

# NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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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**



## The Landing Net by Darl Black

As we approach the Thanksgiving Holiday, the fall run of steelhead is normally well underway, and a horde of out-of-towners are making plans to fish the tributaries over the long holiday weekend. Whether the water level is high, moderate or somewhat low, fish are normally spread throughout the streams and, therefore, so are the anglers. Not so this year, and the alarm is being sounded by tackle shops and hardcore steelheaders alike. Tributary stream levels are at a critical low point and have been so all autumn. Not just low, or very low, but **CRITICALLY LOW**. Basically, all fish are now trapped low in the streams (near the mouths) or in a few normally deep holes upstream a little bit. One long time steelheader told me it's like shooting fish in a barrel – not a sporting way to fish for steelhead, and many believe the entire the fall/winter run is being decimated. Unless the tributaries receive a deluge of rain to blow out the streams and get fish moving before the Thanksgiving holiday, you might want to consider whether you want to fish in extreme crowds over extremely stressed, extremely skittish fish trapped in small spaces.

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 for all public waters in  
Crawford, Erie, Mercer & Venango Counties

### CRAWFORD COUNTY

#### Pymatuning Lake

**Bean @ Richter's Bait & Tackle**; filed 11/14: With the marina docks open to fishing starting November 1<sup>st</sup>, anglers have been getting some big bluegills and nice perch; also a few nice crappies. Guys in boats are looking for walleye and muskies, and doing okay according to some fishermen. One customer stopped in over the weekend to show two nice walleyes – a 30-incher and 28-incher – taken on a blade bait.

**Patty @ Poff's Place**; filed 11/14: You know this is a slow time, but the panfish and walleye bites appear to be pretty good – not as good as spring, but decent. They are getting lots of small perch off the docks at Espyville. Two of my customers are wading and catching a mixed bag of panfish. Anglers in boats are getting walleyes with blades along the Andover Causeway and in front of Snodgrass Launch.

**Captain Hook** (Hermitage); filed 11/11: I landed some nice bass and muskies from Pymatuning during afternoon warm-ups in late October. All taken on artificial plugs and all released after snapping photos. You don't need a boat to catch big fish, just a pair of waders. With the colder weather now, the drop in water temperature is making the fishing tougher in the shallows. See photos – the muskies were 43 inches and 40 inches, and the smallmouth bass was 21 inches. (Photos on top of next page.)



Captain Hook



Captain Hook



Captain Hook

**Bo @ BC Baits;** filed 11/13: I fished the docks at Jamestown twice since November 1<sup>st</sup>. We caught a good mix of panfish both times. We did the best on deeper docks near brush. Fish came on black BC Bait Co. Terry Bug on a gold 4mm tungsten jig. The biggest crappie was 14 inches. Several of the perch were over 11 inches and bluegills around 9 inches. (Picture to right)



Bo and buddies on the docks

**Marilyn @ Blackwolfe Communications;** filed 11/12: We made our last boat fishing trip of 2023 to Pymatuning during Veteran's Day, looking for walleyes. For three hours we fished blades, Neds, hair jigs and rattle baits in the southern-most part of the lake, but all I could come up were perch and a fine specimen of a channel cat – all taken on a Cicada blade bait along channel drop. Did not see anyone landing fish. We talked with another boat angler at the dock who had been fishing blades; he said he only caught one legal walleye and two short ones all day. Water temperature was 49 degrees and massive schools of baitfish were scattered along the channel drops. The day before the big snow on November 1<sup>st</sup> was our previous Pymatuning trip to south end, water temp was 55 degrees and no sign of baitfish schools. On that day, we fished shallow and deep for bass and crappies – only caught one decent largemouth and a couple small ones. Did not see any crappies on electronics around brush, stumps or cribs during either trip.



Nov 11 massive baitfish school



Halloween Bass



## ERIE COUNTY

### Main Lake and PIB

**Kirk @ East End Angler;** filed 11/14: The big news is perch are being caught on both the city side and peninsula side of the Bay. Lots of shorts, but if you hang in there for a while, you can take some nice size perch home. Also reports of walleye and steelhead in the Bay. Walleyes coming off the city side and South Pier at night. Steelhead caught by Liberty Park. Out in the lake, it's all about lake trout – in 20 feet of water from Shades Beach to North East. Flashy jigs and jigging spoons will get them.

**Gus @ G&G Marine Electronics;** filed 11/10: One of my good friends was up to Erie the other day. He said the perch have moved into the Bay and are hitting in big numbers, with many running a good size. He caught a limit of fish in 25 to 30 feet of water in the deepest holes in the Bay and along the shipping channel

**Brandon @ Consumer Direct Sports Supplies;** filed 11/14: Dad and I went up to fish Erie on Sunday, but we faced tough conditions with northeast winds. We didn't see many fish being caught around us from the pod of 12 to 15 boats, so I think it was a struggle for most anglers. I talked to some guys who caught good smallies dragging baits really slow on the bottom throughout the day. We caught a half dozen smallies ranging from 3.5 to 5.25 pounds, a couple walleye and a few lake trout. Everything I caught was on a Steel Shad bait in 17 to 25 feet of water. Weighed the big smallmouth – 5.25 pounds, but did not weigh the lake trout or walleyes as we were trying to get them back into the water quickly. I would guess the walleye was around 28 inches, in the 7 to 8.5-pound range. (See photos below)



## Erie Tributaries

**Kirk @ East End Angler;** filed 11/14: Tributaries are low, low, low and clear, clear, clear. Steelhead are stressed. We need water.

**Dom @ Poor Richards;** filed 11/14: Creeks are very low and very clear. Need finesse presentations, such as a single egg, to catch a steelhead.

**Fishermen's Haven;** filed 11/14:

**Bill @ Tudor Hook-N-Nook at Elk Creek Sports;** filed 11/14: **WE NEED WATER!**

**Robert @ Solitudesteelheadguide@yahoo.com;** filed 11/11: The fall steelhead season is off to a good start as far as fish numbers, but a poor start as far as stream conditions. The Pennsylvania tributaries have yet to see a "blowout." The water levels are critically low with virtually zero flow. Although there are great numbers of fish in most of the streams, the bulk of fish have yet to spread out, and as a result, neither have the fishermen. Expect very crowded conditions and extremely pressured fish on the low to middle sections of the stream. Despite these challenging conditions, steelhead are still hitting the net, and some are very large ones again this year. Downsizing your presentation and terminal tackle will help, but the real relief will come in the form of rainfall, and lots of it. Best of luck to everyone. (Photos below and on cover.)



## **MERCER COUNTY**

### Lake Wilhelm

**Brad at @ibeefishin;** filed 11/14: I caught perch and crappie recently at Wilhelm by slow-rolling a 1/116 oz. tungsten ice jig with a BC Baits Stinger and Pick Worms. I use Gamma Touch 5 lb. test fluorocarbon leader on the setup. The perch are getting big at Wilhelm. I've been doing the same for bass, except with a 1/16-oz. ball head jig and a

small swimbait with 4 lb. mono. Power fishing and covering water with a finesse style baitcaster. To see more content, go to [@ibefishin](#) on Instagram and Facebook. (See photos below)



**Bo @ BC Baits Co.;** filed 11/14: I fished the Wilhelm marina docks on Dock Day. Caught a bunch of small perch and bluegill. Not much luck. (See photo right)



### Shenango Lake

**Randy @ Fish West PA;** filed 11/14: Shenango is cooling down. As water temperature drops, fish are the last of the fall feed. It's a great opportunity for big fish. Mid-November looks decent weather wise so we hope to get more boat time before ice. Tight Lines, Randy. (See photos) below



**Ken Smith** (Sharon); filed 11/14: Until yesterday, I had only been out on Shenango twice the past several weeks due to the windy weather keeping me home. In those two outings I put only a total of 27 crappies in the box; however, friends informed me they were catching crappies on a minnow below a bobber. But I went out on Sunday, 11/12, and had a pretty good day. I caught 30 crappies on Bobby Garland Itty Bitts on a 1/16-oz. head fished around blowdowns. I kept 19 with only two under 11 inches. Also caught 3 short largemouth bass, 6 bluegills, a perch and a white bass. Wind was up, so I could not fish my best spots – had to settle for secondary spots.



## VENANGO COUNTY



### Venango streams

Tony Sobina (Oil City); filed 11/14: Every day of the year, you can find Tony fly fishing. Two of his favorite local streams for trout are Sugar Creek and Oil Creek. Fall/winter cold water period is a great time to fly fish these streams. (See photos left & right)



### Denny Beggs' Venango Diary

- 10/24: I was fishing last evening with a "Mike's Custom Tube" from a pack that I had won from the Fishing Report drawing. I biked up Justus Trail about a mile from Franklin and waded along the bank. Sunset was very nice on the Allegheny. Fished about an hour, but no hook-ups. No fish, but a nice sunset.
- 10/25: Caught smallmouths on Mike's Custom Tubes while fishing the Allegheny today from my kayak. Used Gamma 6 lb. Edge fluorocarbon as leader to my tube jig.
- 11/1: My brother, Scott, and I had fun at Justus Lake today, talking with fishermen and catching many nice rainbow trout. We woke to our first snow fall of the season – pretty scenery with snow hanging on the trees. No one was fishing the old launch when we arrived, but a few fishermen showed up in about an hour. I caught trout on almost every cast for a while using a small chartreuse rubber worm on a size 14 scud hook under a strike indicator. Scott fished with a Trout Magnet jig. We caught and released 25 trout each in a couple hours of fishing. LOL – Scott caught a salamander, too. Other photos include Mike Taneyhill of Franklin, who caught this nice trout using an Atomic Tube Jig. Mike released all trout caught today at Justus Lake. Also at the lake were brothers Pat and Jim Craig of Henry's Bend. They were using Thomas spinners. All fish were released.



## Allegheny River



**Pete Cartwright @ SmalliesOn-TheYough.com**; filed 11/8: We had a great day on the Allegheny River fishing for smallmouth bass. The river was low, and water temperature was 53 degrees with some floating leaves and eel grass. We were using bottom-bouncing baits to catch them with slow retrieves. If you weren't catching them, then you had to slow down the retrieves even more – it works for me! (See photos left and right))



**Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill**; filed 11/10: My good friend Brian Perry and I have been spending



evening hours fishing the river from his jet boat. First, we use a small #16 hook tipped with a piece of red worm or a maggot to drift in current to catch our live minnow baits. Riffle Run-



ners are great in the early fall, but as colder weather arrives this bait disappears, so almost any river minnow bait will work. We hook them to a skirted jig and use a swim-bounce retrieve, or simply vertical jig in deeper holes. Use heavy enough jig so you are able to feel the bottom. I found myself losing too many walleyes at the boat; I wasn't getting the barb buried in the bone roof of their mouths. Using 6 lb. Gamma fluorocarbon line, I was wondering about stretch. So, I called Dale Black, owner of Gamma Line, to discuss. He explained to Angler Al a tip that I will share with you: Use an inline barrel swivel to end of main line to attach a 4-foot leader of 20 lb. no-stretch braid. It works for me – haven't lost a walleye since I switched. (See photos here & Livewell)

**Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service**; filed 11/12: The middle Allegheny River has witnessed its annual fall smallmouth bass transition over the past few weeks. The rapid cooldown coupled with a bump in the flow in late October pushed bass into traditional late fall spots that are deeper and protected water with mild current. My guide trips and fun trips have been producing dozens of smallmouth bass up to 21 inches. Many of the bigger bass have come on suspending jerkbaits, including Rapala's new Maverick



110 (which will be released to the public later this month). As of November 11<sup>th</sup>, the water temperature was 46 degrees with floating eelgrass and leaves still a nuisance at times. (See Knapp photos below)



### **Ernie Pate's Fall River Smallmouth Bass Data Collection**

Earlier in November I had the opportunity to fish with a long-time friend on the Allegheny River. It had been at least 20 years since we had shared a day on the water in the same boat. Anyone who has fished a bass tournament circuit in western Pennsylvania during the past three-plus decades will recognize the name Ernie Pate of Butler. I thought we were simply going out for a relaxing afternoon of fishing and some casual reminiscing about old times. I did not expect to be involved in a data collection event, but it's all about numbers when you go fishing with a retired computer programmer. I'll let Ernie explain...

"I start each fall keeping track of my smallmouth bass catches in rivers at the beginning of October. I'm usually too busy with tournaments before then.

Parameters: I started keeping the spreadsheet in the fall of 2020, although I'm pretty sure the numbers would be over 1,000 for several years before that. The number this Fall stands at 1,257 smallies in 16.68 days of fishing. It's based on 8-hour days so anything less is just divided by 8. It is a total of whatever smallmouth myself and my partner for the day catch from rivers and streams in Northwest PA.

Goal: I use it to compare so I can tell which body of water has produced better for numbers or size in different portions of the fall. I also keep track of what bait or baits have been the best for each trip as well as the number (percentage) of keepers and the biggest fish each trip.



Baits: Without a doubt, Ned-type baits have been largely the what most smallies have been caught on; although jigs, flukes jerkbaits & blade baits have also taken their fair share of fish over the years. Each year I also seem to tweak the spreadsheet, adding additional totals or columns. So far, of the 1,257 smallies caught, exactly 500 have been keepers (over 15"). That's 41% to this point. Hopefully the weather will permit me and my partners to get out more times before ice and cold weather puts an end to it.

The people that to this point who have helped compile these totals for this year are: Rob Singer, Jeff Hall, Larry Detrie, Rich Conlon, Ron Pate & Darl Black!"



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Darl's contribution to Ernie data

## **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

### **Prize drawing announcements:**

Cover Photos (choice pack of Galida's Grubz or Mike's Custom Tubes):

- Ernie Pate
- Robert Packey

Spool of Gamma Line (your choice of type and lb test): Randy @ Fish West PA

Bass Pack: Captain Hook

To collect prize, send email to darlblack@windstream.net with your shipping address. If I do not receive an email from you, the prize goes back in the hopper.



# 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](mailto:Debbie@riverjetpro.com)

These river fish are still eating, along with muskies and pike. Get in on the action!



Bill Logan with Allegheny Flathead

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Brian Perry with Allegheny River walleye

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Pete Cartwright with Allegheny Smallmouth

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Black Knight Industries  
Oil City, PA 16301  
[www.gammafishing.com](http://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

November entries in the Pick Three Gamma Line contest. December issue is last chance to submit a photo of any 2023 fish you caught on Gamma Line.



Denny Beggs; SMB on 6 lb. Edge

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Brad Bee catching panfish with 5 lb Touch.

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Angler Al; Eye on 6 lb. Edge

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# 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



## Here is a tip from Gus Glasglow at G&G Marine Electronics for next season's hybrid striper fishing on Shenango Lake and Lake Arthur

During a pre-tournament scouting trip for crappies on Lake Arthur, I found myself in a full-on blitz with hybrid striped bass. I was not planning on fishing for stripers this particular day. Rather I was just scanning the lake looking for brush as I always do, and noticed large fish darting all around on my Garmin LiveScope. I tied on a small white 4" fluke paired with a ¼-oz. VMC Mooneye jig and started casting. We ended up with nine stripers in less than 30 minutes; all fish were between 25 and 30 inches. Since this trip, I was able to sneak out multiple times to repeat the same situation.



What to look for: I was always told growing up on Lake Arthur that you want to fish for stripers at night. I did this for years, traveling down to the lake at 10:00 pm and fishing well past 2:00 am to maybe have a chance at one of these elusive fish. I had minimal luck back then and pretty much got away from it. Then I was introduced to Garmin LiveScope. As mentioned above, I was looking for brush with crappies on it when I came across a long point that shot out from a big shallow bay. Just out-front of this bay was deep water plus a flooded

railroad bed. This is exactly what the stripers want...deep water sanctuary and a large flat to chase baitfish and corner them. The railroad bed gives the stripers the perfect ambush spot.

With your LiveScope you can set your trolling motor to medium high speed and get right on the edge and start hunting. Stripers are much larger than most other gamefish and make very rapid movements so identifying them is easy. When you do find them, cast the fluke out and let it pass by their nose as quickly as possible. They cannot resist it. If you have any questions in regard to Garmin products, installation, and proper setup, please call me and I would be more than happy to get you pointed in the right direction. - Gus Glasglow at 724-290-9045





## **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