

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

Published by Blackwolfe Communications LLC

Issue: November 18, 2020

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



John with hefty Erie laker

So many anglers focused on steelhead that many forget there are other excellent fishing opportunities in the late fall, including Lake Trout on the Big Pond and Crappies on some inland waters like Shenango Lake.



Ken with jumbo Shenango crappie

The Landing Net by Darl Black

As a result of Covid-19, many more people stayed close to home this spring and summer. A good share of those individuals went fishing and boating. Lakes were busier this season than I've seen in many years. Boat dealers were busy trying to resurrect outboard motors that had been neglected for years. Fishing license sales were up, as were attendance at PA State Parks. And fishing tackle disappeared from shelves of local retailers, who were unable to resupply due to disruptions in both production and supply lines. Typical for this time of year, fishing activity is slowing down, although the Erie tributaries and the Allegheny River continue to draw angler attention. The question now: Ice or not this winter?

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.

NW PA FISHING REPORT for November 18, 2020

Published by Blackwolfe Communications LLC

If fishing in a boat during the cold-water period, don't forget to wear your PFD. It could save your life!

County by County Reports

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Bean @ Richter's Bait & Tackle; filed 11/16: I'm hearing about crappies, perch and bluegills being caught off the docks. Boat anglers are getting a few keeper walleyes on blades from the dam up to the Espyville Causeway, but not everyone is successful. Also, a handful of anglers are wading the shoreline after dark and catching some walleyes on long minnow plugs.

Patty @ Poff's Place; filed 11/16: Anglers who are out are getting some fish – the bite isn't too bad but it could be better. Perch are most frequent species caught. I've had reports from customers of crappies being caught but no specifics. Blade baits seem to be the best lure for walleyes right now; those in boats are jigging up fish around the Causeway. Also had reports of a big musky or two cruising the Spillway area.

Marilyn Black (Cochranton); filed 11/11: Darl and I made our last trip of the season to Pymatuning last week. Looking for crappies, but struck out on all our fall crappie spots in 14 to 18 feet of water. Instead, the bottoms of these areas were carpeted with unde-

sirable white bass – all clones between 5 and 6 inches. Massive numbers apparently down there. Later in afternoon we found a few scattered crappies in 26/27 feet of water on a large barren flat next to the river channel. Crappies were not on cover, or on the edge of the channel. Instead, they apparently smack on the bottom – not even schooled up but with one here, one there. They ranged in size from 9 to 11 inches. We bid so long to Pymatuning until 2021. (See photo below)

Kevin Austin (Farrell); filed 11/5: The first week of November I had a couple very good days on crappies at the Jamestown docks when they first opened for fishing. (See photos below.)



Marilyn with white perch



Kevin Austin with day 1 of Jamestown dock crappies



Kevin Austin with day 2 Jamestown dock crappies

Conneaut Lake



Darl Black (Cochrannton); filed 11/10: Marilyn and I made our last run at Conneaut Lake in search of big smallmouths last week. The post-cold-front bluebird sky made for a difficult day of fishing. Water temperature still in the mid-50s didn't help (should have been 50 degrees or below for a "normal" fall temp the second week of November). After checking shallow and deep, we struck out on smallmouths. Couldn't even get bluegills to bite. We did locate stacks of crappies in a mid-lake basin, filling the water column from 20 to 38 feet of water. Caught a few before realizing these deep schools were comprised of 6 to 7 inch fish. Also caught what will likely be my final largemouth of 2020 on a blade bait from a sunken debris in 25 feet of water. (See photo)

ERIE COUNTY

Doug @ Elk Creek Sports; filed 11/16: Even though there was considerable rainfall to our south on Sunday, apparently not much fell in the Erie watershed during the severe windstorm that battered the shoreline. As of Monday morning, Elk Creek and other West Side streams were still low and clear. Perhaps there will be a late day push of water, or perhaps the 3 inches plus of snow forecast for Erie on Tuesday will add color and flow to the tributaries. We have not received any angler reports since Sunday's storms.



Tudor photo—Bob

Bill @ Tudor Hook-N-Nook; filed 11/16: I checked out three West Side streams today. All were low and clear. Yesterday's rain to our south had no impact on our streams – not even Conneaut Creek which originates in Crawford County. The bite is tough. Hoping for good amount of snow on Tuesday and resulting melt off results in stream rise later in week. Meanwhile, Bob of Solitude Steelhead Guide Service has been putting clients on fish all week long. (See photos on the right)



Tudor photo—Rick

Kirk @ East Side Angler; filed 11/16: At the present time, Presque Isle State Park is closed as a result of flooding and wind damage from the storm on Sunday. I have not received any fishing reports from Bay anglers yet today as to what might impact the storm may have had on fishing in the Bay. Perch had been biting all over the Bay with the biggest perch coming from Head of Bay – that may have changed. I suspect the massive school of gizzard shad off East Avenue Boat Launch have been dispersed due to huge wave action, which means that shoreline bite for walleye, steelhead and lake trout is likely over. All that wind, but little actual rain up here to feed the streams.



Tudor photo—Thao



Jake @ FishUSA; filed 11-11: Due to lack of rain, Erie streams are still very low and clear. Fishing at first light and last light are the most productive times of day. Light line is an absolute must with skittish pressured fish. (See photo on the left)

ERIE COUNTY continued

Denny Beggs (Franklin); filed 11-12: I fished the surf this morning near the mouth of Trout Run. Lots of steelhead being caught – most being released by anglers to catch another day. I fished with sucker spawn fly under a float, egg sack and Power Bait floated off the bottom with sliding sinker. FUN time fishing! (See photo on right)



Denny Beggs photo

John Wilpula (Conneaut Lake); filed 11-8: Here are photos of a couple Lake Erie giant lake trout from the weekend. A mix of trolling spoons and jigging swim baits did the damage. Throw in a couple small steelhead, some additional smallmouth and a walleye, too. Largest laker went 26.5 pounds. What a day on Lake Erie! (See photo here and in Livewell)



John Wilpula and son with laker

MERCER COUNTY

Shenango Lake



Randy with SMB

Randy @ Fish West PA; filed 11-15: Shenango Lake water temp is dropping quickly making fishing tough. High winds of late have not helped. Crappies are still active but other species are slowing down and settling into winter patterns. Erie tributaries have been kind to us though with some nice catches. Tight lines and stay safe! (See photo)

Ken Smith (Sharon); filed 11-15: Crappie bite at Shenango is the best it has been all season! Doesn't matter what depth as long as there is wood nearby. Color doesn't really matter either as I'm using 5 or 6 different colors on each trip. Hand tied hair, plastic or live minnows – all producing. Fishing straight down. Big fish, strong numbers. Absolutely outstanding for November. (See photos here and in Livewell)



Ken Smith photo



Ken Smith photo

VENANGO COUNTY

Oil Creek

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 11-16: Enjoyed fly fishing on the artificial only stretch of Oil Creek over the weekend. I landed several nice rainbows and a few browns. Below this section, where the waters are open to live bait, my friend Tom Hays and I caught smallmouth bass. One was a stocky 3 pounder. (See photo of trout)



Al on Oil Creek

Allegheny River



Winger photo

Gene Winger (Oil City); filed 11-16: We continue to have good days for smallmouth on the Allegheny. Bass have moved to quieter water, but the ones we caught were in shallow water. We caught them good with Mike's Custom Tackle Swimbaits and Tubes. Thanks for making great baits, Mike! (See photo here and Livewell)



Jeff Knapp photo

Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service; filed 11-14: During the past couple weeks we've found good numbers of quality-size smallmouth in well-known wintering holes. In other less obvious areas, the smallmouth bite has been good, also, but not as many 15-inch-plus fish. I suspect this is due to continued low flows (vast areas with low current) which allows bass much more freedom – i.e. they are still scattered. The walleye bite has also been slow to materialize – although we are getting some nice eye's while targeting smallmouth. Finesse tubes, Galida's Grubz, hair jigs and blade baits all continue to produce. (See photo)



Pete Cartwright photo

Pete @ Smalliesontheyough.com; filed 11-3: I voted for smallmouth today. It was a nice day on the Allegheny River. We caught a few nice bass today using 412 Tube Baits. The water had floating weeds and leaves which made presentation tough at times. But we stayed engaged and found some bass by fishing super slow. (See photo)

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

Keystone Connection Guide Service: Allegheny River Smallmouth, Walleye and Musky plus Pymatuning Walleye. Jeff Knapp; 724-902-6082; keystoneconnectionguideservice@gmail.com; www.facebook.com/keystoneconnectionguideservice.

Mark Rose Fishing Pro Guide; Lake Erie Smallmouth Bass. Contact 724-333-3898; markrose@bassonline.com; 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; www.facebook.com/smalliesontheyough/.

Wildwood Outfitters: Fly fishing for Trout, Steelhead and other species. Nick DelVecchio; www.wildwoodoutfitterspa.com/; www.facebook.com/wildwoodoutfitters.

Names drawn for prizes. To receive prize, you must email Darl at darlblack@windstream.net and provide your shipping address.

Cover shot—pack of Galida's Grubz or Mike's Custom Tackle Tubes; Ken Smith

Gamma Line—type and pound test of your choice: John Wilpula

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



Shenango Crappie—Ken Smith photo



Allegheny SMB—Gene photo



Gene Winger photo



26-lb Erie Lake Trout—John Wilpula



Erie steelhead—photo by Randy



Erie SMB—Wilpula photo



Allegheny SMB—Pete Cartwright



Black Knight Industries

Oil City, PA 16301

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



GAMMA NEWS...Gamma Fishing is completely moved their new headquarters in Franklin, PA. Dale and crew were up and running line on their equipment within a day of installing it in the new facility. Assistant Office Manager Ray loves the new setting and has settled in-

to the new office. Business wise, Dale says it has been a good year for Gamma sales. They were able to supply line to old and new customers even though many other major line companies had their line supply and distribution system disrupted due to the pandemic. More anglers had the op-



portunity to try Gamma Line since they were unable to obtain their regular line. If you are a Gamma Line user, you know that once an angler actually tries Gamma Polyflex or Gamma Edge, they are hooked on it and likely will not go back to their old line.

Above: Assistant Ray screens calls and sometimes handles disgruntled customers.

GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE

- Real anglers share actual fishing experiences with Garmin units



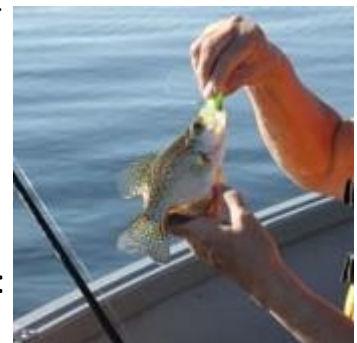
Fishing with Garmin...from Darl Black

The second week of November, Marilyn and I were looking for smallmouth bass on Conneaut Lake. The usual areas where we found and caught smallmouth this time of year were barren. It was an incredibly blue-sky post cold front day which didn't help matters.



So, we kept looking for anything that would bite. On a saddle area between a long point and mid-lake hump, we came across a big stack of something – exactly what species we didn't know for sure but suspected with crappies or a motherlode of Conneaut's mysterious white bass. Fish were stacked in the water column from a bottom depth of 38 feet upward to the 20-foot level. First, we tried drifting hair jigs through the fish. No takers. Next, we went to blade baits, knowing that every species of fish can be en-

ticed into striking by yo-yoing a blade in front of their nose. However, nothing reacted on initial pass. It took a couple passes to nally connect with a fish. Crappie yes. Keeper size? No. A few more presentations of the blade on the bottom as well as high in the water column only yield more 5 to 6-inch crappies. For each one hooked in the mouth, one would come up foul hooked. Leaving these stacked crappies, we continued our search. Lesson: Not every interesting discovery is going to lead to catchable, desirable size fish.



fi-