

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

Published by Blackwolfe Communications LLC

Issue: October 15, 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



48" musky, Justus Lake, Al Bell



22" Smallmouth, Allegheny R., Pete Cartwright

The Landing Net by Darl Black

It's October and things are changing fast. Steelhead are getting slow start due lack of water. But smallmouth bass are going crazy in the Allegheny River, French Creek, Shenango River and several inland lakes. It's also a good time for muskies. And walleyes are starting to turn on at Pymatuning and the Allegheny River. But keep an eye on the Erie tribs and the weather forecast. First good rainfall on the North Coast will send silver up the creeks. Be ready to jump in the car and head north after about one day after a good rain—just enough time for the muddy water to clear a bit, but before levels drop. But weather and bites change quickly this time of year. Get out as often as possible.

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.

NW PA FISHING REPORT October 15, 2023

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County by county reports for all public waters in
Crawford, Erie, Mercer & Venango Counties

FRENCH CREEK – flowing through all four counties



Pete @Smallies on the Yough; Guiding on French Creek: On 9/7, the creek was in perfect shape and the smallies were eating a variety of baits; the 3-inch Venom Tube was particularly effective. On 9/22 I returned to French Creek to find it low and clear with water temperature around 65 degrees. We used

soft plastics to land a bunch of smallmouths up to 19 inches.
(Photos left and right)



Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; 10/9: French Creek has been somewhat challenging. Weeds have made it tough to fish. I find that using a float indicator to float a piece of live bait helps me recognize the bite. That's better than the false feeling from weed debris. Walleyes and smallmouths are feeding aggressively on the Creek. I fished with Mikey one day and he slammed a number of beautiful smallmouths. (See photo right)



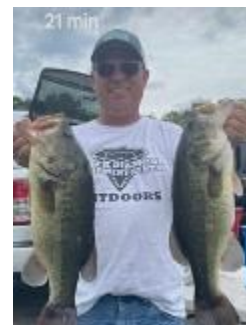
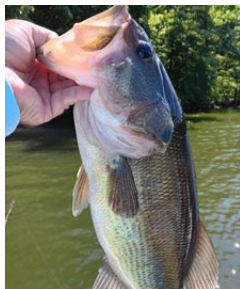
CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Bean @ Richter's Bait & Tackle; filed 10/10: The early walleye Sonar bite is kicking in; seeing some keeper fish on blades. Not hearing anything about musky or crappies. If the weather remains cool and temperatures continue to drop, the latter part of October and early November should be very good fishing. Starting October 13 and running through Halloween, we are having a sale on items in our Gift Shop (not the tackle shop) – many items 15% or 20% off depending on the item.

Laurie @ Duck & Drake; filed 10/10: Perch are everywhere in the mid-section of the lake. Numbers but no really big ones. We are closing for the winter on October 15, but will reopen in the spring. Our catfish and walleye tournament will be back in 2024, but the crappie tournament will not be back until 2025.

Mark Melega; filed 9/18: I had a good weekend bass fishing at both Pymatuning Lake and Lake Wilhelm. Largemouth bass were a little deeper than expected, but crankbaits and jigs worked great. (See photos here & on Livewell Page)



Captain Hook (Hermitage); filed 10/9: I've had good success fishing from shore at Pymatuning in recent weeks. I caught a number of smallmouths, including a heavy 21-inch brown bass. I also landed a 40-inch musky. The musky was a surprise, hitting a bass plug; it took some time to land it on light gear with no net! The warm spell provided some nice fall fishing – bass were active some days but not every day. Conditions will be different with colder weather moving in. All my fish were taken on Gamma Polyflex 6-pound test – the line I've been using all season. (See photos below)



ERIE COUNTY

Lake Erie & Tributaries

Rob @ FishUSA; filed 10/9: **Steelhead** – Tributaries are still low and we need a lot of rain to improve conditions. We do have some rain in the 10-day forecast so that could help if we get enough. Steelhead are being caught off Avonia Beach by anglers casting spoons such as Little Cleo's and Kastmasters. Also, fish are being caught at the mouths of the tributaries and the wall at Walnut Creek. Anglers are using a variety of baits including nightcrawlers, minnows, salted minnows, egg sacs and hardware. (Photo is Andrew Magee from FishUSA Pro Shop)



Walleye – Although some anglers have started putting their boats away or have already filled the freezer, the walleye fishing continues to be productive. Last I heard was 80 feet of water out of Walnut. Anglers using the usual Bombers, Bandits and spoons. **Small-mouth** – I have not personally heard much on smallmouth, nor have I been out myself. But I heard some bass are being marked closer to shore but the bite is a real struggle. This could change at any time.

Bob @ Solitude Steelhead Guide Service; filed 10/9: Some steelhead have begun their annual fall migration up the Pennsylvania tributaries, but in limited numbers. This is mainly due to the near record high lake temperature and the lack of rainfall over the past month. Last weekend's rainfall has spurred some upstream fish movement, but the majority are still staged in the lake or in the very bottom section of tributaries. If you want to get in on the early season action, you will want to concentrate your efforts on the first ½ mile of stream or the lake shore near a stream mouth. The season only gets better from here! (See photos below)



Kirk @ East Side Angler; filed 10/9: I'm hearing from anglers that there are more steelhead moving up East Side creeks than West Side creeks. On Twenty Mile, fish have been reported between Rt 5 and Rt 20 – not great numbers but enough to be of interest to some anglers. Up down the PA north coast, steelhead anglers are catching a lot of Pink Salmon this season; I've heard this could be due to stock of pinks by Michigan. The lake

has been rough so not many have ventured out for walleye or smallmouth, although I had report of near-shore steelhead anglers picking up smallmouth bass. The last wall-eye report we had over a week ago put the big schools out at about 82 feet. The near-shore water is still too warm for lake trout to move in. However, the Bay report is interesting...fishing for perch and crappies is very good right now on city side at Dobbin's Landing, Convention Center pier, and Liberty Park; perch are biting from sunrise to about 9 am, and crappies are hitting from dusk to full dark.



Chad Prihode; filed 10/9: Emily caught an 8.25 lb. steelhead at mouth of Walnut on a green/silver Little Cleo. Damien landed a 4-pound smallmouth bass on a drop-shot rig with a Berkley Flat Worm from 22 feet of water off Shades Beach. See (See photos left & right))



MERCER COUNTY

Randy @ Fish West PA; filed 10/9: The Shenango River Lake bite is on for the fall feed for most species. With water temperature dropping, hybrids, white bass and black bass are chasing bait. A great time to be out, surrounded by beautiful colors of fall, Shenango Lake provides incredible sunsets. (See photos below)



Marilyn Black

Marilyn @ Blackwolfe Communications; Cochran; filed 10/10: Early to mid-October on the Shenango Lake and River complex produces topwater action.

Captain Hook; Hermitage; filed September 15: Still catching hybrid stripers in the river below Shenango Dam. Landed this guy on 6-pound Gamma Polyflex. Smallmouth bass bite is on as well.



Captain Hook

VENANGO COUNTY

Angler Al's Venango Diary

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 10/9: Since the last report, I have had the opportunity to fish several times on different bodies of water, with several different people. We all caught fish and some of them were dandies! The fall bite is on.



- Allegheny River: My friends Brian Perry and Kevin Kunkle of Franklin, and I have been catching walleyes and smallmouth bass from the Allegheny. Our presentation is live bait! We put forth the extra effort it takes to get live bait. Many hours are spent catching it before we can even fish. Time management is part of that play. If we catch our bait early afternoon into early evening, come the last couple hours of daylight we are on the river catching fish on practically every cast. On two different evenings this past week alone, we tallied 75+ smallmouth bass and 25+ walleyes in five hours of fishing. All bass and most walleyes were released; we each kept a couple walleyes.

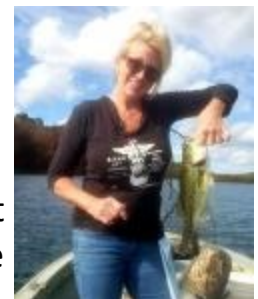


- Oil Creek: The artificial-only section on Oil Creek got stocked. I found the water level so extremely low that fishing was not much fun. After catching two 13-inch brown trout on a black spring lizard pattern, I exchanged my fly rod for a spinning rod and headed to the river. If we get more rain, perhaps I'll make my way back to Oil Creek.

- Justus Lake: Justus Lake in Two Mile Run County Park has always been a favorite of mine. Back in July I caught a huge, trophy northern pike – a Personal Best freshwater catch. The morning I got my replica back, I called my friend Tom Hays the next morning to see if he wanted to join me for a trip to Justus Lake. By early afternoon we had boated and released a total of 14 smallmouth and largemouth bass, and we were running low on bait. I caught a yellow perch and used it for bait on my catfish rod which was spooled with 40-pound test. Twenty minutes later I broke that Personal Best freshwater record set in July with a 48 inch 35-pound musky. All I can say – what a fierce battle and great net job by Tom. PTL!



- I returned to Justus Lake a week ago with Delora Lusher, a lady friend from Tavarise, Florida. I bought Delora a three-day tourist cense so she could experience the great fishing in our area. She did exceptionally well, landing several good-size largemouth



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bass using live large creek minnows as bait. Then she hooked a big one – a 20.5 inch 4 lb. plus smallmouth bass. A PB for her!

- French Creek: See Angler Al's French Creek report under the French Creek heading on page two.

Allegheny River



Denny Beggs (Franklin); filed 9/14: First, we fished under the Emlenton bridge to catch about 20 large minnows. Then I drifted with Larry Kladney in his 9.8hp prop boat to Parker. We caught about a dozen smallmouth bass and one walleye with the bait. First bass was under the Emlenton Bridge. Great weather day and great fun on the river. (See photos)



Pete Cartwright's Allegheny Diary (September to early October), see guide page

- 9/5 It was extremely hot today on the river. We started early and finished late – an all-day adventure. We started catching smallies on the first cast and that action never slowed. We used a variety of lures including Keitech Fat Swing Impact swimbait which I buy at Fishing Online.
- 9/14: The recent cool down has made water temperatures drop, and in mid-September that means get out as much as possible as the smallies are eating for the big winter move. We got into them early and often. Landing lots of bass. We were using 412Tube in my signature color SOTY.
- 9/26: The weather had changed over the last few days. The high today was in the lower 60s. This drop had smallies eating big time. I lost a few massive fish on jumps. Then hooked and landed a giant 22-inch smallie with a 14-inch girth. What a fish!
- 9/27: The weather changed again; the sun came out and warmed things up. The smallies were still eating today; we landed some nice fish up to 19 inches using small soft plastics fished slowly.
- 10/6: The fall bite is in full swing. We got into them all day long. We used soft plastics including Keitech swimbaits to land smallies up to 21 inches. With the colder temperatures coming the bite should get even better.
- My guide season for smallmouths is over the first part of October, but I will be guiding on the Yough for trout this winter. (Smallies On The Yough.com)



Allegheny River continued

Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service; filed 10/9: Smallmouth bass action on the middle Allegheny remained excellent throughout September into October. Basically, an extension of the fine fishing that occurred all summer. My Guide trips average around 50 smallmouth bass during full day trips including plenty of quality-size fish up to 20 inches. As of my last trip, Oct 7, the water temperature was in the mid-60s and we were still catching bass in areas of faster current on Rapala X-Raps and Zoom Super Flukes. That will likely change with the onset of cooler weather and an increase in flow. Floating eelgrass, an annual fall event, has been an issue during the past week or so, along with the presence of suspended algae. A few walleyes are showing up while targeting bass. (See photos below)



Dragonfly photo by Denny Beggs while on river float.

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; fishinkeef5132@gmail.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

Names drawn for prizes are as follows:

Cover photos: **Pete Cartwright** and **Al Bell**—each receive a bag of Galida's Grubz

Spool of Gamma Line: **Chad Prihode**

Pack of Mike's Custom Tackle Tubes: **Denny Beggs**

To claim your prize, send an email to darlblack@windstream.net with you shipping address. In the case of Gamma Line, include the type and pound test you wish. You must send an email to Darl to claim the prize. Thank you.

The Livewell

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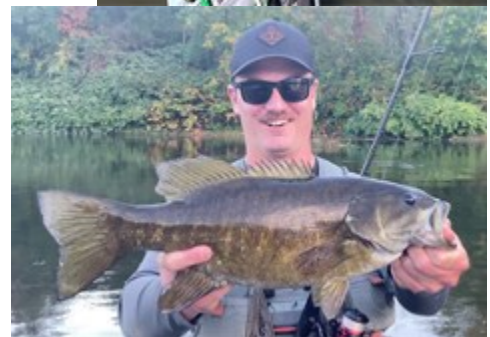


Email: Debbie@riverjetpro.com

The Allegheny River is always a hot bite in the early fall and continues so right up through ice up. Get yourself to the river. Need a boat? See Wiegel Brothers Marine.



Melega & Corazzi win 3-Rivers Classic





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 Assists in Tournament Win for Team Glasgow/Druschel on Lake Arthur

By Gus Glasgow

What an October day! Crazy winds and a huge drop in temperatures made for some interesting fishing. Boat control was a disaster with wind twisting all over. We stayed in one general area all day that was semi-protected from the wind and beat brushpiles all day. Crappies were buried in the brush which resulted in a ton of snags, but the right quality fish were there. Dan and I caught two big crappies weighing almost two pounds each within 100 yards of one another, so we hung in that area. Fish were caught in the shallowest brush we could find – 3 to 7 feet produced most of our fish. We were able to



pull 1st place and lunker – which we were very thankful for. Thanks to the Northeast Ohio Crappie Club for hosting the event. And thanks to our sponsors: FishUSA, **Gamma Fishing Line**, G&G Marine Electronics, Striker, Apex, Cast Cray Outdoors.

GAMMA PICK THREE PHOTO CONTEST

Here are this month's contest entries. Two more issues (November and December) to go before the drawing. The winner will receive sample spools of three different Gamma Lines of their choosing.

Anyone can enter. Do not need to be regular contributor. Simple to enter:

1. Email a photo of a fish (any species, from any water) which you caught on any Gamma Line.
2. Provide the name of angler in photo, fish species, which body of water caught, and the specific Gamma Line you used. (Lure or bait used and weight or length of fish is optional.)
3. Email to darblack@windstream.net listing the Subject as **Entry for Gamma Line Contest**. Please email an entry in it's own email — not with your regular report. One entry per angler per month.



Debora; Justus Lake; 8lb Optic Yellow Copolymer; 4.5 lb. smb



Brock; Pymatuning; 6 lb. Polyflex; 40 inches musky



Denny; Allegheny R; 6 lb Edge



Mikey; French Cr; 6 lb Edge



Al; Allegheny R; 6 lb. Edge; 10 lb. catfish

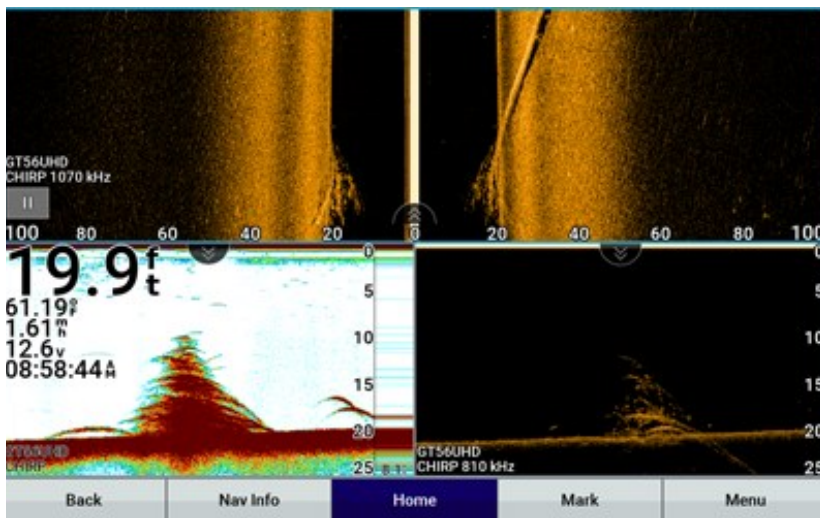
GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE



- 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 by Jeff Knapp (Keystone Connection Guide Service)

Now is the time of year when I find crappies setting up on deeper wood cover, more specifically brushpiles, laydowns and cribs. My Garmin Echomap Ultra makes it easy to tell if baitfish and/or fish I suspect to be crappies are present. During a recent trip to Lake Arthur, my friend Dave Keith and I caught a couple dozen crappies up to 14 inches by scanning sunken wood in the 15-to-20-foot range, then vertically jigging the spots that held fish. I'd offer this tip regarding Echomap touchscreen units: Set up the onscreen control so you can instantly adjust the brightness of Side Vue and Clear Vue; and the gain on 2D sonar. This way you can quickly adjust for changing depth and bottom composition for the best possible picture.



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

FishUSA

Poor Richards Bait & Tackle

Tudor Hook-N-Nook At Elk Creek Sports

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

French Creek Fishing Company

Galida's Grubz

Luckis4rabbits

Mike's Custom Tackle