

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

Published by Blackwolfe Communications LLC

Issue: February 12, 2021

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



Seven-year-old Alivia shows off one of two pickerel from Sugar Lake on her first ice fishing trip.

LANDING NET by Darl Black

Well, with less than six weeks until the First Day of Spring, ice fishing season is finally in full swing. Be sure to check out Tim Tomlin's detailed report on Presque Isle Bay ice under the ERIE COUNTY section. Also, I complied a list of all area lakes and reported ice cover for each. But do not assume the indicated thickness is lake wide. Rather the reported thickness is only in the area being fished by some anglers; there will be soft spots and thinner ice on different sections of the lake. The News Bites section offers a listing of scheduled ice fishing tournaments. But if you are awaiting the arrival of spring, be sure to read Brock Morocco's piece on Pymatuning Lake.

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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News Bites

February 13: Canadohta Lake Ice Fishing Tournament sponsored by Timberland Bait; for information see their Facebook Page or contact Jerry at 814-882-8369.

February 13: Pymatuning Ice Fishing Tournament sponsored by Pymatuning Trailblazers; for information phone 412-303-3822.

February 13: Foxburg Ice Fishing Tournament at Kahle Lake; call 814-227-7697.

February 20: Lake Wilhelm Ice Fishing Tournament sponsored by Western PA Hardwater Series; for more information visit their Facebook Page.

March 6: Lake Arthur Ice Fishing Tournament sponsored by Western PA Hardwater Series; for more information visit their Facebook Page.

May 22: Spring Classic Bass Fishing Buddy Tournament sponsored by Bassmasters of Crawford County; for more information email Eric Marsh at flipnstik59@gmail.com.



County by County Reports

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake



RJ Graham photo

Bean @ Richter's Bait & Tackle; filed 2/10: Ice fishing on the South End is going great. Lot of crappies being caught, most of them of keeper size or bigger. Some nice perch, too. Crappies are in 16 to 20 feet of water, and nice perch are a little deeper in 26 feet. Ice jigs tipped with live minnows, mealworms or waxworms are taking both species. A few guys are successful at catching legal size walleyes off the deep humps at various depths; Vib-E jigging lures and live shiners are attracting the walleyes. (see photos)

Patty @ Poff's Place; filed 2/10: Anglers are still plucking away at crappies, perch and walleye. Not getting every day, but enough action to keep them coming back. Most of the action is at South End. There are a few guys out on the North End, and some have been trying to get out of Snodgrass but ice isn't what many would call safe. Many are upset that the Tuttle gate is locked and they can't get out at the old Tuttle boat ramp.

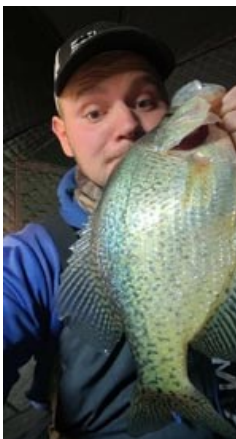
Bo @ BC Baits; filed 2/10: Myself and several of my pro-staffers have done very well at Pymatuning off the Jamestown Marina Ramp in 30 feet of water. Crappies and perch have been eating our BC Stingers in Eagle's Milk color fished just off the bottom. (see photos)



BC Baits photo



BC Baits photo



RJ Graham (Tionesta); filed 2/10: I've been fishing Pymatuning on the weekends and doing very well on crappies and perch. Most of the area down around the dam is 7 inches, with some spots maybe 5 inches. All the fish we have been catching are around 25 feet. Small jig tipped with a maggot is drawing the hits. I also fished on Tionesta Lake this past week for crappies; we did well down towards the dam after drilling through 11 inches of ice. (see photos on left)

Sugar Lake

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 2/10: Sugar Lake is a solid 6 inches. Friends Travis Barker and John Hazlett took Travis' 7-year-old daughter Alivia with them on their trip this past week. She caught 2 pickerel; both fish hit medium size golden shiners. They said she was all bundled up but having great fun – time spent with children teaching them to fish is a priceless investment in the future. (See Cover Shot)

ERIE COUNTY

Presque Isle Bay

The complete PIB Ice Report by Tim Tomlin



Tim Tomlin photo PIB ice

Tim @ Presque Isle Bay Anglers Group; filed 2/10: Presque Isle Bay has about 90% ice coverage at the moment that I am writing this report, but much of that ice is thin and extremely dangerous. Experienced ice anglers know that no ice is actually safe. One of our members who was working his way out of Chestnut Street boat ramp by spudding and drilling test holes, broke through only a couple yards from his shelter. Fortunately, he was able to self-rescue with aid of his ice picks and a spud bar. I share this event to make everyone considering stepping onto the Bay ice to understand the risk they are taking and to check all ice conditions for themselves rather than trusting internet posts or other reports. For the angler who is prepared and aware of current ice conditions, they can find some of the best fishing opportunities available on PIB.



In NW PA, there is no truly "safe" ice.

Ice on The Head of the Bay has become walkable and offers access to a popular spot to catch steelhead through the ice. Access is only available from Presque Isle State Park – not city side. The small boat launch at the third vista parking lot is popular access for perch anglers. The Stinkhole (Sturgeon Bay) is nearly ready for foot traffic (but not there yet) and anglers can target every species found in PIB. Marina Bay is another prime location for steelhead and perch anglers, and has been walkable for a couple weeks.

Now we get to the three most popular and productive spots for ice fishing. Misery Bay typically is the top producing sub-bay for panfish, steelhead and northern pike. Misery

Bay ice was recently damaged by a seiche wave caused by high southern winds pushing water from the open waters of the main Bay into the Misery Bay. The entire ice sheet in Misery Bay was lifted up, separating it from the shoreline. This damage forced the cancellation of the Erie leg of the Western PA Hardwater Tournament Series. The damage has been repaired by cold temperatures.

Horseshoe Pond has been walkable for several weeks now, and is home to the picturesque houseboats, as well as the US Coast Guard Station. It is a tremendous location for panfish and steelhead, but stay away from the houseboat platforms as ice thickness near them can be deceiving.



Tim Tomlin photo

Most local anglers look forward to perch fishing off city side in the main part of PIB above all else. It's been several years since ice fishing in this area was possible. Also, walleye catches in the Bay have increased in recent years due to a healthy population explosion across Lake Erie; this is area where they can be caught. Chestnut Street boat launch is the main access point right now to this section of ice. Ice access from Dobbins Landing is not safe at this time.

Pay attention to forecasts, angler reports and above all else, what your eyes and ears show you on the ice. Carry all necessary safety gear, and let people know where you will be venturing out. Ice fishing can be either a social experience, or it can be solitary time hunkered inside a hut. Good fishing and be safe.

Kirk @ East End Angler; filed 2/10: Steelhead streams are locked up with ice, except for a small section of Sixteen Mile. On some creeks, there are guys drilling holes in the ice on the deeper, slower pools and fishing for steelhead. At PIB, most of the action is in Misery Bay with crappies and bluegills being caught around the weedbeds, and perch a little further out towards the mouth of Misery Bay. Anglers are also on Eaton and Lake Pleasant. I have not heard anything about Edinboro Lake.

Brittney @ Poor Richards; filed 2/10: West Side tributaries are frozen and there's nothing in the 10-day forecast to change that situation. Some of our customers are fishing for panfish on Presque Isle Bay, while others are targeting smelt.

Bo @ BC Baits; filed 2/10: We made a trip to Lake Pleasant recently – first time there. We caught many bluegills and trout. Orange-colored Mini Terry Bugs brought in most of the bigger fish – which were down at approximately 30 feet.

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Bo @ BC Baits; filed 2/10: At Lake Wilhelm, anglers have been doing very well on crappie between Launch #1 and the Dam. BC Stingers in Eagle's Milk color has been the ticket. Ice on the lower lake near the dam is 6 to 7 inches in most places. Bluegill and perch are being caught in good numbers by Old Launch 3. A red Mini Pickworm fished near the bottom has been producing the larger perch. Wilhelm will be the site of the second Western PA Hardwater Series on February 20. If the bite continues, I expect to see some crappies caught.

BC Baits pro-staff were well represented at the last Hardwater Series tournament on Lake Arthur with 10 teams in the competition. (see photo on right)

Shenango Lake

Editor's note: Although a few anglers were observed on the lake this past week, no reliable reports of ice thickness were available. Those I talked to indicated the ice was not thick enough for them to venture out. As a flood control reservoir with a major current moving through the lake, Shenango is usually one of the last to achieve satisfactory ice thickness.

VENANGO COUNTY

Justus Lake

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 2/8: I spoke with a friend who recently ice fished at Justus Lake. He stated solid and clear ice 4 to 5 inches everywhere he drilled. He caught several nice bluegills, perch and a number of trout. Most of the fish came on small shiners which he trapped locally.

Oil Creek

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 2/8: Congratulations to Chad Jaco from Titusville. He shared a picture of dandy 23.5-inch brown trout he caught on Oil Creek north of Titusville. The big trout smashed a black/gold Rapala crankbait. The fish was released. (see photo on right)

Allegheny River

Editor's note: Fishing on the Allegheny in this region is pretty shut down due to edge ice and floating chunks of ice. Given the 10-day forecast, many of the slower pools will be ice covered soon.



Bo with Lake Wilhelm Crappie



Chad Jaco with 23.5" Brown

Summary of Reported Ice Thickness on Area Lakes as of Feb 12 and Species Being Caught

Thanks to Jake Schneider (FishUSA), Bo Bartholomew (BC Baits) and others for providing info from their trips to numerous lakes recently. Do not assume ice thickness to be uniform across the lake; it will vary considerably. No ice cover should be considered completely safe. Always carry necessary safety equipment.

<u>Lake</u>	<u>Ice</u>	<u>Species Reported Caught</u>
Eaton	8 inches	crappies, 'gills, walleye
Lake Pleasant	6 inches	perch, 'gills, trout
Canadohta	6 inches	crappies, perch, musky
Justus Lake	5 to 6 inches	trout, perch, 'gills, walleye
Sugar Lake	7 to 8 inches	crappies, 'gills, pickerel
Lake Wilhelm	6 to 7 inches	crappies, 'gills, perch
Woodcock	5 inches	crappies, walleyes
Pymatuning	5 to 8 inches South 4 inches North Mid-section unsafe	crappies, perch, walleyes
Shenango Lake	3-4 inches off Golden Run – few anglers observed Not safe off Chestnut Beach	
Conneaut Lake	No report	
Edinboro	No report	
Lake LeBoeuf	No report	

Presque Isle Bay – See ERIE COUNTY report for details provided by Tim Tomlin

Shore Fishing Pymatuning Lake

By Brock Morocco

(Longtime Fishing Report contributor Brock Morocco is anxiously counting the days until Spring thaw so he can get back on his favorite water – Pymatuning Lake. Here shares his thoughts and some useful information with readers who may desire to fish Pymatuning but do not have a boat.)

Shore fishing along Pymatuning can be very rewarding whether pursuing gamefish or just enjoying nature while fishing. I enjoy wading and casting mainly for walleye, bass and musky. Living only 22 miles from the lake has its benefits, allowing me to fish the lake often at peak times. I personally prefer evening fishing over early morning, but both are good windows of opportunity. Low light is a key factor for feeding fish so use it to your advantage.

One nice thing about Pymatuning is it hasn't changed much in decades. It remains basically the same year after year. It also supports good fishing with almost full shore access from Ohio and Pennsylvania. Of course, if you are a Pennsylvania resident, you must also have an Ohio non-resident fishing license to fish from the Ohio shore, and vice versa. Most areas are easily accessed, with parking not a problem around the lake.

Pymatuning remains the best fishing lake in Western Pennsylvania with millions of walleye fingerlings stocked each year, along with a strong musky stocking program, too. Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass, Crappie and Perch also abound in the lake.

I personally target shore walleyes mostly in the late evening into full dark. Tossing stickbaits works best for me. A Rapala Minnow and Thunderstick Jr are my go-to lures. Jigs and soft plastic are backup baits. Jigs tipped with a minnow or crawler have their place, too.

I like wading along bays, inlets or on protruding points. Walleyes travel in small schools all along the lake shoreline feeding on baitfish. In my experience there is not one hot spot because where you caught them one night may prove void of fish the next night. You have to be ready to try different areas along the shores, so having multiple spots to fish is a must. I might fish spot A tonight, then depending on how I did, I move to spot B or spot C the next trip.

I do not study moon phases, but I do prefer a larger moon with lots of light over darker nights for walleye fishing. I like calmer waters mainly because it increases water visibility so fish can see my lure. I find this very important under low light conditions – calm, clear water is key to my fishing success.

Pymatuning is a shallow lake so it's ideal for wading or bank fishing. However, being shallow the weed growth doesn't take long to become somewhat of a nuisance. Best months to shore fish start the first of April and continue to mid-June before weed growth can become a problem. But not all shoreline areas are weedy, so once again you must search for spots without dense weeds in order to continue fishing through the summer.

The bonus is bass begin to surface feed as summer progresses so weeds aren't a problem when I fish for them. I will select a topwater bait, preferably one I can work with a gliding motion that causes a commotion on the surface. Both largemouth and small-mouth bass are common in Pymatuning, with some really nice size fish of both species.



When musky fishing I change up gear, choosing a heavier action rod, sturdy reel and heavier line. Although Pymatuning has rebounded with good numbers of muskies in the lake, it nonetheless requires hours of casting to catch one. Large stickbaits with stout hooks and bucktail spinners are what produces for me. However, it may take several trips before you successfully hook and land a musky. The enthusiasm of beginners may wane before connecting with that first musky. But persistence pays off.

The typical musky caught at Pymatuning are in the mid-size range between 32 and 42 inches, but there are bigger ones in the lake — such as the one in the photo. Having a large landing net is a good idea so you can unhook and release a musky with relative ease.

Shore fishing on the east side of Pymatuning can be especially rewarding even if you strike out because the sunsets are often spectacular!

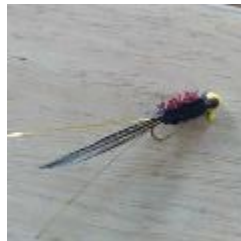
Regards, Captain Hook

There's a New Jig in Town

Besides his reputation as a crappie angler, Kevin Austin is known for his **Luckis4rabbits** line of fishing clothing. Within the past couple weeks, he has added hand-tied jigs to his business. He only recently began tying crappie and panfish jigs. This past week, Kevin took one of his creations ice fishing and landed his very first fish on a personal hand-tied jig. "These jigs catch fish," he says with a smile. Pictured here are several of his creations. Check out his Facebook Page **Luckis4rabbits** to learn more and purchase some locally crafted jigs for spring fishing.



First fish on his new jigs.



The NW PA Fishing Report supports local tackle shops and local lure making businesses.

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.

Starting with the Spring issue of NW PA Fishing Report, this section identifying individuals who had their name drawn for a prize, will move to the Gamma Fishing Page.

For this issue of the Report, the name drawn for a spool of Gamma Line is: Tim Tomlin. To claim your prize, email me with you mailing address and the type & pound test Gamma Line you would like to try.

A lure pack will be awarded for the cover shot of 7-year-old Alivia and her Sugar Lake pickerel. Note: photo provided by Al Bell. Al, please contact me with address to send prize.

The Livewell

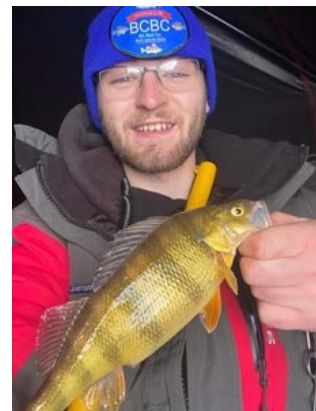
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Pymatuning/ BC Baits



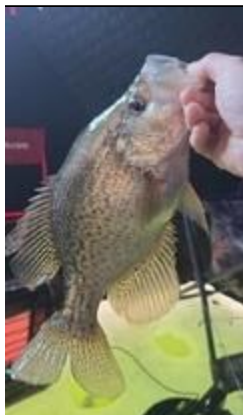
Sugar Lake/Dale



Alivia with trout from pond



Pymatuning/RJ



Pymatuning/RJ



Pymatuning/ BC Baits



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 Fishing supports the Western PA Hardwater Series. Gamma's Ice Line is used by many anglers on the circuit. Check out Gamma lines on their website GammaFishing.com.



Lake Arthur produces

With safe ice forming late again this winter, the Western PA Hardwater Series has been scrambling to get tournaments in after postponing the first two January events. With fishable ice limited to Misery Bay, Hardwater anglers were all set for a Presque Isle event last weekend. Then came the big blow. The entire ice sheet of Misery Bay was lifted up by seiche wave action, breaking it loose from the shoreline just two days before the event. Gus

Glasgow and officers of Hardwater Series went to their backup

plan and moved the tournament to Lake Arthur. According to the Hardwater website, Jason Britton and Colby Sprenkel pulled off the win with six-panfish limit going 6.91 pounds, good for a \$2,000.00 check. The next Hardwater event is Lake Wilhelm on February 12. Registration is parking lot #1 by the dam, and weigh-in is at the Marina. Check their Facebook Page for more details. For the final event on March 6th, Hardwater Series returns to Lake Arthur.



BC Baits pro-staffers—the Blue Hat Mafia

GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE

- Real anglers share actual fishing experiences with Garmin units



Fun with GARMIN...Some shots sent to me from Garmin users that have not appeared on this page.

- Photo 1: Gus Glasgow created his own LiveScope Ice Bundle. Now he finds those fish under the ice, but just needs to figure out how to catch them.
- Photo 2: Gus Glasgow spent a lot of time with his Garmin units on Pymatuning this past summer. Although the picture is not clear due to reflection, he wants to know if anyone is missing a pontoon boat from the lake. He believes that may be what he is looking at on the screen.
- Photo 3: Mark McQuown sent this shot of a lure being dropped straight down to a school of smallmouth bass (at Thousands Islands, I believe). How does he know they were smallmouths? His buddy caught several...but Mark failed to take a photo of smallmouth. Reckon he was intent on getting the product shot.
- Photo 4: Crappie Dan says it's time to start thinking about spring. Dan Dannenmueller, publisher of CRAPPIE NOW online magazine, instructs how to get the most out of Garmin LiveScope regardless how shallow the fish are.



Photo 1: LiveScope on Ice

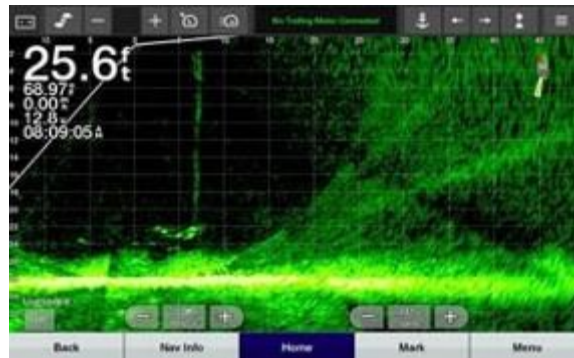


Photo 3: Going down to sweet spot in 25 feet.



Photo 2: Pontoon?



Photo 4: Crappie Dan