brought to you by:



**Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region**  
crawford • erie • mercer • venango



**Fishing with Darl Black**  
**Information Service**



Lake Erie Smallmouth—Mark Rose photo of client

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## The Landing Net by Darl Black

It is looking like all inland lakes will finally reach 60 degrees this week. Indications are this Memorial Day weekend should be very good fishing for crappies across the region. It's also looking good for smallmouth bass in the Allegheny, inland lakes and Lake Erie. If you have not been able to get out fishing this spring, but have free time over the holiday, this is a great time to take the family out to your favorite fishin' hole.

The NW PA Fishing Report provides timely angling information for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties. Fishing comments and photos are offered by regional tackle shops and area anglers. The NWPAFR is based on experiences, observations and opinions of individual contributors; information is considered reliable but comments are not independently verified. In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to your comments being edited for clarity and brevity, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

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### Updates

- Erie, PA, May 15: The Erie Sports Commission announced today that the 2020 B.A.S.S. Nation Northeast Regional Championship scheduled at Presque Isle Bay for June, has been postponed due to the COVID-19 virus. The rescheduled dates are August 19-21, 2020.
- Pymatuning Lake: The Pymatuning Lake Association announced their annual Kids' Fishing Tournament has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 virus.

## COUNTY by COUNTY REPORTS

### CRAWFORD COUNTY

#### Pymatuning Lake

**Dave @ Richter's Bait Shop**; filed 5/18: We had our busiest day of the entire season so far on Saturday. People were everywhere. Lots of anglers on the lake. But, as is always the case, some caught fish and some didn't. The daytime walleye bite has picked up and nightcrawlers are doing better than minnows – either casting on a jig or drifting. The night bite is still there for some anglers, but the number of walleyes being caught after dark is way down. I heard there were a couple muskies caught this weekend, but it was second hand information. Smallmouth largemouth bass are active. The crappie



RJ & Colin with LMB & SMB

spawn is just getting started on the South End. The water temp on the South End is roughly 10 degrees colder than usual for this time of year. I expect Memorial Day Weekend to be very good crappie fishing – if the weather doesn't sour!

**Laurie @ Duck-N-Drake;** filed 5/18: Mixed reports the last few days. Some customers report no walleyes while others are doing okay. And the technique varies as well: some fishermen are catching them by trolling deep with **Shad Raps** and **Flicker Shads** while others are getting the by jiggging the humps with a jig tipped with a crawler. Believe it or not, I'm still getting reports of decent-size yellow perch in the deep water just off the Andover/Espyville Causeway; fewer are being caught but some nice ones still being taken. Another customer tells me he has been catching crappies every day from the North End in the pads. Wishing everyone a Happy Memorial Day and enjoy being outside.

**Russ @ Gateway Bait;** filed 5/18: Fishing success has been up and down with the weather – a drop in water temperature turns crappie bite off and sends some to deeper water. Hopefully now that it's starting to warm up, the bite will pick up. I'm hearing a lot of chatter about muskies this year so far, but no pictures.

**Brandi @ Poff's;** filed 5/18: It was a decent weekend of fishing with anglers catching a little bit of everything. Crappies in the North End seem to be the best bite. Walleye bite is better in the South End than the North. I don't have any prediction for the holiday weekend as to what will be biting, but I will recommend you take advantage of the warmer weather and get out of the house!

**Sam @ Robinson's Bait;** filed 5/18: On and off, up and down – fishing has been both good and bad. Water temperature in North End is 5 to 10 degrees colder than it should be at this time of the spring. Up north, the crappies are back in the shallows getting ready to spawn; reports are females still have tight egg sacks. If water continues to warm, eggs should loosen up maybe this week. If you are not catching crappies then you are not fishing shallow enough. Be sure to stop by the shop this holiday weekend to pick up a free "I support the Class of 2020" armband or key chain!



**David Graham** (Tionesta); filed 5/17: I sure was surprised when my spinnerbait was hit by a freight train Sunday afternoon on the North End of Pymatuning while bass fishing in the shallows. Okay, it wasn't a real train. But it was one smashing hit and a heck of a fight. Never knew there were any in Pymatuning. What was it? A hybrid striped bass! (See photo left)

**“Captain” Hook Morocco** (Hermitage); filed 5/15: Lots of options for fishermen to choose from this time of year. I like trout fishing by day and walleye fishing at night! The rivers and streams have all been very fishable recently. I caught a 20-inch Palomino from the upper Shenango River this week – which was quickly released. The walleye shore fishing has slowed some at Pymatuning, but a few can still be caught by those willing to keep tossing the stick baits into the night. (See photo)



Captain Hook

### Conneaut Lake

**Marilyn Black** (Cochranton); filed 5/15: One afternoon earlier this past week, Darl and I checked out Conneaut Lake. The lake was a little high and still at 50 degrees, rather cold for this time in May. Struck out on shallow-water smallmouth bass. But we did notice several boats fishing one of the better-known staging sties for pre-spawn crappies. Saw a couple crappies caught. This warmer weather should get fish moving shallow at Conneaut.

## ERIE COUNTY

**Kirk @ East End Angler**; filed 5/18: it’s been another rough week weather wise on the North Coast. Walleye bite on the lake has only been so-so, although a few anglers are catching ‘eyes at night from the South Pier. I had reports of lake trout being caught in 60 to 65 feet between Shades Beach and North East.

**Brittney @ Poor Richards**; filed 5/18: We are still plagued with colder than normal water temperature and a mudline out to 20 or 30 feet. A couple reports of catching walleyes on jigs in 10 to 20 feet of water – would likely improve when the mud clears. Also, a couple customers stopped with Lake Trout they caught off North East. For the Memorial Day Weekend, we are having our walleye trolling rod and reel combos on special. Stop in and check them out.

**Mark @ Mark Rose Guide Service**; filed 5/18: Hey guys and gals! Captain Mark Rose here with a smallmouth bass report. Bass fishing out of Erie, PA has been up and down with the weather, and also with the intense fishing pressure. But it hasn’t stopped them from biting if you know the spots and the best baits to use. Best baits have been drop-shot, **Ned Rig** and jerkbaits. Our big fish recently have been 5.5, 6.4, 6.1 and 5.3 pounds plus lots of



Mark Rose photo



Mark Rose photo

other good size bass, too. If you are looking for a great fishing trip, book today with bassonline at 888-629-2277. We take care of everything...booking your trip and lodging. (See photos here and on cover)

**Richard @ Someday Isle Tackle**; filed 5/18: Well rough weather continued to be a major factor the last 2 weeks. But the walleye fishing on both sides of the city is pretty decent. This past Saturday the water temp was 50.9 degrees. Now going from winter to mid-summer temps this coming week. Memorial weekend should be outstanding. Drifting and casting **Water Puppets** in the shallows has been a hot presentation. Whole or half crawler on the jig outfishes minnows right now. Have fun! (See photo)



Someday Isle photo

**Keith at Dutch Fork Fishing Charters**; filed 5/15: We fished out of Walnut Creek on Wednesday. Water was muddy with east breeze. Perfect conditions for walleye fishing!!! It took a bit to figure it out but caught our limit of 'eyes - all from 16 to 24 inches. Fish came on our custom painted **Bandit Crankbaits**. Purple and chartreuse were best. Fish 14 to 18 feet of water at 1.4 mph. We saw guys jigging but the bite looked slow. We actually had 1 double and 1 triple, and missed quite a few other fish. The bite should be good this coming week as the weather warms. (See photo—more in Livewell)



Dutch Fork Fishing Charter

## MERCER COUNTY

### Lake Wilhelm

**Bo @ BC Bait Co**; filed 5/18: Crappies are biting in the shallow bays. A white medium-size Terry Bug on a 1/16-oz jighead suspended 3 feet under a float has been out most successful setup. Bluegills are biting as well. One of my customers picked up a musky and an 18-inch walleye on BC Baits just down from Launch #1 on Wilhelm this past week.



Captain Hook on Shenango River



Lake Julia trout fishing

## MERCER COUNTY Continued

### Shenango Lake

**Randy @ Fish West PA**; filed 5/18: When Shenango Lake water temps move into the lower 60s, fish come to life. There were some very good days as well some slow days in the past two weeks. All species are in their usual spring spots and hungry. Walleye and crappie moved shallow along with bass, pike and hybrids. Now's the time! Tight lines! Randy. (See photos)



Fish West PA photo

**Rick Como** (Sharpsville) filed 5/18: I was fishing alone this past week, so I do not have photos. But here is what I know...fishing at Shenango has improved considerably the past few days. Water temperatures have begun to rise and all fish species seem to be on the move. Crappies are showing up in shallow cover in good numbers; lots of the crappies 10 to 12 inches are being caught all over the lake. White bass are along the shoreline and some have started to run up the rivers. Largemouth bass and pike are hitting well, taking crankbaits and buzzbaits along the riprap shorelines. Hybrid stripers are finally showing up along the river channel edges and points. If the weather holds, the next couple weeks should be dynamite fishing for many species!



Fish West PA photo

**Kevin Austin** (Farrell); filed 5/18: I've been catching some nice crappies from Shenango this past week. My biggest one was just over 16 inches. I used a black/chartreuse **Bobby Garland** minnow body on a red 1/16-ounce jighead. I was fishing the jig three feet below a stick bobber. I decided to suspend my kids fishing class this spring due to COVID-19 virus. But be sure to visit my Facebook Page "luckis4rabbits" so see the fishing logo wear I offer. (See photo)



Kevin/ with 16 inch plus

**Scott Selle**; filed 5/17: My son Rob and I had a crappie day at Shenango on Saturday – no pun intended. We caught 12 to 14-inch slabs using **Bobby Garland Baby Shad** suspended below a bobber in about 8 feet of water. (See photo right and more on Livewell page)



Scott Selle

## VENANGO COUNTY

**Jody @ Maurer's Trading Post**; filed 5/18: The river has been so muddy that many of our regular customers have not been fishing it. However, anglers have been having success on Justus Lake for trout and Lake Wilhelm for crappies. We are fully stocked with live bait and tackle for the Memorial weekend of fishing. Also, we just got a shipment of Sawyer's Tick Repellent in so be sure to stop in to pick up some; this is the stuff the US Army uses.

**Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill**; filed 5/17:

- Justus Lake – Wow, weather finally reached 70 degrees! About time! Heating up Justus Lake a bit paid off for me while trolling a six-inch creek bait. A chunky 14-inch large-mouth bass decided it wanted to be a bit chunkier. After releasing the bass, it swam away probably disappointed it didn't get the big meal it wanted. I spoke with several other fishermen. The best report was on trout – a couple fishermen used wax worms below a slip bobber in 22 feet of water at the dam end of the lake, catching one trout right after another one.
- Sugar Creek – I spent a few hours drifting different baits. Caught many rainbow trout and a few browns on both pieces of nightcrawler and wax worms. I did try some large creek minnows, which went over well for smallmouth bass, catching a half-dozen. All fish were released.



Angler Al on Justus Lake

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### Allegheny River

**Rich Sari** passes on this bit of information: Caddis flies are nearing the end of their hatch on the river, so boats will not be covered with flies come Memorial Day weekend!

**Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service**; filed 5/16:

We've had excellent fishing on the river the past two weeks. Water temperatures were unseasonably cold – 46 to 50 degrees – but smallmouth bass were biting well and starting to stage up near spawning areas. We've taken lots of smallmouth up to 20 inches on **Galida's Grubz** and finesse tubes. A good walleye bite too, with most fish come from current areas on soft boot0tail swimbaits. A recent high water even will reset the clock.



Nathaniel / Jeff Knapp photo

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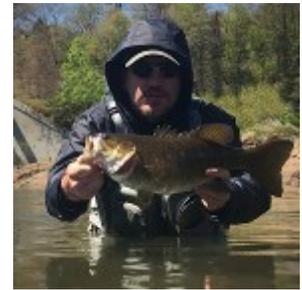
## Allegheny River continued

**Pete @ SmalliesontheYough.com**; filed 5/16: Allegheny diary

5/9: My first guide trip of the year on the Allegheny. Cold and snow in May is crazy but the fish didn't seem to care. We caught smallmouth up to 20 inches and a single largemouth – rare catch this far north on the Allegheny. Also landed a northern pike.



5/11: It was a decent day on the river today. We caught a bunch of nice smallies up to 19 inches. We also caught a rainbow trout! Water level is low and clear right now. Bite should be getting better.



5/13: Nice cool, sunny spring day on the river. I landed a bunch of smallmouths up to 20 inches using soft plastics in current. My 6-pound **Gamma Edge** handled all situations. I caught several nice walleyes, releasing the bigger ones. (photos on right plus more on Gamma Tip Page)



Relax and enjoy an awesome Pymatuning sunset shot by James Scott

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## **Area Guide Services contribute to the NW PA Fishing Report**

Looking for a trip on a Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango county water?  
Check them out!

**Dutch Fork Guide Service:** Lake Erie Walleye trolling, casting and jigging. Keith Eshbaugh; 724-884-3977; [www.dutchforkcustomlures.com](http://www.dutchforkcustomlures.com)

**Keystone Connection Guide Service:** Allegheny River Smallmouth, Walleye and Musky plus Pymatuning Walleye. Jeff Knapp; 724-902-6082; [keystone-connectionguideservice@gmail.com](mailto:keystone-connectionguideservice@gmail.com); [www.facebook.com/keystoneconnectionguideservice](http://www.facebook.com/keystoneconnectionguideservice).

**Mark Rose Fishing Guide;** Lake Erie Smallmouth Bass. Contact 724-333-3898; [markrose@bassonline.com](mailto:markrose@bassonline.com); [markrosefishing.com](http://markrosefishing.com).

**Smallies on the Yough LLC:** wading for Smallmouth Bass on the Yough River, Allegheny River and other streams. Pete Cartwright; 412-215-6254; [pete@smalliesontheyough.com](mailto:pete@smalliesontheyough.com); [www.facebook.com/smalliesontheyough/](http://www.facebook.com/smalliesontheyough/).

**Wildwood Outfitters:** Fly fishing for Trout, Steelhead and other species. Nick DelVecchio; [www.wildwoodoutfitterspa.com/](http://www.wildwoodoutfitterspa.com/); [www.facebook.com/wildwoodoutfitters](http://www.facebook.com/wildwoodoutfitters).

## **Contributors Drawn for Prizes in this issue**

Spool of Gamma Line: **Mark Rose**

Lure Pack of Galida's Grubz: **Scott Selle**

To claim your prize, email Darl Black with you shipping address. If you fail to notify Darl that you saw your name posted by the next Fishing Report, the prize will go back into the bin for another drawing.

# The Livewell

Brought to you by:  
Wiegel Brothers Marine  
704 1/2 Elk Street  
Franklin, PA 16323  
Phone 814-437-2077



Email: [Debbie@riverjetpro.com](mailto:Debbie@riverjetpro.com)



Pymatuning perfect at Wiegel Brothers



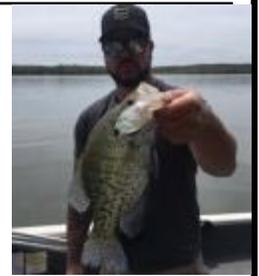
Erie—Dutch Fork Charters



Mikey with golden bow



Rob Selle



Rob Selle

Shenango—Scott Selle

## Allegheny River—client success with Jeff Knapp of Keystone Connection Guide Service



Shawn



Tom



Father and son fishing success



Black Knight Industries  
Oil City, PA 16301  
[www.gammafishing.com](http://www.gammafishing.com)

Gamma Line may be found locally at the following tackle shops:

- Consumer Direct Sports (CDS) near Grove City Outlet Mall
- Maurer's Trading Post, Franklin, PA

Darl Black: I've been using Gamma Edge Fluorocarbon on my spin-jig rod ever since I was introduced the line well over a decade ago. I prefer straight fluorocarbon on my Loomis spin-jig rod because I am bottom-bouncing jigs and tubes, and getting hung frequently on bottom snags. To get free, I can sling-shot the jig out of 90% of hang-ups. However, if using braid, there is no stretch in the line and therefore you cannot use the sling-shot method to get free. With braid all you can do is pull and see what happens. The 6-pound Edge offers the necessary manageability and adequate strength for all the presentations I do with my spin-jig rod. About two years ago I finally convinced to try 6-pound Edge as his go-to river line instead of 8-pound. He loves it! Witness the variety of fish he and clients has landed on recent river Small-mouth guide trips.



Largemouth Bass



Northern Pike



Walleye



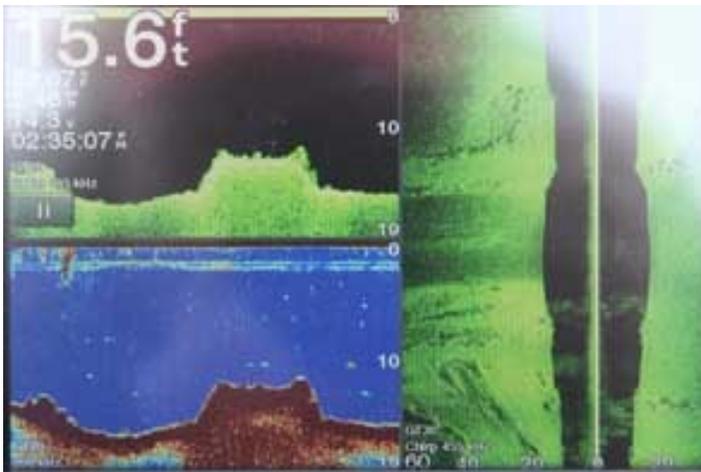
Rainbow Trout

## GARMIN Information Page

Tips from real anglers on using Garmin Electronics



My Garmin units are the best fishfinders I've ever used. It's amazing what you can learn about areas of a lake you may have fished for years and thought you knew very well. If you want to learn how to use your unit – particularly Side Vu – I recommend visiting either Shenango Lake or Lake Wilhelm. Both of these lakes have incredible amount of natural bottom structure and manmade roads & foundations, plus added brushpiles. (At Pymatuning you can cover acres of deepwater flats but never see a thing – you might think your unit isn't working because it looks a desert down there.)



There are a number of submerged roads under Wilhelm. Some of the best summer crappies spots are at manmade brushpile put on the road-bed, or a bridge foundation where the road crossed Sandy Creek. Cast a 1/16-ounce jig (such as a Bobby Garland Baby Shad), count it down and slowly swim it back to the boat. There are lots of small crappies in Wilhelm, so you may have fish a couple of these spots until you find a school of keeper-size black crappies.

