

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

Published by Blackwolfe Communications LLC Issue: April 12, 2024

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



Perch fishing in PIB produced many incredible size yellow perch.

Landing Net by Darl Black

What an absolutely crazy late winter and early spring – summed up as warmer, windier, and wetter than what we are used to. No ice fishing, but the steelhead anglers probably got in more days of fishing than ever given the milder (but still rough) conditions. And the small-mouth bass bite on the Allegheny River was off the charts, feeding like crazy and getting fat; one reliable river rat identified smallies feeding on schools of alewives in the Oil City area (a non-native baitfish new to the middle Allegheny). Will weather stabilize so mid and late spring bites materialize, or are we in for more up and down weather that will play heck with our waterways and ability to get out to enjoy fishing? Guess we will have to wait and see.

THE APRIL, 2024 ISSUE OF NW PA FISHING REPORT



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

Pymatuning Spring Calendar:

- PFBC Linesville Hatchery Open House, April 13, 11 am to 3 pm
- PLA Crappie Tournament, April 27; info: pymalakeassoc@gmail.com
- PLA Walley Tournament, May 18; info: pymalakeassoc@gmail.com

Dave @ Richter's Bait & Tackle; filed 4/10: Anglers are doing very well on walleyes – both during the day and at night. There are lots of night wading fishermen over here this year. Typical lures – long minnows and shallow Shad Raps fished slowly near the surface, also jigs or jig-n-minnow combo. The shallow springtime musky bite is on, too. Perch fishing has slowed some. Crappie bite had been good prior to that week of stormy weather but has slowed now; no one seems to be on them right at the present time.

Laurie @ Duck-N-Drake; filed 4/10: Walleyes are being taken on jigs tipped with a large minnow. Some scattered reports of crappies and perch up North.

Patty @ Poff's; filed 4/10: Fishing has been good with lots of anglers on the lake. Rough weather impacts catches, however. Reports of walleyes and perch off the Espyville

Causeway. Crappie success has been hit and miss; they seem reluctant to bite given the big swings in the weather.

Captain Hook (Hermitage); filed 4/4: Night fishing for walleye has been hit and miss for me. For several nights the fish are biting good, then there will be several days of calm and the fish don't bite. I've been catching them tossing a Rapala just after dark. (Photo)

Keith Eshbaugh; 4/10: I waded Pymatuning the other night with a friend. Got six walleyes, one smallmouth and one big perch. All came on jigs with twister tail and 4" shallow crankbaits. I had other hits but did not hook them. (Photos below)

ERIE COUNTY

Kirk @ East End Angler; filed 4/10: The west side of the of North & South Piers are currently loaded with perch preparing to move back into the lake. A couple guys I know are using LiveScope to locate and catch jumbo perch in the Head of the Bay. Some reports of lake trout in 50 to 60 feet of water from Shades to North East. Over at Eaton Reservoir (Bull Dam), crappies are biting as well as northerns...the number of pike being caught is crazy. Lake Pleasant has been giving up some huge trout.

Aaron @ French Creek Fishing Company; filed 4/8: Perch fishing has been excellent on Presque Isle Bay recently when weather conditions cooperate. Good number of large fish are being caught outside weed beds in 6 to 12 feet of water using drop-shot rigs or slip bobbers in weedy areas. Fish have been caught on a variety of soft plastics including 2" FC Split Tail Shads, 1.5" FC Twin Tails and 2" FC Pin Worms. Trout fishing was very difficult for the opener with heavy rains the local area experienced. As water levels recede, fish catches should pick up; I saw a 'little black Stonefly' hatch the other day and the spring caddis hatch should begin soon. (Photos below)

Robert @ Solitude Steelhead Guide Service; filed 4/6: As we approach mid-April, another fantastic steelhead season is coming to an end. The majority of steelhead remain in the system are drop-backs looking to find their way back to the lake. Suckers have taken over the streams, and smallmouth bass are not far behind. Several tributaries have been stocked with brown trout for opening day; these streams are also scheduled to receive in-season stocking. Steelhead smolts are scattered throughout the tributaries. Please handle these fragile fish with care as they are the future of our steelhead runs. This is the time of the season when you can catch a trophy-size sucker, small-

mouth, brown trout and steelhead in the same day – many times out of the same run. A great time to be on the water! (Photos below)

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Brad at @ibeefishin; filed 4/10: Wilhelm is a little high from all the rain, but all launches are accessible. Since the raise in water, the bass bite has gone down. But before the high water, I was crushing 14-to-16-inch wolf packs of largemouth – multiple back-to-back casts with over 20 fish in an hour of fishing throwing swimbaits. Got one solid three pounder so far. Panfishing also turned off with the rain, but Rich and I did well the other night – seemed the panfish become active once the sun gets low in the sky. Lake seems to be returning to normal as of yesterday. I have been catching crappies on BC Bait Company Stingers in chartreuse. (Photos)

Shenango Lake

Randy @ Fish West PA; filed 4/10: The crappies were biting pretty good before the high water and the string of cold fronts. With the lake flooded, fish catching opportunities have slowed. Water is slowly receding. Once it levels out and the water warms a bit, the spring bite should be on! (Photos)

VENANGO COUNTY

Opening Day on Venango Trout Streams

Denny Beggs (Franklin); filed 4/10: Attached is a photo of my son, Devin, from opening day holding a rainbow trout from Sugar Creek on Saturday afternoon; this fish was released. Devin was drifting salmon eggs. In the morning, we fished Oil Creek but conditions were not good – high and fast. But a group of us have a tradition to meet for breakfast at 7 am and hit a stream. Always fun regardless of conditions. (Photo)

Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 4/8:

- On opening day, Mike and I fished a small tributary of Sugar Creek in the morning since water levels on the main creek were a bit extreme; then later in afternoon we fished a stretch on the main branch. Mike caught several rainbows on pieces

of drifted nightcrawler and a few on a spinner; I caught some on minnows. Our total was 18 rainbows and 3 suckers. Mike's largest was a 20 inch 'bow. (Photo)

- During the eclipse on the 8th, I went to Sugar Creek before the time frame of the eclipse, prepared to catch trout when it got dark. I caught two rainbows in the 30-minute period before it started getting dark; then the trout turned off like they normally do during the end of a normal day as it gets dark from the eclipse. After the sun came back out, the trout turned back on. I caught a total of 15 rainbows and two browns. Largest 'bow was 20 inches; largest brown was 17 inches. They hit minnows and pieces of nightcrawler. I was blessed to share the moment with my friend Corey Breen. He as well caught trout before the afternoon darkness.

Sugar Lake

Angler Al; filed 4/8: Lewis Smith of Dempseytown has been catching pickerel in the slack water outflow of Sugar Lake. He primarily uses a chrome/black X Rap and then releases the fish. Thanks for sharing photos of your catch, Lewis!

Allegheny River

Pete @ Smallies on the Yough; early March: In early to mid-March, I enjoyed several excellent days of smallmouth fishing on the Allegheny River near Franklin. We had to work for them, but they were eating a variety of lures during the unusually warm water temps. We caught smb from 14 to 21 inches. (Photos)

Angler Al: Since my last report I fished the Allegheny River a few days in March for walleyes. We caught and released 8 walleyes, 10 smallmouth and a northern pike. The biggest 'eye was Brian Perry's 28-incher going 7 pounds. Several smallies were in the 4-pound plus category. We used large live shiners with #2 circle hooks, with split shot 24 inches up the line. Also, chartreuse/orange jigheads with white or chartreuse twister tails.

Bill Logan (Titusville); filed 4/1: What a day on the Allegheny! Caught 30 smallmouth bass and 1 walleye. Largest bass was 4 lb. 2 oz. – but no picture of the big one. Did get photo of a 3 lb. 11 oz. one, however. Also had another good day in March with smallie over four pounds.

Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service; filed 4/6: Prior to the early April deluge of rain and resulting blowout of the Allegheny, smallmouth bass fishing had been outstanding. Starting in mid-March, scouting outings and guide trips directed toward small-

mouth bass were producing 30 to 40 fish per day, most of them quality bass in the 15-to-20-inch range. The fish were found near wintering holes, as well as seasonal migratory staging areas scattered between much deeper holes and spawning areas. Many of the fish were extraordinarily fat for this time of year, with a plethora of food protruding from gullets that included suckers, chubs, crawfish and giant stoneflies. Productive lures included Galida's Grubz, Crush City Ned BLT, rabbit fur jigs, Z-Man Finesse TRDs, blade baits, and suspending jerkbaits (Rapala's new Mavrik 110 in particular). Productive depths ran from as shallow as one or two feet to as deep as 15 feet. Water temperatures were in the low 40s. (See photos)

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

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



If you are looking for the do-everything, go-everywhere (well, almost everywhere) fishing boat, then Wiegel Brothers Marine has the perfect outfit for you. If you are general do-everything angler on a budget, you probably don't want a fancy bass boat; besides the astronomical price of a fully rigged high-powered bass boat, you will be limited as to where to use it. However, if you only fish the Allegheny, then a jetboat will likely fit your needs and no one knows jetboats like Wiegel Brothers. But if you want to fish limited HP lakes, unlimited horsepower lakes, and want to be able to navigate to some of the great fishing opportunities on Lake Erie (under reasonable wave and weather conditions), then a jetboat isn't for you.

What I am leading up to is the absolute best all-around craft built for a wide variety of fishing situations – from bobber fishing for crappies to pitching jigs for bass to trolling for muskies. Stop by Wiegel Brothers Marine to see the 2024 G3 V167T with a 20 HP Yamaha. I always preach that tiller steering is best in boats with horsepower under 50 HP – without a consol, there is more room for people to move about to fish effectively. It has a roomy front casting deck and can fish three adults easily – yet can be handled by one person when loading and unloading even on secondary ramps. Live-well, lockable storage, space for electronics. And that 20 HP Yamaha will quickly put the boat on plane with two adults aboard. This boat/motor can be used on Lake Erie under normal weather fishing conditions. Be sure to take a serious look at the G3 V167T at Wiegel Brothers Marine before you buy a fishing boat anywhere else.



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**

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

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

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Poor Richards Bait & Tackle

Tudor Hook-N-Nook At Elk Creek Sports

Crawford County – Pymatuning

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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

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Mike's Custom Tackle