

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



For something different this winter, consider booking a trip with a guide this winter, such as Wildwood Outfitters.



Don't forget the Lake Trout bite next year

Landing Net by Darl Black

It's that time of year – many anglers are hunting, others are deep into Christmas preparation, and the rest are waiting for ice fishing. However, looking at the ten-day forecast, safe ice isn't going to happen anytime soon; it may be three to six weeks away – we just don't know. In the meantime, there are still open water opportunities for those who really want to fish. Steelhead fishing in Erie tributaries draws the most attention. Pymatuning, Wilhelm and Shenango still have crappies biting. Walleye in the Allegheny River. Wishing everyone a most joyous and safe Christmas celebration. See you next year!

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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Great program put together by Tim Tomlin. Still have until December 17th to get donations to Tudor Hook-N-Nook, East End Angler or BC Bait Co.

County by County Reports

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Bean @ Richter's Bait & Tackle; filed 12/12: Not many boats on the lake. Many anglers are fishing the Jamestown Marina Docks. Boat anglers are catching walleye and perch almost exclusively on blade baits like Vib-E, Sonar, etc. Anglers on the docks are still scoring crappies – taken on small plastic jigs rather than live minnows. Occasionally someone gets a limit.

Patty @ Poff's Place; filed 12/12: Things are slow. The hottest bite seems to be the docks at Linesville Marina where they are catching perch and crappies. I'm not even getting reports of any success along the causeway.

Marilyn Black (Cochrannton); filed 12/11: Darl and I fished the docks at Jamestown Marina for about an hour in the late afternoon on Friday. We didn't catch anything, but the angler a couple slips down from us had a half-dozen very nice bluegills in his bucket when we arrived.

Kevin Austin @ Luck-is-For-Rabbits Fishing Clothing; filed 12/11: I fished the docks at Jamestown on Thursday; caught 7 keeper crappies. Not as good as previous trips in November. (See end of November photo)



Blade bait 'eyes



Dock bluegills



State Park Docks at Pymatuning produce fish



Austin's previous dock trip

ERIE COUNTY

Lake Erie tributaries

Note: The flow in Erie tributaries is a fickle beast. Levels can rise and fall rather quickly, depending on the amount of rain and snow melt in the watershed. If thinking about making a holiday trip for steelhead, it's best to reach out with a call or Facebook visit to one or more of the near-lake tackle shops which deal with local steelhead anglers on a daily basis for a reliable report on stream conditions. Most of those tackle shops are contributors to the NW PA Fishing Report, and are mentioned below. **(See steelhead photos on Special Erie Photo page.)**

Nick @ Wildwood Outfitters (Guide Service): The steelhead fishing on PA tributaries has been outstanding! There is a nice mix of fresh and dark fish spread throughout the drainages. Our anglers are doing really well on pink, orange, and red egg patterns as well as on caddis imitations and stoneflies. The snowy backdrop makes for a spectacular scene and it's truly one of the best times to be a PA tributary. **(See cover photo)**

Bill @ Hook-N-Nook: There are some fresh fish in the system along with drop backs. A little snow melt and some more water should move them around and get them biting. **(See photos on Special Erie Photo Page)**

Jake @ FishUSA: Cold water means lazy fish which in turn calls for lazy techniques. Dead drifting sacks and jigs in slow moving pockets have been key to getting bites in frigid temps!

Jeff @ Poor Richards: Minnows and minnow imitations have been producing. Fly fishermen are doing best on light-colored egg patterns.

Doug @ Elk Creek Sports: When creeks are low and clear, many anglers struggle because steelhead are easily spooked. We need rain to add flow and color to streams.

Kirk @ East End Angler: Dredging opened the mouth of Sixteen Mile Creek and a bunch of fish moved into the stream this past week. Based on catch reports, it appears Upper Four Creek may have received a stocking of breeders from the hatchery this past week.

Chad Prihode: Using single yellow egg flies on 6-pound fluorocarbon tippet, my wife Emily and I caught seven steelhead from Elk Creek near Girard on December 6. **(See photos on Special Erie Photo page)**

Lake Erie

Keith @ Dutch Fork Fishing Charters: Fall lake trout fishing was very good this season, except for the wind. We were only able to get out a few times, but we caught some great fish! A 19 pounder was our biggest, but several lakers over 25 pounds were reported. We strictly jig for lakers in the fall, but they can be caught trolling, too, using regular trolling techniques. The bite is just about finished, with just some big males still hanging around. The walleye bite will start around mid-May 2021 and we will be ready to go. Book early! **(See Lake Trout photos on Special Erie photo page.)**

Presque Isle Bay

Tim @ Presque Isle Bay Anglers Group: The Bay has been hit and miss for perch so far this winter, which is surprising since there are plenty of emerald shiners around for personal netting. Try the usual city-side spots. The cold water in the shipping channel has brought in some nice walleye and eelpout (aka burbot or freshwater ling-cod). Walleyes are being caught at all depths in the channel, while burbot are strictly caught on the bottom. Use emerald shiners, golden shiners or cut bait for burbot. Pack plenty of terminal tackle because the Channel has plenty of snags. PIBA member Roger Hawk recently caught three of these tasty bottom dwellers— see his photos below. Good luck and be safe around the cold winter waters. ALSO – A HUGE thank you to all the anglers, charter captains and sportsmen groups who have donated to our PIBA's Tackle for Tots tackle drive. There is still time to donate this year. And we will do it again next year.



Burbot: Strangers from the depths of Lake Erie. Each year at the start of winter, these seldom seen fish show up in the channel leading from Lake Erie into Presque Isle Bay. They may be caught in the manner described above by Tim Tomlin. Although I've never sampled burbot, they are reportedly very good eating when prepared properly. – Editor.



MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Bo @ BC Bait Co; filed 12/11: The dock fishing at Wilhelm Marina this fall has not been as good as in past years. Crappies seemed to have come in and left. Only catching perch, and while a few are nice, most are small. However, if you still have a boat to launch there are good crappies to be caught down towards the dam. **See Garmin Tip Page** in this Report for more on our Wilhelm crappie outing.

Shenango Lake

Randy @ Fish West PA; filed 12/12: Shenango Crappies are still feeding, but our sights are set on steelhead right now.



Docks at Wilhelm

VENANGO COUNTY

Sugar Creek & French Creek

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 12/11: With recent uptick in warmer weather this past week, I had an opportunity to get out on Sugar Creek a couple times. Each time I caught fish, including rainbow and brown trout, and a few smallmouth bass. Drifting live shiners worked best. Caught some on pieces of nightcrawlers. When using a fly rod, griddle bug nymphs and egg patterns brought the best response. The nicest trout I caught was a gorgeous brown trout just shy of 20 inches. (See photo) I hit French Creek during last hours of light a few times. I haven't landed a walleye yet, but did have a dandy on – until it broke my line in a snag. Northern pike have been regular feeders whenever I offered large size creek baits. Lots of 20 to 25 inchers and occasionally a bigger one. (See photo)



Sugar Creek Brown



French Creek Pike

Allegheny River



Water temperature had dropped into the 30s, thereby slowing the smallmouth bass bite. Walleyes should be feeding, but seem to have lock jaw. Bill Logan and a friend caught their last smallmouth bass of the season during the waning days of November. Mike McFadden reported the river temp came up a degree or two during warm days last week; smallmouth were caught here and there, but no walleye bite yet.

With most of the fishing action of the past two weeks happening in Erie tributaries...

Special Erie Photo Page #1



Wildwood Outfitters photo



Emily Prihode

Chad Prihode

Photo array from Tudor Hook-N-Nook and Solitude Steelhead Guide Service



Special Erie Photo Page #2

Subtitle for this page is "Should have been here last week." Keith at Dutch Fork Fishing Charters says the shallow Lake Trout bite is pretty much over of the season. Late October through first of December is the best time. So mark your calendar now for next season. Photos courtesy of Dutch Fork Fishing



THANK YOU TO SPONSORS!

As 2020 winds down, Blackwolfe Communications would like to thank the organization and businesses who make the NW PA Fishing Report possible.

Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region tourism organization has been the primary sponsor for the Fishing Report since its inception in 2010. You can check out links on their Facebook Page, or visit each of the four county members (Crawford County Convention & Visitor's Bureau; VisitErie; Visit Mercer County PA; Oil Region Alliance) any time you need to more information on events and eateries, or lodging for visiting friends.

Wiegel Brothers Marine in Franklin is the number one authority on jet motors and jet-boats in western Pennsylvania, as well as offering top notch Yamaha motors, G3 boats, Jetcraft Boats and an inventory of used boats/motors. If you didn't get your boat winterized this fall, then you should definitely get an appointment for spring to go over your rig before you head out on the water.

Gamma Fishing, based right here in Franklin, is one of the leaders in high quality fluorocarbon and monofilament line. Once you try molecularly altered Gamma Edge, Gamma Touch, Gamma Polyflex or Gamma Optic Yellow Panfish Line, you will be hooked.

Also, for the past several years, five locally-based fishing tackle companies have supplied product prizes for the NW PA Fishing Report.

Mike's Custom Tackle – maker of soft plastic baits for bass & walleyes, and a unique blade bait. Mike's three best coldwater baits for the river are his blade bait, mini tube, and mini spider jig – check them out.

Galida's Grubz – The "original swimbait" has been catching all species of fish since the 1980s. Galida's Grubz are known far and wide. [Check their Facebook Page for a special offer right now.](#)



B.C. Baits Co – Hand-poured small soft plastics especially for panfish and ice fishing. [Check their Facebook Page for a special offer right now.](#) And be sure to check the Garmin tip Page in this issue of the Fishing Report to BC Baits success this part week.



Product Sponsors continued:

Dutch Fork Custom Lures – Specializing in hand-painting of specific walleye and bass plugs, plus they produce the best walleye worm harnesses on the market.

Someday Isle Tackle – Their innovative Water Puppet jighead is a winner for drift fishing tipped with live bait for walleyes in Lake Erie and inland waters. Other products include Shimmerling bobber jig and ice fishing baits.



You have until December 17th to drop off your donations
at Tudor Hook-N-Nook, East End Angler or BC Bait Co.

Don't Overlook the Perfect Gift

Looking for a gift that will provide lasting memories? Give a gift certificate for a guided outing from one of NW PA Fishing Report's fishing guide regular contributors. All are licensed by the Fish Commission and insured as required. Check out details on their Facebook Page or on their website. Book now; rates may go up in 2021.



Keystone Connection Guide Service: Jeff Knapp's focus is the Allegheny River, specializing in Smallmouth Bass most of the year – except during the coldwater period when his focus is on Walleyes. All fishing is from a customized jetboat, offering 4, 6 or 8 hour trips.



Smallies on the Yough Guide Service: Pete Cartwright is a Smallmouth Bass guide on the Allegheny River, French Creek and Yough River. No boat for Pete. He says wading gets it done, enabling every possible holding area for a Smallmouth within a small stretch for flowing water to be covered thoroughly.



Wildwood Outfitters Guide Service: Nick specializes in fly-fishing for Steelhead and inland waters trout. Through the late fall and into early spring, he is busy with Steelhead trips to Erie tributaries. During late spring and summer, he focuses on small cold-water streams for Brook, Browns and 'Bows.



Dutch Fork Guide Service: Keith Eshbaugh is a big water, big boat kind of guy – running a very fishable big water Ranger boat. As a licensed charter captain on Lake Erie, he specializes in Walleye from mid-May to about October – pulling whatever baits are necessary to catch fish. Then from mid-October to early December, he switches to the shallow water Lake Trout bite; no trolling – just jig fishing with light line!

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.

Contributor Prize Winner

The winner of a spool of Gamma Line is Chad Prihode. To claim your prize, you must email me with your shipping address. Please specify what type of line you wish (Edge fluorocarbon, Polyflex regular, Panfish high-vis or Torque braid) and pound test.

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



Allegheny River/ Bill Logan photo



Randy of Fish West PA doing the steelhead thing at Walnut Creek



Erie Lake Trout/ Keith Eshbaugh photo



Erie Lake Trout/ Eshbaugh photo



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



Associate Office Manager Ray extends a very Merry Christmas message and a Happy New Year to anglers everywhere from all the staff at Gamma Fishing.

GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE

- Real anglers share actual fishing experiences with Garmin units



From BC Bait Company:

On Friday, December 11, Bo Bartholomew and Chris Hatfield (co-owners of B.C. Baits Company) fished for crappies on Lake Wilhelm with Aaron Steffey. Aaron runs Garmin LiveScope on his boat. "We fished in 20 feet of water down by the dam," says Bo. "Garmin LiveScope is amazing! We could see individual fish in a huge school of crappies moving around near a drop off. Water temperature was in the 30s. We caught over 100 crappies between the three of us. Most crappies came on BC Bait's medium-size Terry Bugs in Eagle's Milk color. We only kept 12 eating-size crappies, releasing the rest – including any crappie over 13 inches."

