

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

Published by Blackwolfe Communications LLC

Issue: February 2, 2023

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



Year of BIG steel-heads in PA tribs! Top photo from Bob at Solitude Steelhead Guide. Bottom photo of Jake at FishUSA with his biggest steel-head so far.



LANDING NET by Darl Black

With no safe ice since Christmas, angling opportunities have been simple: Steelhead in the Erie tribs (fantastic), walleye in the Allegheny River (very good), winter trout in steams (decent for those in the know), dock fishing for panfish at Pymatuning & Wilhelm Marinas, and pier fishing in Presque Isle Bay. However, with cold weather moving in for Groundhog Day and staying for awhile, there likely will be some ice fishing in the near future. But with First Day of Spring only six weeks away, the life expectancy of this new thin layer of ice is unknown.

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

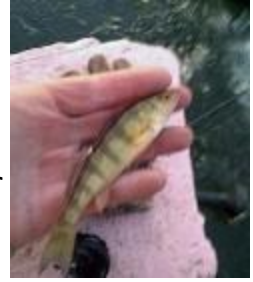
Pymatuning Lake

Bean @ Richter's Bait & Tackle (filed 1/30): Not much to report here. No safe ice. No word from the Shenango River. Anglers have been catching some nice crappies off the Jamestown Docks, along with some perch and bluegills. Weather is about to turn colder. Maybe ice in the future?

Arron @ French Creek Fishing Company (filed 1/29): Although there is little to no ice on area lakes, panfish and walleyes can still be caught by those willing to endure the cold weather fishing from boats or from piers. Fish are being caught by drop-shotting small plastic such as the 2" FC Darter or 2.2" FC Caddis fly. Finding fish feeding around submerged wood and transition points between mud and gravel bottoms seem to be the most productive spots to fish. (See photos below)



Adam Horne (filed 1/30): The last time I fished was December 28, 2022 at Pymatuning Lake near Jamestown Marina – just after the Christmas Artic Freeze that froze area waters for a short time. The ice was clear and 4 inches thick with shad frozen in the ice. Care had to be exercised heading out on area lakes. Always be careful and take proper precaution with a spud bar and life-saving ice picks should you fall through. Saw lots of small fish with the Vexilar. Bite was very light...and very small. However, it was worth getting out so I could try some new Christmas fishing gear. Bait of the day was a small jig tipped with maggots or mealworms. Fish on!



ERIE COUNTY

Important Public Access News for steelhead anglers: In case you have not heard, the PFBC announced on January 13 the acquisition of an easement on Twentymile Creek that will provide nearly 9,000 feet of public fishing access on this renowned steelhead fishery. It includes three contiguous parcels of land that were formerly leased to a private fishing club. Anglers should obey signage that has been placed at the easement site to guide them to accessible areas and direct them away from restricted areas.

Bob @ Solitudesteelheadguide; (filed 1/29): The mild winter we have enjoyed so far has made for some fantastic January steelhead fishing. Even though quite a few fish have been dropping down towards the lake, many fish remain through the system. Due to warmer than average water temps, fresh fish continue to enter the streams with each high-water event. We have even heard reports of a few white suckers showing up already. The only bad news for steelhead fishermen is that it appears the season will be on pause beginning in early February. With night time temperature sinking into the low teens, expect streams to become ice locked. Best of luck to everyone. Spring run is right around the corner! (See photos below)



Jake @ FishUSA; (filed 1/30): Steelhead fishing has been consistent throughout the first part of the year! Fish are starting to look a little older, as colors are starting to change. These fish are feeding heavily on eggs so a great imitation is a Blood Dot this time of the year. Lack of ice in streams is great because it keeps a consistent flow in the streams and great color! (See cover shot)

Kirk @ East End Angler; (filed 1/30): Fantastic steelhead fishing for January. However, no ice fishing on PIB or other area inland lakes. Anglers have been catching a few keeper perch off the docks and piers, but it's hit and miss. All about to change with colder weather moving in. Creeks will slush and ruin steelhead fishing, and PIB may eventually ice over if the cold hangs in. (See photo at right)



Kirk on upper Fourmile

Junior @ Poor Richards; (filed 1/30): Winter steelhead fishing has been excellent, but looks like that will be changing as extended cold moves in and ices up the streams.

Bill @ Tudor Hook-n-Nook; (filed 1/30): This has been an awesome steelhead season so far, not only for the numbers of fish and the size of fish, but the fact that season has been extended clear through January due to milder temperatures. But all good things must come to an end. The cold forecast starting this week and continuing on for a period will create edge ice, put slush in the streams and even freeze some pools. Going back to the arctic chill we had around Christmas, I believe we had a fish kill of steelhead based on the dead ones observed by myself and several others. Days before the freeze, the streams were low. I saw one small isolated pool which had about 100 fish in it with tails and backs sticking out of the water. There weren't moving because the water was too low. Then the super cold arrived the next day. When it warmed back in few days, that's when we saw an unusual number of dead steelhead. I think an undetermined number of steelhead froze to death. Fortunately, many fish survived and fresh ones have since moved into the streams.



Bill at Tudor



Arron @ French Creek Fishing Company; (filed 1/29): Just after the Christmas cold snap, ice was safe for a short period on some lakes in Erie County. We caught crappies and perch using the .7" FC Mayfly and the 1" Fluke. A bonus catch was a steelhead from the Bay. (See photos left and right)



VENANGO COUNTY

Allegheny River and Sugar Creek

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill: Al announces a new Facebook Page – Angler Al's Fishing Adventures. Be sure to "like" it.

January's Allegheny River Diary (see photos below)

- Since ice out on the Allegheny, Brian Perry (Franklin) and Kevin Kinkle (Franklin) and myself, have been catching lots of walleyes. We're using a vertical jigging technique with a 3/8-oz. jighead with a chartreuse or white twister tail body, and tip with a 2" to 3" creek minnow. We slow drift slack water in 10 to 15 feet.
- On Monday, 1/16, we boated 8 walleyes. My biggest was a 24-incher.
- On Wednesday 1/18, we boated another 8 walleyes with the 22-incher being the biggest. Most of the rest were around 20 inches.
- On Monday, 1/30, I caught a 30" northern pike with jig-n-shiner.
- **River walleye tip:** Fishing open river water during winter requires a slow finesse presentation. I prefer my St. Croix 7-1/2' medium light, fast action rod. My reel is spooled with 8-pound Gamma Edge. With your bait on the bottom, you can feel the sensitivity of crawling the jig; employ a 2 to 6-inch upward lift during the retrieve. This works great when positioned near the slack area of a current run. Give your presentation a better chance of being hit by teasing it along the bottom. In winter cold water, walleyes are not likely to chase your bait. This technique keeps a bait longer in the strike zone. In 6 to 12 feet depths, I use a 3/8-oz jig in chartreuse/orange or chartreuse/green, tipped with a 3-inch shiner. Deeper water, I go heavier in jig weight.



VENANGO COUNTY continued—Sugar Creek

Angler Al's January's Sugar Creek Diary (see photos)

- I ended my 2022 fishing season by catching a 19-inch brown trout on the last day of the year. On New Year's Day, with my new 2023 license, I caught a 15-inch brown . Both fish were caught with drifted live minnows. And they were both released un-harmed!

- On 1/28, drifting a 3-inch creek shiner above the bridge in Sugarcreek, I caught a 19-inch brown trout with a sweeping hookset. My rig was a #8 hook and 6-pound Gamma line. Released to do battle another day! PTL from Angler Al.

- On 1/29, I hiked a distance to seldom-fished section of Sugar and caught a 19-inch brown on my last cast. Drifting live creek bait, of course.



French Creek Fishing Company photo

RECENT RELEASES: Gifts for an individual of any age, or something for yourself to get through the last six weeks of winter.



Just released: **Eastern Wildlife Coloring Book** by Linda Steiner, award-winning outdoor writer and nature artist, is now available at Amazon.com. Thirty wildlife species, from mammals, birds and fish to snakes, amphibians and insects. Color them and read about their natural history. Plus, many “Wildlife Extras” with more animal pictures and nature lore to enjoy. 64 pages/Size: 8.5” by 11”

And don’t forget the 2022 release of Robert Lynn Steiner’s book **“River Boots: A fish Warden’s Tales of Pennsylvania Fish and Game Law enforcement,”** also available on Amazon.com. A collection of both humorous and dramatic anecdotes from Steiner’s years in the field as a Waterways Conservation Office in NE and NW PA. Here are a couple true stories from northwest Pennsylvania.

HOMEMADE LIBERTY BELL LICENSE (Lake Pleasant, Erie County)

It was ice fishing season, early in 1976. I was working the ice on Lake Pleasant with Jim Carter, the warden, not the president. Everything was going well, and when I checked a young fellow I didn't look closely at his license. I had seen the Liberty Bell, that year's license's featured artwork, which I trained myself to look for, so I just made small talk with him about fishing. As I walked over and got back with Carter, something in my head kept saying I had missed something.

I told Carter to wait a minute, and I went back to the kid I had just checked. When I looked at his license more closely, I realized what had caught my eye. It was a homemade license. He was very proud of the attempt, knowing he had nearly foiled justice. I complimented his artwork as I wrote his ticket and impounded the license.

CHEERLEADER JACKET (Allegheny River, mouth of Pithole Creek, Venango County)

The pretty young girl had been fishing with her friends at the mouth of Stewart Run. I asked her name and age.

“I'm Joanne and I'm only 15,” she said.

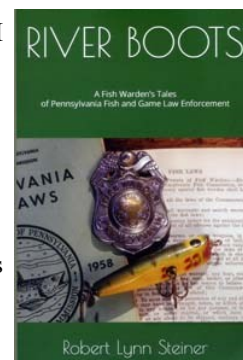
“Where do you go to school?” I followed.

“Oil City,” she replied.

“I think your name is Carly, you go to Rocky Grove High School and you graduate this year, which makes you at least 17,” I offered.

“How did you know?” she asked.

“You have your cheerleader jacket on,” I replied.



NW PA FISHING REPORT'S 2023 GUIDE/CHARTER CAPTAIN UPDATE

The following guides and charter captains have been providing reports and photos to the Fishing Report. They are experts in their respective fields. For 2023, some of these guides have added new waters and/or new species to their offerings. If you are looking for a guide or charter captain for a personal trip, or for gift certificate to present to someone, please consider these excellent choices. In alphabetical order, here is what they offer:

Capt. George Mro (George Mrozinski)

- Smallmouth Bass on Lake Erie, from April 15th to first week of November.
- Largemouth Bass on Lake Okeechobee, Florida during winter months.

724-816-4035; capt.georgemro@gmail.com.

Dutch Fork Fishing Charters (Keith Eshbaugh)

- Lake Trout on Lake Erie, from end of April to May 13.
- King Salmon on Lake Ontario, May 19-May 30.
- Walleye on Lake Erie out of Walnut Creek, June 3 to October 1.

724-884-3977; dutchforklures@gmail.com



Fishing with Bo (Bo Bartholomew)

- Ice fishing on Lake Wilhelm when ice is safe.
- Panfish at Lake Wilhelm and Conneaut Lake during April and May.
- Bowfin trips into Conneaut Outlet Marsh from June through September.

724-704-1723; fishwithbo@gmail.com

Keystone Connection Guide Service (Jeff Knapp)

- Primary guiding for Smallmouth Bass on the free-flowing middle Allegheny River mid-March to late November, depending on river conditions.
- Walleye trips on middle and lower (lock & Dam) section of Allegheny River, Nov- March.
- Largemouth & Smallmouth Bass on Keystone Power Dam, spring through fall.
- Crappies trips on Keystone, Crooked Creek Lake and Lake Arthur, spring through fall, plus limited walleye trips on Pymatuning as schedule allows.

724-902-6082; keystoneconnectionguideservice@gmail.com



(continued next page)

Smallies on the Yough (Pete Cartwright)

- Smallmouth Bass wade trips on Allegheny River & tributaries, and on the Youghiogheny River, from April through October.

pete@smalliesontheyough.com



Solitude Steelhead Guide (Robert Packey)

- Steelhead guide trips on Lake Erie tributaries from mid-October through mid-April.

724-972-8813; solitudesteelheadguide@yahoo.com

XTR Fishing Charters (Cory Elder)

- Walleye on Lake Erie, through late fall.

724-679-4510; xtrfishingcharters@gmail.com



Solitude Steelhead Guide 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 Winner

The winner of Gamma Line Personal Best Catch drawing was 11-year-old Jovie Scott of Erie. Her PB catch was a 21 lb. King Salmon caught on 12 lb. Gamma Polyflex during the Lake Ontario LOC Spring Derby, winning her first place in Junior Division. The random drawing for the GAMMA Line Sampler was on January 12 at Gamma headquarters in Franklin. Jovie was one of approximately 30 entries; her prize was a filler spool of five different Gamma Lines and a cap, with total value of about \$100.00.

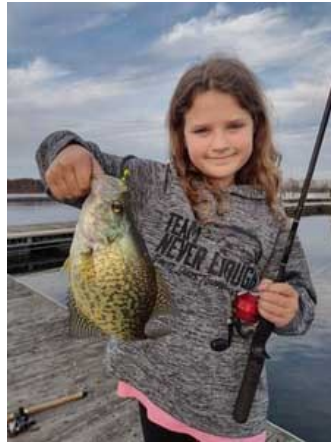


"We love Gamma line; it's the best line we have ever used," said Jeremy Scott, Jovie's father. "She is going to try and defend her title as we plan on fishing this year's Lake Ontario LOC Spring Derby but we may target Brown Trout and Lake Trout a little more. Quick family story, when my wife said we were expecting, she said it was a boy she could feel it, so when we found out it was a girl, I was somewhat disappointed thinking I wasn't going to have an outdoors

buddy. Wow, was I wrong as Jovie and her younger sister Jancy (who my wife said for sure 100% this time was a boy) have both have turned out to be the best outdoors partners anyone could



have ever wished for. Jovie tagged out this year harvesting a buck and doe and Jancy (age 9) harvested a doe. We fish together as much as possible; they help me clean, cook, and love eating the fish we catch. I'm super proud of them both! Jovie works ahead at school so she can take time off for our annual family fishing vacation. In the first two quarters at school this year, she has straight A's." (More family photos below)



Editor: What more could you ask for—an entire family that fishes together. We are sure that Gamma Line Sampler prize will be put to very good use. Hope to hear from Scott family about more of their catches from NW PA in the coming year!

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 –

Ice Fishing Setup by Gus Glasgow at G&G Marine Electronics

I have been getting a ton of questions about what batteries to be using on the ice. The most popular battery selling right now (I also keep a few in stock) is the 32AH (amp hour) battery. This battery can power your Garmin unit and LiveScope all day without a problem. I have also had some questions about charging and storing. Lithium batteries require a different type of care than your typical lead batteries. Lithium batteries when charged can handle the freezing temperatures without any problems; however, when you get off the ice, this is where it gets tricky. The battery needs to come up above freezing temperature before being placed on charge. When I come off the ice, I place my entire system inside the cab of my truck so it can warm back up on the drive home. When I get home, I can throw my battery right on the charge. If a battery is still cold, it can show a 0.00 voltage or an error on the particular charge being used and will not charge until the internal system resets.

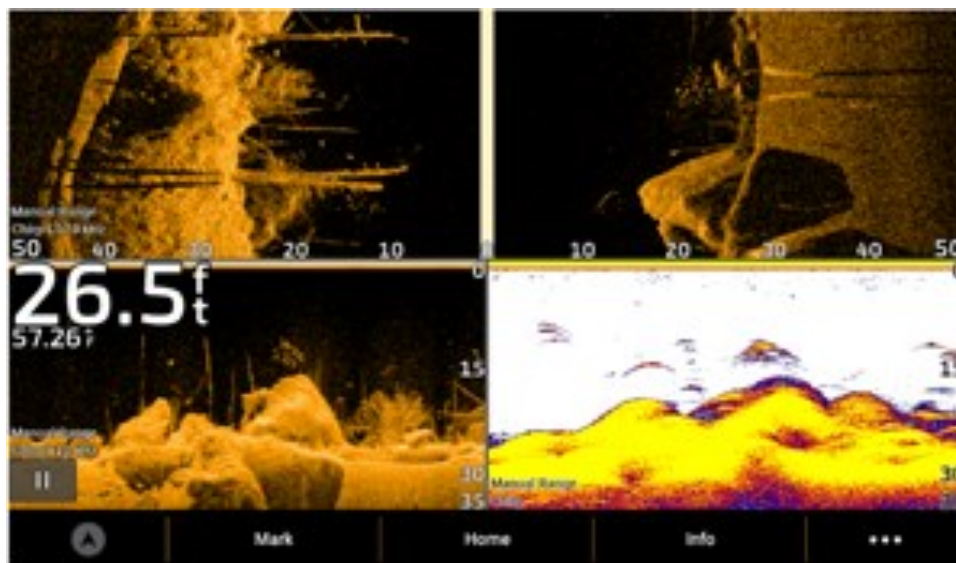
Garmin just released an improved ECHOMAP UHD2 system in the 6", 7", and 9" size only (for now). Garmin has improved the screen resolution, sonar definition, built-in mapping, and finally gone wireless. What this means is the system can communicate with other UHD2 graphs within the boat. This means you can drop waypoints on one unit and it will automatically appear on another unit. For us installers, this means fewer wires and network cables throughout the boat. I suspect there is more to come with these units within the near future updates as the wireless technology could open up a whole new world of advanced technology.

I have been testing and playing with Garmin transducers for the last two years and I found the holy grail of all transducers. For two years up until the spring of 2022, I ran a Garmin GT54UHD transducer. I used this transducer to map several lakes for our first year of competitive crappie fishing. I would turn on my side imaging and run at approximately 5 mph

or less scanning 100' to my left and right. I would also set my system to record so I could make my own maps which I would later upload to my active captain app/community making my own extremely accurate maps. The GT54UHD worked flawlessly.

In the spring of 2022, I ordered two new graphs for my boat which came with the GT56UHD transducer. I did not expect much difference, but what I found blew my mind. I went back down to my home lake, Lake Arthur and started going over areas that I have been over hundreds of times. Immediately I started finding brush piles I had never seen before. It took me a while to figure out what was going on. I can't prove this part that I am about to tell you, but it's the only explanation I can come up with. The GT56UHD was picking up PVC brush piles that people had placed into the lake that did not show up on the GT54UHD (at least that I could tell). I know a lot of anglers build structures out of PVC, buckets, and PEX materials, and on a lake like Arthur, there's a ton of brush out there being placed by anglers (FYI, this is not legal, so don't get any ideas). I spent the entire season remapping areas that I had previously mapped the year prior and found countless structures that I never noticed or never saw before. In my opinion, as of 01/2023, the GT56UHD is the holy grail of transducers. I have attached an image that Garmin took of the GT56UHD in action.

(See image of GT56UHD transducer below. Contact Gus at G&G Marine Electronics about a Garmin setup for your boat and for ice fishing.)



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