

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

Published by Blackwolfe Communications LLC

Issue: July 28, 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



Kyla with large-mouth bass from Kahle Lake

Anthony with his first catfish from Lake Wilhelm.



The Landing Net by Darl Black

There is no shortage of water on inland lakes, streams and rivers. During initial high water in area lakes, the bite was tough. But fish adjusted, and the bite is back on – but maybe not in summer locations you might expect on your favorite lake. With all the storms, winds and heavy rain since mid-June, we could use some stability in the coming weeks to bring lake levels back to summer normal and reposition fish to normal summer locations...before fall gets here. In the meantime, the Erie walleye bite is on fire. If you want some walleyes for the freezer, hire a charter with friends, or take your own Erie-worthy boat, and Go Fish!

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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County by County Reports

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Norm @ Jamestown Marina; filed 7/25: The lake level is coming down; we are currently about 8 inches above normal summer pool. Pontoon rental customers have been catching mainly yellow perch and catfish. The bigger perch are in the weedbeds. A few of the well-experienced walleye anglers with their boats in the marina are coming in with legal walleyes – mostly coming at night. Have not heard a word on crappies.

Bean at Richter's Bait; filed 7/25: For most anglers it's a tale of perch in the weedbeds and catfish everywhere else. I've had many reports of bass on topwater baits – and one particularly huge largemouth that measured 24 inches. Some of the regulars are still getting a few walleyes by trolling Hot-n-Tots and Flicker Shads. Also, there is small core group of hardcore walleye anglers who have been getting a limit of walleye every time they go out – of course they are not saying much about details.



Richter's photo



Richter's photo

Patty at Poff's Place; filed 7/25: It's been rather quiet on the fishing front, I'm afraid to say. Lots of catfish if you are into that species. Also hearing about an occasional musky from north side of Causeway. A decent size walleye now and then, but mostly small 'eyes. No one has mentioned success on crappies except a couple anglers pursuing big crappies for the Duck-N-Drake Crappie Madness event. These guys have going out at night and using their electronics to find fish. They state they are finding lots of crappies on their electronics but can't get many to bite. From what I gather, it seems they are catching more sublegal walleyes than crappies.



Stan Teitelbaum; filed 7/24: Since last Report, I've made two trips to Pymatuning. On July 18, the water level was way high. It was rather windy. But the 17-inch bass pictured here was close enough to my boat when it jumped that I could throw my crankbaits beyond the ripples, the fish smacked it on the retrieve. I landed two bass and lost three before I had to leave at noon. Today, the 24th, the water level seems to



be back to normal. A few areas of the lake are murky. The sun came out for a few minutes and it was really comfortable. My biggest bass today was 15 inches.

Conneaut Lake



Gus Glasgow @ G&G Electronics; filed 7/26: Last week I participated in 2021 Bass Classic on Conneaut Lake. While our weight did not put us in the top five, I had an interesting and exciting day. Our boat had four smallmouth bass for 12 pounds. We were fishing a combination of deep and shallow water for the four I caught, but I lost four additional smallmouths around the same size of 3.5 to 4-pound range. I think I was quite rusty on my landing skills after spending all my time this year so far chasing crappies. When we started in the morning, I make the decision to fish for big fish only and put away the finesse gear. My Gar-

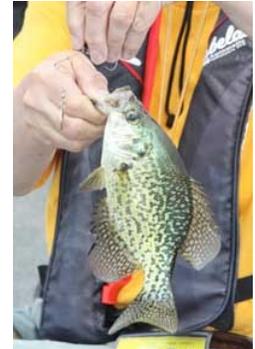
min LiveScope helped put one of the big smallmouths in the boat. That technique could be extremely effective if used properly for smallmouth bass. (See photo)

Editor's note: The tournament was won by Ben Lipiec and Eric Anderson with 20.9 pounds. FURTHERMORE, if you looking for expert installment of Garmin units on your boat, be sure to check in with Gus at G&G Marine Electronics; phone 724-290-9045.





Marilyn Black @ Blackwolfe Communications; filed 7/15: We went looking for jumbo bluegills at Conneaut Lake but I could only catch yellow perch when I started drop-shotting live leeches on deep-water humps. So, I switched to a Beetle Spin and caught crappies in the shallows. (See photos left & right)

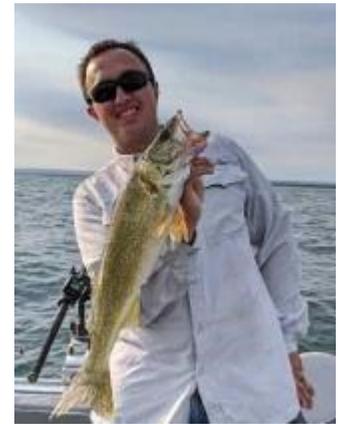


ERIE COUNTY

Erie's Summer Walleye Bonanza

Summary: It's the end of July and the Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie are filled with transients – massive Western Basin-born walleye schools which make a long journey around Lake Erie in search of forage. It's what walleye anglers have been waiting on since the spring perch bite subsided. Due to disruptive weather late spring/early summer patterns with strong winds from the east and north, many anglers were beginning to consider the possibility that the traveling schools might not show. The first part of July the numbers seemed low, and only charter boats seemed to be making the big scores. But three weeks later, average anglers with their own boat are getting a share of the action. All the near-lake shore tackle shops (Tudor Hook-N-Nook; Elk Creek Sports; Poor Richards; East End Angle; FishUSA) are providing basically identical information on fish depths as follows:

- The largest concentration of legal-size walleyes will be found in 50 to 70 feet of water, usually suspended 40 to 50 down. This depth is fairly constant for schools from the Ohio line to the New York line.
- A shallow band of walleyes (likely more home-grown walleyes) occurs from 30 to 40 feet of water. These fish are holding closer to the bottom, and there are many more sublegal walleyes in these schools.
- A variety of baits are producing fish: Worm harnesses, shallow and deep-diving stick baits (depending whether on lead core line or diving device). Spoons are coming into play as well.



Dutch Fork Charter Service





Tudor Hook-N-Nook photo

The above depths are a starting point. Once on the water you will need to find these moving schools, which are traveling west to east as they eat their way across the lake. Quality electronics are an absolute must. If you don't see fish, keep moving. Here is an example of the need to move from Tim Tomlin of Presque Isle Bay Anglers Group: "On Monday, I got on my boat and headed straight out to 70 feet of water off the Point as many of the angling reports indicated. I struggled to pick up a couple walleyes. We ducked into 64 feet of water off Four Mile Creek and the sonar screen was stacked top to bottom. Tremendous schools of baitfish were up high with predator fish at all depths underneath. We caught one keeper 'eye for every three shorts. On this day, lead core with shallow-running Bay Rats outperformed everything."

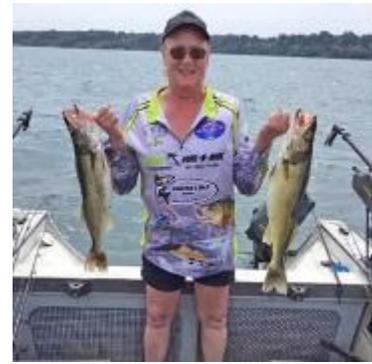
If you are having difficulties in choosing a presentation, here are three completely ones offered by experts:



Tudor Hook-N-Nook photo

- Casting an Erie Dearie: Captain Bob Zawadski of the Perch Pirate head boat has his customers fishing Western Basin style by casting and counting down forward-weighted spinners. He recommends using a 1-ounce Erie-Dearie baited with a nightcrawler hooked twice while leaving a long trailing tail. Cast out, count the spinner down to the depth of fish observed on the screen (drop rate is roughly 1 foot per second); engage the reel and begin a very slow retrieve trying to maintain depth. If no strikes, adjust the count deeper or shallower until contact with fish is made.
- Trolling a Worm Harness: Kirk Rudzinski of East End Angler is an old hand when it comes to worm harnesses. One simple rig is a drop-weight rig (a.k.a. three-way rig) with 2 to 6-ounce weight on the dropper. Weight must be heavy enough to keep the line behind the boat 45-degrees while bouncing bottom. On the bait leader is a crawler harness with a Dutch Fork Custom Tackle Butterfly Blade or a Worm Burner. Kirk's second presentation is for suspended walleyes, employing 20-pound test mono, a Dipsy Diver and worm harness on a lead that is no longer than the handle length of your landing net. With line in the number 3.5 setting, let the Dipsy out on 82 to 86 feet of line. This will position the bait between 46 and 48 feet while trolling, according to the Dipsy chart.

- Trolling Plugs: Jake Schneider is an experienced Erie angler and customer service representative for FishUSA. In his own words, here is his productive set-up. “My go to set-up this year has definitely been 5 colors of FishUSA Stealth Core and a deep diving plug such as a Thunder Stick SR or a Bandit Deep Diver. The board bite has been off the charts with most of my bigger fish coming in the middle of the water column. The smaller ‘eyes are right on the bottom as well as high in the column. Having your baits in the right place in the middle produces big fish!



Hook-N-Nook photo

The diver program has been very good, too. Using a Luhr Jensen Diver and my favorite blue-and-chrome Renosky plug is a staple that works every time it gets wet. All these products are available at FishUSA so come in and talk with me or one of our other knowledgeable staff.”

Now go catch dinner!

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Pam @ Maurer's Trading Post; filed 7/26: Angler reports from Lake Wilhelm have been limited to panfish – yellow perch, sunfish and crappies. No mention of walleyes. Or bass.



Jerry Vettorel; filed 7/25: My grandson Anthony Vettorel caught his first catfish at Lake Wilhelm on July 22. He was very excited! (See photo on right)

Shenango Lake - Currently the hottest bites among the inland waters

Editor's note: Except for the 7/15 report, all the following catch reports were during the high water on Shenango. Lake still remains above normal summer pool with all ramps closed except the Shenango Recreation Ramp (Campground) at Clark. Reports are in chronological order...earliest to latest report. All photos associated with the reports start at the end of the Reports and continue on special Shenango Lake Photo page.

John Kolodziejski; report from 7/15: Dianne and I spent a few quiet hours on Shenango on the 15th before the monsoons hit. It was a change of pace after being in Manhattan for five days! The crappies were fairly cooperative. We found them on drop offs at a depth of approximately 12 to 16 feet. All fish were caught on 1/16-ounce lead heads

tipped with plastic curly tails. I used several colors with varying success but Dianne did the best with chartreuse. We also observed white bass busting shad on the surface just before we called it a night, and were able to take advantage of that exciting opportunity, too. (See photos)

Kevin @ Luckis4rabbits fishing apparel and tackle; filed 7/20: I caught these crappies today on Shenango fishing from shore with one of my custom hand-tied 1/32-ounce jigs using a weighed bobber set at four feet. (See photos)

Ken Smith (Sharon); filed 7/21: I fished Shenango Lake today. Fished ten different spots, but most were void of keeper crappies. I had two in the box when I found the biting keepers. Took 18 crappies from one small area, out of the wind. They were 14 feet down in 16 feet of water. Used a slip bobber and jig set-up. This high water has moved the fish off my favorite spots – but I managed to find some. (See photos)

Randy @ Fish West PA; filed 7/24: Shenango Lake is high for this time of year without a doubt. Fish needed some time to adjust and they did just that. This past weekend proved patience is truly a virtue. Good numbers for us at FISH WEST PA with a few doubles on hybrids, plus bass, catfish and panfish biting when you find them. Stay alert when boating due to floating debris. Falling water is a great time to fish! (See photos)

Ken Smith (Sharon); filed 7/25: Good week on Shenango. Followed my gut feeling and checked the former shallow brushpiles. Crappies were there in good numbers. Four trips, we caught over 300 fish. Most were throwbacks but still fun to catch. Kept around 20 fish each trip that were over 10 inches. Mostly fat bodied blacks. One measuring just shy of 15 inches that weighed 1.74 pounds on my handheld scale. Both Hang Gliding and pulling jigs at .7 mph put them in the box. (See photos)

Special Shenango Photo Section Begins here



Kevin Austin

Fishing from shore



Randy still on the big ones

This season, **Shenango Lake** is providing an outstanding summer bite for crappies - far better than Pymatuning, and the only lake in the NW where you can catch hybrid stripers. Normally the striper bite slows in mid-summer, but the anglers from Fish West PA have been on them good this past week.



Dianne Kolodziejski



Fish West PA crew



Ace with another big hybrid striper



Ken Smith and friends have been hauling in the crappies even during high water.



Who is hiding behind this striper



Ken Smith photo

VENANGO COUNTY

Allegheny River

Editor's note: High water level on the river continued through the week. With the amount of water being held by Kinzua Dam and other ACE reservoirs on the upper river system, water level of the Allegheny may remain high for some time. Bass guides Jeff Knapp and Pete Cartwright have suspended guide trips until the river recedes some. Oil Creek and Sugar Creek are back to normal levels, but I did not receive any report from anglers on these two waters.

Pam @ Maurer's Trading Post; filed 7/26: Anglers passing through our shop are wanting to fish walleyes and bass on the river but are facing high and dirty water. Still, they have been trying. One customer described success on smallmouth using a multi-bait A-Rig.

Justus Lake and Kahle Lake



Kyla on Kahle Lake

Rick Shrout; filed 7/25: My two grandkids from Florida are here visiting and love to fish. We hit Kahle Lake on Tuesday evening (7/20) for a couple hours before the thunderstorm shortened our trip. We caught and released 8 bass – nothing over 15 inches. Most of the bass came on small tubes and a couple on spinnerbaits. The kids were tickled to catch fish. On Thursday morning (7/22), my grandson and I



Gage on Kahle

went to Justus Lake. We fished for muskies for two hours to no avail. Then we switched to bass for a couple hours and caught 7 largemouth on small tubes and spinnerbaits. Only one was legal size. All were released.

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; keystone-connectionguideservice@gmail.com; www.facebook.com/keystoneconnectionguideservice.

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.

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



Dave Parisi



Tyler Parisi

Yes, the smallmouth are still biting in Lake Erie, as Dave and Tyler Paisi can testify to.



Yes, still walleye in Shenango



Yes, Shenango hybrids still making news.



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
- East End Angler, Harborcreek, PA

Gus Glasgow: What a grind at the second Lake Wilhelm Tournament Series. I fished it with Dan Druschel. With severe storms and downpours all night and day, the fish we found in practice were literally washed away in mud. My Striker rain suit was put to the test and worked perfectly. With all that we were still able to pull out a 2nd place finish along with big fish honors.

I can't give away all of our secrets, but here's one. We run Gamma Fishing line on all our rods running a braid to fluorocarbon leader. This equals longer casts and increases sensitivity for light bites.



Gus



Dan

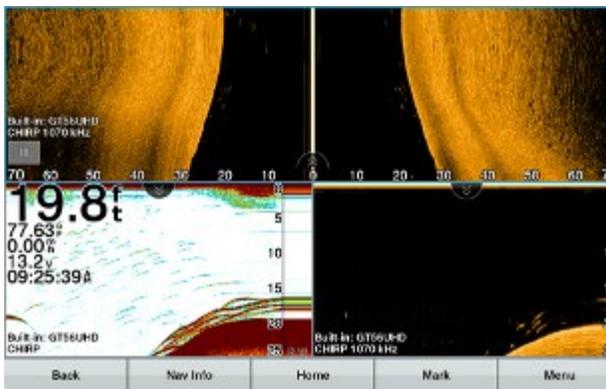
Gamma...the line used by those who demand the best in a fishing line.

GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE

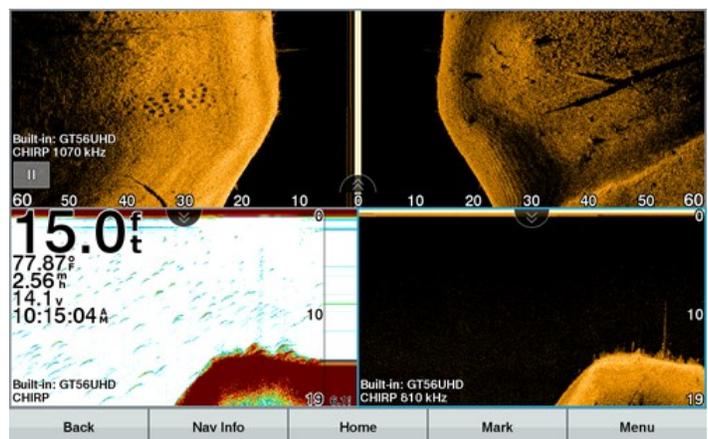


- Real anglers share actual fishing experiences with Garmin units
- For professional installation of Garmin units, contact G&G Marine Electronics at 724-290-9045

Jeff Knapp @ Keystone Connection Guide Service – This past week at Keystone Lake, I had my new Echomap Ultra out for its maiden voyage. I'm really impressed with clarity of the unit coupled with the gt56 transducer. I've included a couple screenshots. One is the drop off along a weed point. Marked fish as seen on the screen, put a drop-shot down, and caught a 2.5-pound largemouth bass. The other screenshot shows a cluster of bluegill beds. Pretty neat! There is a noticeable improvement in clarity from the GT54UHD transducer and the new GT56UHD transducer at the high frequency settings (1070 khz/GT56; 1120 khz/GT54).



Screen one—largemouth bass on the drop



Screen 2—bluegill beds on left Side-Vu