

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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The NW PA Fishing Report is brought to you by:



Fishing with Darl Black

Information Service



Woody Knis with a 46 inch musky caught and released from Pymatuning Lake this past week. He expects to battle more muskies as the water cools.

LANDING NET by Darl Black

Welcome to the first day of Fall, featuring fabulous fishing during the next 10 weeks or so as water temperature drops through the 60s, 50s and into the 40s. Anglers in the know realize they will see some of the best catches of the year for bass, walleye, musky, northern pike, crappies, bluegills, yellow perch and white bass. Hybrid stripers will also put a feedbag briefly during this time. Spool on some fresh Gamma Line 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 FROM CRAWFORD, MERCER, VENANGO AND ERIE COUNTIES

FRENCH CREEK – flowing through all four counties



Pete @ SmalliesontheYough.com; filed 9-17: We hit French Creek in the morning. Initially, the bite was slow, but picked up later in the morning and we ended up catching some nice smallmouths. Justin landed a 20-inch stud! Smallies were scattered in faster water. (See Photos left and right)



CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Bean @ Richter's Bait & Tackle; filed 9/19: A handful of anglers continue to catch legal walleyes; one of our regular customers got 5 legal 'eye over the weekend by jigging. We are hearing a lot about nice-size perch, but not much on crappies. The muskies continue to hit; these fish are being taken primarily by trolling very large musky plugs – we just happen to have some of the most popular Pymatuning baits in stock.

Patty @ Poff's Place; filed 9/18: Fishing has slowed down on the north side of the causeway due to low water levels and thick vegetation. Best bite going right now mid-lake is catfish. Catfish everywhere. Also, anglers are catching some smallish perch and some BIG bluegills. Looking for walleye, crappie and bass bite to pick up as the lake water cools over the next month.

Woody Knis (New Castle); filed 9/21: Finally got back out musky fishing over the weekend. The bite was tough. However, on Saturday, I landed a 46-incher on a Leo Mojoe (leolures.com). On Sunday, I lost two muskies bigger than Saturday's fish. Lost them right at the boat. Sick about it. Both fish were over 48 inches. (See photo on cover)

Stan Teitelbaum; filed 8/27: It was a tough bass bite on Pymatuning the last week of August. However, this 17.5-inch smallmouth caught early morning on a Pop R made the trip worthwhile.



Editor's note: I have received numerous reports of decent smallmouth bass catches from Pymatuning the last couple years. In late spring of 2021 when Pymatuning was very clear, I observed many recently vacated smallmouth beds. We also caught an untallied number of six to nine-inch smallmouth on our crappie jigs. Looks like there has been a good spawn in last couple years.

Conneaut Lake

Darl Black @ Blackwolfe Communications; filed 9-20: Marilyn and I headed over to Conneaut Lake late Sunday afternoon hoping boat traffic on the lake would have subsided since Labor Day. No such luck. Our plan was to scout for inkling of an early fall smallmouth on topwater. I recall some excellent topwater days for big smallmouth the last week of September and first week of October back in the 1980s. Wasn't to be on this evening. What we did find was an incredible population of bluegills on the move. I addressed this early fall bluegill bite in the latest issue of the **PA ANGLER & BOATER** magazine. To see some screen shots of massive bluegills schools, see the **GAMMA TIP Page** of this Report.

ERIE COUNTY

Lake Erie



Keith @ Dutch Fork Fishing Charters; filed 9/18: Bruce, Jan and I went deep today and found some great walleye. Quite an eventful day fishing with these two wonderful people I just met this year. We will be doing it again soon! (See photo on left)

Kirk @ East End Angler; filed 9/19: Anglers are getting limits of walleyes between 65 and 100 feet on the east side. But you've got to work for

them since the fish are not biting well. When you catch the first walleye out deep, you should work and rework that small area, rather than continue trolling through the long school like most anglers do during the summer. You'll see lots of fish, but not all are biting. I've also had hit and miss reports on perch in 50 to 55 feet of water off Shorewood and The Point. But it is taking time to catch a small bunch of fish. Furthermore, reports are perch are not hitting salted emeralds – only sawdust minnows. Bass anglers are catching smallmouth in the lake. In the Bay, anglers continue to catch crappies from city-side piers; this is unusual since the crappies typically disappear during the summer heat.

Ken Smith (Sharon); filed 9/19: I have another great trip to Erie with friends for walleyes. We came home with plenty of fillets. (Photo right)



Dan @ Buckets Charters; filed 9/19: We are wrapping up our walleye charters for the season. This past walleye summer on Erie was so good I just cannot imagine it being any better. Boat limits of walleyes in short time. Looking forward to next summer!

Erie Tributaries

Jake @ FishUSA; filed 9-19: Recent rain will have a pretty large impact on the steelhead fishing for the upcoming days. We finally got more rain than a little “grass soaker” this time. Anglers have been targeting steelhead in the early mornings and before dark in the low clear water. At least if Monday’s rain doesn’t blow out the stream and raise the CFS to a much higher number, we will have some color to the water likely leading to more fish to move into the streams and become more aggressive. My go-to fly for early season steelhead in good flow is an emerald shiner pattern like the “Little Precious.” Steelhead are so used to targeting baitfish while in the lake, they will be very keen to take a minnow pattern when they enter a stream. It takes a few weeks before they start to transition into a raging “egg bite.” The upcoming weeks will progressively become better and better as the temps start to dip into the 50s. Good luck and Fish On!

Kirk @ East End Angler; filed 9-19: There are a few steelhead holding off the stream mouths on the east side. Brown trout have been spotted moving into streams by the twos and threes. The cold rain should get more moving.

Jeff @ Poor Richards; filed 9-19: During the early morning and in the late evening, anglers have been catching steelhead off the wall at Walnut Creek and in the lake at the mouth of Trout Run. Powerbait, wax worms, and spoons like the Little Cleo are producing. Walleye bite is slowing down, but there are enough ‘eye out there to still draw anglers; spoons and plugs are outproducing worm harnesses.

Chris @ Elk Creek Sports; filed 9-19: The steelhead run has started, but it will take more water in the streams to get the fish moving into the creeks in numbers. Right now, best baits are eggs, worms and maggots.

Bill @ Tudor Hook & Nook; filed 9-19: After being shut down during most of the summer due to road construction, we are back open, fully stocked and ready for steelheads. We have an amazing selection of standbys as well as some hot new stuff in the store. The fish are staging, with a few scouts moving into streams at low light. But we need color and flow in the creeks to get a massive wave of fish to move. With Monday’s rain, we may see some action late into the week. With more rain in the forecast, things are looking up. No matter how dirty the streams may be due to accumulated summer silt, I’ll be out there with my 7 wt. 10’ rod working a bright minnow pattern.

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Bo @ BC Baits; filed 9/21: I haven't been fishing much recently, although I did go to Wilhelm over the weekend. I caught some decent bluegills and a few small crappies from brush in 9 feet of water about mid-way down the lake. However, I do have some news. I signed a lease on a building on Route 62 just outside of Sandy Lake where I plan to open a regular bait & tackle shop, and an outboard motor repair business. I hope to open later this fall in time for ice fishing.

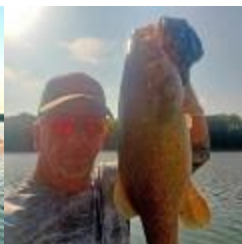


Brad B at Wilhelm; filed 9-18: Here are some of my biggest bass so far in September. I also got my niece and nephew out for some fishing time; each caught their first fish doing so on crappie jigs -- super proud moment! Bass are feeding on shad, crushing moving baits right now. (See photos left & right, and on Livewell Page)



Shenango Lake and River

Randy @ Fish West Pa; filed 9-18: Good month all around for Fish West PA crew. James caught a couple nice hybrids at Lake Arthur. On Shenango, some members of the crew have been going hard at the flathead catfish in the Shenango River and Lake. Others members are catching white bass and crappies in the lake. I've landed walleye and several nice smallmouths. The bite is only going to get better as the water temperature cools down more during October. (See photos below)



Randy with Walleye Randy with SMB



Chris has been on a hot flathead bite

Ken Smith (Sharon) – on Shenango Lake

- 9/4: I only got to fish one day the first week of September, but I did good on that day. I put a limit of 10-inch crappies in the box. I was fishing 15 feet of water over brush with a Garland Baby Shad and an ACC Snax. Snax is a new bait for me. Couple of colors did the job – chartreuse/white on a 1/16-oz. head and lemon/lime was second best color. The Snax held up better than the Baby Shads. Going to start next trip with this new bait right away.

- 9/13: I invited two new friends to fish with me on the 13th – Frank and Bo. We put 26 keepers in the box. Hang gliding in 16 feet of water over brush. (See photos on right)



VENANGO COUNTY

Sugar Creek

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 9-5: Went on a bait run this afternoon, but only caught 4 medium size creek minnows. Decided to stop at Red Bridge on Sugar Creek. On my second cast I caught this 18.5-inch rainbow! (Photo right)



Justus Lake

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 9/5: The first week of September was good fishing on Justus Lake. Slowly dragging live bait drifted behind the boat was the best presentation. Best locations were along weed beds and deepwater pockets near weedbeds. On Tuesday, my guest Doug Merchbaker from Cochranton and I boated 23 bass. Generally considered a largemouth bass lake, Justus Lake also has a population of dandy smallmouth bass; Doug caught several smallies in the 2 to 3-pound range. On Friday morning, fishing with my good friend Dave Feltenberger (also from Cochranton) our total was 25 bass. One largemouth which Dave caught was 4 pounds. On Sunday, rain moved in and I decided to go it alone. My morning was exceptionally good for fish and numbers – landing 18 bass. The largest was a 20.5-inch smallmouth. I was fortunate Alex Pitz of Pittsburgh was near the dock when I came in. He took my pic with the smallmouth. During our conversation, he informed me he primarily fishes for musky from shore on this lake. He had yet to land one on this day, but had lost one. On Monday Alex sent me a photo of a 32-inch tiger muskie he was able to land and release after I had left. (Photos here & Livewell)



Allegheny River



Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service; filed 9/18: Action on the middle Allegheny continues to be great. In general, river smallmouths are still in the chasing mode. Rapala X-Raps and Ripstop suspending jerk-baits are taking lots of fish, as are Zoom Flukes fished with a subtle twitch-pause re-



trieve. Trips are producing excellent numbers of fish, including a good mix of smallmouth in the 15 to 20-inch range. I've noticed a slight shift to deeper, slower water recently. Floating eelgrass on the surface (an annual nuisance during the fall) is underway. Depending on current and wind, one can find weed-free areas to fish. (See photos here & in Livewell)

Pete @ SmalliesontheYough.com: September Allegheny Diary

- 9/1: Great day today! Smallmouths were active during mid-day, eating soft plastic tubes from 412Bait Company. The smallies were in slightly deeper water today. I used a slow drag to catch them.
- 9/8: Wonderful day on the Allegheny fishing for smallies today. The bite was on and off through the day, but there were periods of particularly good activity. We landed fish up to 19 inches using a variety of baits including 412ubes. As always, our reels were spooled with 6-pound Gamma Edge in the clear water of the Allegheny.
- 9/13: The weeds are dying off and floating in the Allegheny. This makes it tough to fish, but you can still catch them. I used 412ube in SOTY color and swimbaits to land some nice smallies.
- 9/16: Action was great on the river when we arrived in the afternoon, but then slowed as the sun went down. We caught smallies up to 19 inches by targeting current areas.
- 9/18: A perfect day for smallies on the Allegheny. The fish were still in a summer pattern today, eating the usual suspects. (Photos below & in Livewell)



ALLEGHENY RIVER continued

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 9/8: Fishing with Brian Perry in his river boat, we first stopped to catch some riffle runners. After filling the floating minnow bucket with about 30 baitfish, we headed north of the 8th Street Bridge. Using large pinch-on sinkers and a number two hooks, we cast downstream into pockets 8 to 10 feet deep. We picked up four walleyes, nine smallmouth bass, and one catfish. I caught my Personal Best smallmouth going 12 inches and 5.5 pounds. (See photo.)



Rick Shrout; filed 8/22: I decided to explore the Franklin area of the Allegheny last week, and boated 28 smallmouths over three days, including a 3-pounder. I used a variety of soft plastics to catch all the bass. (See photo)

Randy @ Fish West Pa finished his summer fishing on the evening of September 20th on Shenango Lake with his last hybrid striper of summer. Now he is looking forward to an improved fall striper bite in the as water temperature cools.



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 Bartholomew 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

Prizes...names drawn this issue—you must email me with your shipping address in order to claim your prize (darlblack@windstream.net). I do not send out prize automatically.

Gamma Line: Ken Smith

Walleye lure pack: Rick Shrout

Panfish lure pack: Al Bell

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



Bill caught this musky at Tionesta Lake



James with Lake Arthurs hybrid



Keith with Erie walleye



Brad lands Wilhelm big bass



Pete with Allegheny bronze

More on next page



Allegheny SMB/ Jeff Knapp photo



Alex's 32" Justus Musky



The Erie walleye crew; Ken Smith photo



Smallies; Pete Cartwright 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
- East End Angler, Harborcreek, PA; 814-898-3474

Gamma Line president Dale Black says "Show me your Personal Best Catches!"

Send in a photo of your personal best catch of any species taken on any Gamma Line and you are automatically entered in a contest to win a Gamma Products Sampler, which includes couple different types of Gamma Line, Gamma cap, Gamma Bite indicators, and other Gamma products. You have October, November and the early Winter issue of the NW PA Fishing Report to get your photo in to darlblack@windstream.net. This can be a Personal Best species, or your own line class record – such as Ken Smith's hybrid striper on 2-pound Gamma Panfish Line as posted on this page. Include your name, fish species, Gamma line type & pound test, and water where the fish was caught. Providing name of Lure or bait used is optional. Personal Best entries this issue:

- Angler Al with a 21" 5.5 pound Smallmouth Bass from Allegheny River on 6-pound Gamma Edge. (left)
- Ken Smith his largest hybrid striper from Shenango Lake taken on 2-pound Gamma Panfish Line. (Right)

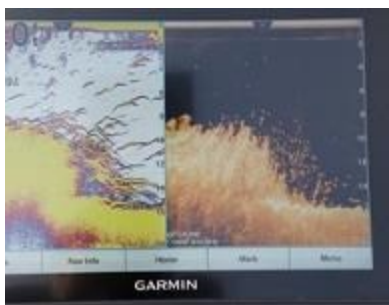


GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE

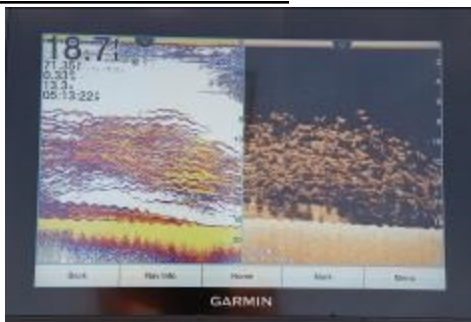
- Real anglers share actual fishing experiences with Garmin units
- For professional local installation of Garmin units, contact G&G Marine Electronics at 724-290-9045



Calling all bluegill anglers! Conneaut Lake is one of the best bluegill lakes in the state of Pennsylvania. It's a hotspot for jumbo 'gills in deep water during the hottest days of summer. But in the 44 years that I have fished Conneaut, I have never seen such high numbers of bluegill in the lake as this year. In August when I returned to the lake (I avoid it like the plague from mid-June to late July due to intense boat traffic), I observed massive schools of young-of-year bluegills feeding on plankton over top of all weedbeds. We did not return to Conneaut until September 18. My Garmin down scan showed lots of bluegills hanging along the deep edge of weedbeds. But down scan also showed massive schools of panfish-size fish filling the screen a little deeper around every major weedbed. Exploratory baits dropped to these fish resulted in keeper size bluegills mainly in the 7 to 8-inch range, along with some larger ones. These 7 to 8 'gills could not be from the 2022 hatch. **Bottom line – there are several exceptionally strong year classes of bluegills that are in need of harvesting.** Get yourself to Conneaut Lake!!! For tips on catching these fall bluegills, check out my article in the September/October PA ANGLER & BOATER magazine—Darl Black



Small 'gills on edge of weedbed



Down scan on right side of screen shows panfish much clearer than traditional sonar on left. Bottom screen shows larger bluegills in massive schools from 8 to 18 feet. Easy to ID when you drop a bait to the marks and catch big 'gills like Marilyn did.



DIRECTORY OF FISHING REPORT SUPPORT

The following agencies and business may be found on Facebook pages.

PENNSYLVANIA GREAT LAKES REGION (Regional tourism association is prime sponsor of the NW PA Fishing Report)– County organization listing provides information on Activities, Shopping, Lodging, Restaurants and Special Events

- Crawford County Convention & Visitors Bureau

- VisitErie

- Visit Mercer County PA

- Oil Region Alliance

AREA TACKLE SHOPS – Regularly provide information to NW PA Fishing Report on status of the public waters fished by their customers. Support these shops.

- Erie County

 - East End Angler

 - Elk Creek Sports

 - FishUSA

 - Poor Richards Bait & Tackle

 - Tudor Hook-N-Nook

- Crawford County – Pymatuning

 - Duck-N-Drake

 - Poff's Place

 - Richter's Bait

- Crawford County East

 - Timberland Bait

- Mercer County

 - Consumer Direct Sports Supplies (CDS)

- Venango County

 - Maurer's Trading Post

LOCAL TACKLE MANUFACTURERS – They supply the prizes for giveaways on the NW PA Fishing Report.

- B.C. Baits Custom Tackle

- Dutch Fork Tackle

- French Creek Fishing Company

- Galida's Grubz

- Luckis4rabbits

- Mike's Custom Tackle