

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

Published by Blackwolfe Communications LLC

Issue: December 21, 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



Bo with Wilhelm crappie



"Doc" with French Creek pike

LANDING NET by Darl Black

As winter approaches, open water fishing opportunities narrow as water temperature drops into the 30s. Although there are still some species actively feeding, you can see the fewer contributor reports that many anglers have called it a season for open water. Others are waiting on "safe" ice for hardwater fishing. I hope you didn't throw in the towel too soon this season. Some of the largest fish of the year were caught late this fall once water temperature dropped into the low 50s and moved downward to the mid-30s. See you in late January.

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 FROM CRAWFORD, MERCER, VENANGO AND ERIE COUNTIES

NEWS BYTES

- PFBC: Mandatory Life Jacket Requirement now in effect on boats less than 16 feet in length until April 30, 2022.
- PFBC: Don't forget to purchase your 2022 PA Fishing License before fishing in the new year.
- Neshannock Creek Fly Shop, Inc: Fly tying Classes begin at the Volant shop starting January 6th and continue for 6 weeks on Thursdays; cost is \$95.00. For more information call 724-533-3212.

FRENCH CREEK – flowing through all four counties.



Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 11/30: Over Thanksgiving weekend, my brother-in-law and I enjoyed an afternoon on French Creek. We caught northern pike and a limit of walleye. (See photos)



CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave @ Richter's Bait & Tackle; filed 12/15: Not much has changed in recent weeks, although there are a few more people fishing



Tomko reels in 50-inch muskie at Pymatuning Lake

Herald Staff report Nov 30, 2021



now that deer season is over. Guys on the Jamestown Docks and out in boats are catching some decent size crappies. Lots of sublegal walleyes are being caught mostly on blade baits. But there are legal 'eyes, too, and occasionally a trophy walleye – such as this 29-inch, 9 - pound 'eye taken on a Vib-E blade bait this past week. I see several musky boats out trolling, so you can figure they are catching some – although they really don't talk much about their catch. The exception was a 50-inch taken by an angler the end of November and reported in the Greenville newspaper. (See photos above)



Kevin @ Luckis4Rabbits; filed 12/18: I've been catching a few crappies from the docks at Jamestown. I am using my custom tied jigs by Luck-is4rabbits. The bite is slow for crappies, but the bluegill bite is more consistent. (See photos)



ERIE COUNTY

Steelhead 2021

Ask any stream guide or tackle shop owner and they will tell you the Steelhead and Brown Trout fishing in the tributaries this past fall has been awesome; most will say the best in over a decade.

"Stream fishing in Erie tribs has been one for the books for most anglers," exclaimed **Jake @ FishUSA**, who has scored most of his fish on egg patterns. (Photo at right)



“The number of steelhead entering our streams has been greater than we have seen in a long time,” stated **Dan at Elk Creek Sports**. “And they just keep coming. This is a dynamic steelhead season.”

Bill at Tudors added, “There has been continuous flow of fish since mid-September. Fresh fish keep trickling in to join those which have spawned. This has been a phenomenal fall run.” (All photos at right from **Solitude Steelhead Guide Service** and Tudor’s)

And don’t forget the brown trout. Most shop owners are seeing more than the average number of brown trout entering the streams, too. **Dominic at Poor Richard’s** reported a 14-pound brown trout recently – an exceptional size brown. **Kirk at East End Angler** said after the last big storm, Twenty Mile and Four Mile east side creeks saw their biggest influx of brown trout all fall.

As the warmer-than-usual weather prevails, steelhead fishing in the streams is expected to produce good results. However, with a few cold snaps that lower water temperature, steelhead mobility will slow and the bite will become more difficult; many of the remaining fish will leave the streams. Hopefully sometime in February when a slight warming trend occurs, a spring push of steelhead will begin to move into the tributaries.

Presque Isle Bay

According to **Kirk at East End Angler**, the perch bite slowed after the big storm but has started to pick back up. However, the size of most perch being caught continues to be on the small size. Perch are being caught from city-size piers and docks, the marina dock at the State Park Marina on the peninsula; at the Ferry Dock landing; and from boats out in front of Parking Lot #2. Fingers are crossed for perch size to increase as winter progresses towards the spawn at ice-out. After a few fish were caught around the first part of December, word on burbot has fallen silent. Maybe the big blow screwed up their spawning run into the Channel.



MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Bo @ BC Baits; filed 12/5: According to Bo, the late fall crappie bite at Lake Wilhelm finally kicked in when the first measurable snowfall hit. Bo had been checking on the crappie bite all through November, but was only coming up with very small ones. Then almost overnight, the water temperature dropped to the point where larger crappies began to school up on deeper water. His best spots were along ledges in 17 to 18 feet of water that fell into the old creek channel. No live bait necessary – just a white soft plastic body on a jighead.



Shenango Lake

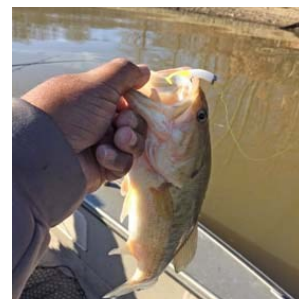


Typical crappie catch
before the Dec 11th storm

Ken Smith (Sharon); filed 12/17: According to Ken, as the water level receded for winter drawdown and water temperature dropped into the low 40s to mid-30s, the lake's crappies moved to deeper water. Seventeen foot was the best depth to find schooled crappies, with most of the fish hugging the bottom. If he moved his Baby Shad crappie jig more than a couple inches off the bottom, he did not get a bite. Although his total numbers were falling, he was still making a decent catch each time out... up until the big storm December 11th.

"My last time out was Tuesday, December 14. As of Tuesday, the lake was 7.5 feet below summer pool and is still falling. It's chocolate milk out there, but I was able to find a few crappies and bass. Fishing was very tough. Only a few keepers, so I released them. Time to put the boat in stor-

age now. I had a very good season and hope for an even better year in 2022. Happy Holidays to everyone!" (See photos)



Shenango bass

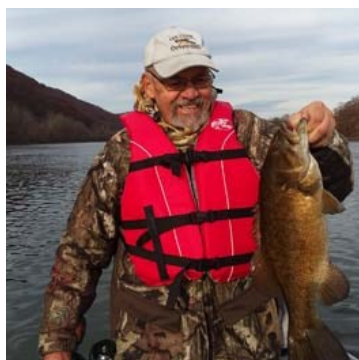
VENANGO COUNTY

Allegheny River

Bill Logan (Pleasantville; filed 11/24: Today I landed 17 smallmouths in 38-degree water. They hit tubes, Galida's Grubz plus a small skirted jig with trailer; jig and trailer caught the majority of fish. Rick Shrout got 7 bass. Our lunker for the day was 4 pounds. (See photo below)

Rick Shrout; filed 12/18: Bill Logan and I have fished the Allegheny River a couple times in December for smallmouth when the water level allowed us to do so safely. While the number of bass we caught each trip has declined as water temperature dropped, we still successful in landing some decent size bass. (See photos below)

Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service; filed 12/18: Due to the comparatively mild weather of the past few weeks, I've primarily been fishing a handful of west central PA lakes before ice eliminates them as options. Those outings produced largemouth and smallmouth bass, crappies, yellow perch as well as some non-target species. On the middle Allegheny, while some smallmouth bass can still be caught by fishing ultra-slow with finesse presentations like the Ned Rig, it's mostly walleyes we are catching now that the water has dipped into the upper 30s. During a recent trip to the Venango County section of the river, Sid Brown and I caught a dozen-and-half walleyes, most of which were quality sized fish in the 18 to 22-inch range. All but one came on bucktail jigs. I'll do a limited number of walleye guide trips this winter as weather and river conditions permit. (See photo below and in Livewell)



Bill Logan



Rick Shrout



Rick Shrout



Jeff Knapp photo

Area Guide Services contribute to the NW PA Fishing Report

Looking for a trip on a Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango county water?

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/.

Fishing with Bo Guide Service: Specializing in panfish in area lakes and kayak swamp trips for bowfin. Bo Batholomew at bcbaitshadley@gmail.com; 724-704-1723

Solitude Steelhead Guide Service: Fly-fishing the tributaries of Pennsylvania. Bob Packey; 724-972-8813; solitudesteelheadguide@yahoo.com; www.solitudesteelheadguideservice.com



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 walleye are more active than smallmouth bass with water temp in 30s.



Keystone Connection Guide Service



Dale Black photo

This is the time for big muskies to make an appearance, such as this 45.5 inch 36 pounder taken from Justus Lake by Ernest T. Dykins . Picture below was posted on Two Mile Run County Park Facebook Page.





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; 814-898-3474

GAMMA TIP: With river and stream water temperatures near their low point of the year, one of the best lures for small-mouth bass and walleye will be a hand-tied hair jig. Small-mouth guide and hair jig fishermen Pete Cartwright offers these tips.



Pete Cartwright, Smallmouth Guide: I fish all year for Smallmouth in rivers. It can be extremely difficult to get them to bite at times in the winter with water temperature in the mid to upper 30s. I might fish for six hours, but only get a small window when smallmouth bite – maybe an hour if lucky, or maybe only 20 minutes. If you have precise spots on a river section where you have previously caught smallmouth in the winter, be sure to check them often rather than chasing new water during an extremely tough bite. Just because bass didn't bite early in the day, doesn't mean they won't bite mid-afternoon – or maybe not until the next day. Be patient.

Hair is at the top of my list when the winter bite is almost non-existent. Use a hair jig to fish a spot as slowly as you can possibly fish. There are several ways a hair jig can be presented: cast and retrieved very slowly close to the bottom, under a bobber (float-n-fly), and dropshot method. I store my hair jigs in a fly box. Be sure to let them dry after use before putting them in a box. I do not scent my hair jig although I sometimes use a small trailer on them that is scented, such as a Gulp Leech.

GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE



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

GARMIN TIP

Jeff Knapp @ Keystone Connection Guide Service: Come late fall, when submergent weed die-off reduces cover and the fall turnover gives gamefish and panfish access to the entire water column, fish attractors located in deep water come into play. Utilizing Garmin's Side Vu gives you the ability to efficiently locate such cover. The combination of traditional 2D sonar and Garmin Down Vu allows you to see if fish are present and pinpoint boat position to target revealed fish. The accompanying screenshot shows cribs and fish on sonar; the photo shows a largemouth bass taken from one of these cribs.

