

Northwest

Pennsylvania

Fishing Report



Reporting Date:

December 21, 2012

Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region
crawford • erie • mercer • venango

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The NW PA Fishing Report provides timely angling information for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango Counties – covering all species and all waters open to the public. The fishing comments and photos are offered by regional tackle shops and area anglers, compiled and published twice a month. The NW PA Fishing Report is based on experiences, observations and opinions of individual contributors; information sources are considered reliable but comments are not independently verified. If you would like to share your fishing experiences or photos from any waterway in the four counties, please email to Darl Black at darlblack@windstream.net. In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to it being posted in the Fishing Report and distributed electronically to media and websites.

The Landing Net

by Darl Black

Happy Winter Solstice! In addition to being the first day of winter, December 21 has the shortest amount of daylight of the entire year. From here on out until the Summer Solstice, the days keep getting longer. I now start my count down to the Spring Equinox – the first day of spring on March 22...91 days away!



While safe ice may be some time off in the future, there are several open water opportunities right now for anyone looking to fish during the Christmas/New Year's Holidays. Check the pages of the Fishing Report: steelhead, walleye, crappies and smallmouth bass are in the news.

PS: Blade baits are great coldwater lures. Check out my article on Blade Baits in the January BASSMASTER Magazine.

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT for December 20, 2012

Brought to you by PA Great Lakes Region tourism

What's biting in Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties?

French Creek – Flowing through all four counties

Editor's Note – 12/20: With recent rains, the level of French Creek is ideal for movement of walleyes into identifiable high-water spots. French Creek should be in near-perfect fishing condition (high but clearing if no high temps to melt snow) for the week after Christmas and into January – although low temps may result in slush ice in the stream. What's the potential of the creek this time of year? Best opportunity for trophy size walleyes. It was the holiday week back in the late 1980s that the late Ed Gray – renowned French Creek angler – caught an 11 pound walleye on New Year's Eve and a 14-pound walleye on New Year's Day; both fish taken on hand-tied white hair jigs. This time of year on French Creek, from Franklin north almost to Union City, walleyes are being taken on live creek minnows and hair jigs.

Ed Lawrence (Union City) filed 12/20: "I've been really busy but managed to drop a line a few times. I have been catching some walleye from French Creek the past few weeks."

Doug Devore (Cochranston) 12/15: Doug reports having some very good walleye and smallmouth catches from French Creek during December on live creek bait and jigs.

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Editor's Note – 12/20: Starting around the first of December, anglers finally began reporting fairly decent walleye catches from Pymatuning on blade baits and the bite has continued through the month. Perhaps the exceptionally low water in the reservoir during October and November was in some way detrimental to the walleye bite.



Norm Brakeman (Hills Country Store) filed 12/20: "The water level at Pymatuning is back up and you can now launch at several ramps. I plan to be back on the water in my boat as soon as this snow storm subsides. One of my customers has been catching walleyes by wade-fishing the shoreline, casting both blade baits and long minnow plugs. When he hits the right spot, he limits out in 20 to 30 minutes – but he may have a long walk before finding a bunch of walleye. Other anglers are catching some nice crappies off the docks at Jamestown Marina – not those little ones, but crappies in the 12 to 14-inch range."



Chub Hornstein (Meadville) filed 12/16: "Dan Wielobob and I fished Pymatuning on December 14th and 15th, having our best two days this fall on the lake. On Thursday evening, we caught 8 legal walleye and Friday evening we had 6 legal – plus numerous short ones. All on blade baits around 12 foot depth."

ERIE COUNTY

Editor's Note – 12/20: With each rain in December, fresh steelhead have been moving into the tributaries making this a better than usual December for steelhead. When I stopped by the mouth of Trout Run on Saturday, December 16th, anglers were still catching steelhead in the lake. Fishermen told me the best bite was late in the day at dusk. I watched steelheads scoot behind the line of shore-line wading anglers and attempt to work their way into Trout Run (no fishing permitted) where hundreds of dark steelhead were holding in the first hole, unable to move upstream. With rain and snow this week, expect some fresh fish to move into the streams where you are permitted to fish. It should be a Merry Christmas for steelheaders!



Erie Tributaries

Matt Hyrcyk (Poor Richards) filed 12/20: "Each time we have high water, additional steelheads have been moving into the tribs. We have high and dingy water right now. But if we get more snow than rain, and the snow doesn't melt quickly, the streams should be the right color by Sunday or Monday."

Dan Seaman (Elk Creek Sport) filed 12/20: "With recent periodic rains, more steelheads have been moving into the streams. With the snow and cold coming in over the next couple days, it will slow the fish down until they acclimate. Temperatures are to remain cold through Christmas (low to mid 30s), so I don't expect a lot of snow melt, therefore stream color should be good for fishing. If it's a slow melt, stream flow should remain good. If temperatures turn too cold, expect some slush ice in the streams. The game is now winter steelheading techniques – don't hit the stream until mid-morning and fish during the warmest part of the day. This has been one of the best Decembers we've had in years, and if we are lucky it will continue for a little while longer."

Bill Logan (Pleasantville) filed 12/20: "This past week fishing the mouth of 16 Mile Creek I caught 4 steelheads in two hours. Others were hooking fish regularly, too. Overnight the water dropped and the fish went back out to the lake; I caught 1 steelhead on 20 Mile."



Trout Run packed with steelhead

Thomas Watral (Erie) filed 12/18: "On the 18th, I went to Cascade Creek to see if steelhead came in during the last few days of light rain. To my surprise there was a nice number of steelhead in the creek. On December 13th I went to Mill Creek and was surprised to see lots of minnows and lots of steelhead in the clear water. The fish were hanging in big pods and no one was fishing for them. Back on the 11th, I caught and released 4 steelheads at mouth of Mill Creek and walked upstream to a hole and caught 8 more fish, losing many more. All fish hit a single red egg drifted through the hole."

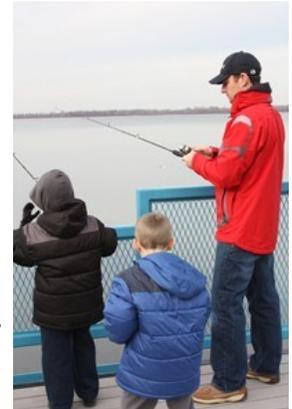
Frank Malek (Oil City) filed 12/12: "The enclosed photo of a hen brown ate a green egg sack on Elk Creek, caught on my center-pin reel with 10-pound main line and 6-pound fluorocarbon leader. This was one of 28 fish I caught in a four hour period. I hated to leave biting fish, but my son had some un-

used deer tags he wanted to try to fill. Elk Creek is fishing the best it has in the last few years, so get out before it freezes!" (See Livewell)

Presque Isle Bay

Al Nacopoulos (B.A.C. Bait) filed 12/20: "My customers have been catching some perch plus a few steelhead and brown trout at the Waterworks. They have also been catching perch off the docks at the Marina."

Thomas Watral (Erie) filed 12/10: "I went to the docks to fish for perch yesterday and did very well. Perch were hitting everything from minnows to grubs, fished on multi-hook crappie rigs. I limited out in three hours. The biggest one was 14 inches and the smallest was 10 inches. Then I stopped by the South Pier to see how they were doing. Anglers were catching big perch in the 14 to 15-inch range. Also learned that Lake Pleasant had been stocked for the winter so trout fishing should be good over there, too; I like to fish a minnow below a bobber for the Lake Pleasant trout."



Perch fishing on PIB

MERCER COUNTY

Editor's Note 12/20: This week the PF&BC released a listing of PA's Best Fishing Waters (based on biologists' trap net and electrofishing surveys). Listed by species, just six lakes over 500 acres made the Best Crappie lakes list – two of those lakes were in Mercer County: Shenango was 3rd and Wilhelm was 6th. (Pymatuning in Crawford was #2) If you have not been fishing Wilhelm because you were not catching anything due to the large gizzard shad population – right now before ice up may be the time to Wilhelm for crappie and walleye. Try blade baits along the main creek channel.

Shenango Lake

Ken Smith (Sharon) filed 12/13: "My ice fishing club, the BOIs, have been fishing Shenango from our boats – instead of putting them away like we usually do the first of December. We've found a pattern that has been producing some very nice crappies – lots of 12 to 16-inch white and black crappies. Drifting deepwater stumps with jigs tipped with **Berkley Crappie Nibbles** has been working. For example, today, the 13th, we fished the stump field in Campground Launch Bay. Hang gliding and drifting **South-ern Pro Jigs** on 1/8-ounce head tipped with Nibblers. We caught a lot of small fish along with 21 keepers. The sunshine felt nice with temps reaching 40 degrees. The lake is muddy with a water temp in the low 40s. I'm going to keep going until the lake freezes! The fall bite has been very good!" (See Livewell photos)

VENANGO COUNTY

Allegheny River

Editor's Note 12/20: The Allegheny has been spectacular this fall, particularly for smallmouth, and the good fishing continued through December. No one can recall a fall when bass were running so heavy, and in good numbers.

Steve Udick (Oil City) filed 12/16: "I fished the 15th and 16th with Pat Murray of Oil City. We both caught real nice walleyes on Saturday and four large bass – releasing all fish. We fished the Peaceful Valley section in protected areas to avoid the wind. We anchored near shore and fished major current breaks in about 7 feet of water. I used a perch-colored **Rapala Shad Rap SR7** to catch the bass. The walleyes

came by jiggling minnows. On Sunday, I was only able to land one walleye and two bass (another one with a funny tail). All fish came on the Shad Rap. River temp was 37 -38 degrees...who said bass turn off at 38 degrees anyway?" (See Livewell photos)

Jeff Knapp (Keystone Connection Guide Service) filed 12/16: "I continue to run guide trips through December, with fairly good results on smallmouth bass and walleye. Lately we've been catching most fish on live bait, although I had one day of excellent blade bait fishing. I caught my largest smallmouth of the season on the 15th – a 21-inch 4.5 pounder."

Steve Udick (Oil City) filed 12/11: "Fishing weather has held on again this year. I got out on Saturday, 12/8, in the early AM. Bass were hot as the river had come down to the 6-foot level. I caught bass in both deep and shallow water. I got four fish behind the pontoon ice device at Oil City. Water was about 2 feet deep. Fish were taking a perch-colored **Shad Rap** worked very slowly. One of my bass had a lamprey attached to it (see photo); it's the third bass this year with a lamprey feeding on it, all in the same eddy...very strange. I ended up with 15 bass and a pike for the morning. No size to them. We had also been catching a few walleyes, several in less than four feet of water, both on live minnows and **Shad Raps**." (See Livewell photo)

Bill Logan (Pleasantville) filed 12/5: "On Monday, 12/3, I fished the river alone for three hours. Three boats showed up later. I got 9 smallmouth bass, 3 rock bass and a walleye on **Sweet Beavers, Galida Grubz** and a 20-year old fresh-out-of-package **Silver Buddy**. I hit 4 bass on 6 casts. The flurry with the blade bait stopped as quickly as it started. Every fish was close to a drop-off."

Chub Hornstien (Meadville) filed 12/4: "Dan Wielobob and I made a couple trips down to the Allegheny this past weekend for walleye. We fished for smallmouth in the afternoon, catching a dozen or more each day on **Kalin Grubs**. Then we anchored up at a pool tail out for the evening, fishing live creek chubs which we had trapped. It was the first time we had fished live creek minnows in year. It was fun! We missed more 'eye than we landed. But we came away with a decent catch each day. The largest was 26 inches." (See Livewell photos)

Gene Winger (Oil City) filed 12/3: "Thanks for all the hard work you put into the NW PA Fishing Report, it's a great contribution to the sport! Attached is a cute picture with my four-year old granddaughter Olivia (who loves to go fishing, too!) when we landed a double." (See Livewell photo)

Scott Kinard (Elwood City) filed 12/2: "It was nice to meet you and Marilyn on the river yesterday. It was most pleasant day for December to be on the river. I only managed to land 11 smallies yesterday despite a number of missed or lost fish. With the water temp starting out around 40.4 degrees in the morning, it was a very slow bite until later in day when I finally figured out the right presentation was very slow. My fish came on **Venom Sweet Dreams** and tubes. Although I managed a few fish, the size did not match up to what I had caught in previous trips. This was likely my last trip of the year." (See Livewell photos)

Marilyn Black (Cochranon) filed 12/1: "Darl and I fished the river with Dale Black for about four hours today. We saw eight other boats on the river, seven of which were contributors to the Fishing Report! The action was a bit slow, but we managed to land 15 smallmouths among the three of us. Dale caught fish on a tube and a **Larew Biffle Bug Jr.** on the back of a **Booyah Baby Boo Jig**; Darl got several fish on **Get Bit Tubes**; all of my fish came on **Jimmy D's River Bugs** (hair jigs). Dale had a four pounder."



DB gets lucky

The Livewell

Brought to you by:



Frank Malek with Elk Creek brown



Happy Holidays from the staff at Wiegel Brothers Marine in Franklin



Walnut Creek steelheads

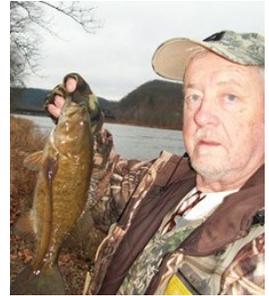
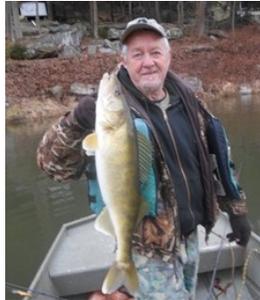
Shenango Lake—Fall crappie bite, photos from Ken Smith



Livewell Overflow:

Allegheny River Fishing has been hot, hot , hot this fall!

Photos from Steve Udick of Franklin:



Photos from Chub Hornstein and Dan Wielobob:



Photos from Scott Kinard:



Photo from Gene Winger



Dale Black with nice pike



Marilyn Black &
Gamma's Dale
Black with hair jig
Smallmouth bass

PROCESSED FOR PERFORMANCE



Gamma Line's Fishing Tips and Forecast for NW PA Waters

Gamma Pro Tip from Bassmaster Pro Stephen Browning: "In cold weather, I like to use a little lighter line. I believe you get better sensitivity for those coldwater bites. You need a lure to act naturally to the fish. With heavier line, the bait may not act as naturally as it does with lighter line. I normally drop down to 10 or 12 pound test when it gets cold outside. In the cold, use the lightest line you can get away based on the cover. If open water, you can go really light into the finesse realm."

Tackle tip from Fishing Report contributor Scott Kinard: "With winter approaching, many fishermen are hanging up their gear for the season – although others will continue to fish open water as long as possible. When you do put tackle away, you want to protect the investment you have in rods. For storage and transportation of rods, I use the Rod Glove (www.vrxfishing.com). They make a rod sleeve for all size and styles of rods. With this protection, I do not have to worry about damaged guides, line or rod blanks. It's a great product for the angler that is tough on gear." Scott wins a spool of Gamma Polyflex Line.

Editor's note: It's a good idea to take the time before storing rods and reels to clear your gear. (Admittedly, I don't do it right now 'cause I continue to hope the weather breaks so I can fish the rivers or head South on a trip, etc...so I clean it all in the spring!) Rod blanks often get water stains, dried vegetation, grime and so forth on the blanks. Use extreme care in choice of cleaning agent to use on rod blanks because some household cleaning agents will soften the epoxy coatings on guide wraps – I know from experience! A little dish soap and warm water is best. To clean cork handles, I use Simple Green according to instructions...and Simple Green appears safe for rod blanks, too. Darl Black

Prize Pack for this issue of Fishing Report is being supplied by: PRADCO Brands

The winning contributor of the prize pack is: Steve Udick

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