

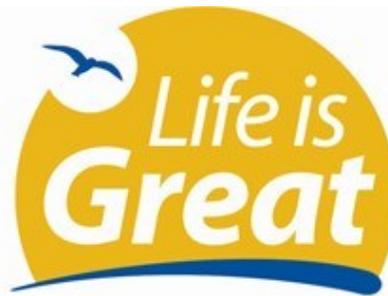
Northwest

Pennsylvania

Fishing Report

Reporting Date:

February 2, 2014



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

The NW PA Fishing Report is brought to you by...

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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 your comments being edited, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

The Landing Net

by Darl Black



Ground Hog Day and the Super Bowl falling on the same day? So when the hype and glitz of February's two biggest holidays is over on Monday morning February 3rd, what are we left with? Cold, snow, ice and wind...six more weeks of winter. Forty-five days to be exact. But the countdown will have started! So how can you survive? Attend one or more of the February ice fishing event listed in the Report. Go shopping for line, lures and a new rod at one of the area tackle shops that support the Fishing Report. Look into a new or used fishing boat at Wiegel Bros. Marine. Pour lead, tie jigs, paint lures, change line...suddenly it's Spring! Kicking off a new season, look for the next NW PA Fishing Report on the First Day of Spring, March 20th.

NW PA FISHING REPORT: 2/2/2014 – Ground Hog Day Mid-Winter Report

Brought to you by PA GREAT LAKES REGION

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

WHAT TO DO IN FEBRUARY

This winter is going to be a long one. Buy an auger and some ice fishing rods, and GO FISH! Here are several upcoming Ice Fishing Events...

Canadohta Lake Ice Fishing Tournament: February 8, 2014

Sponsored by Timberland Bait and Tackle; 7 am to 4:30 pm; registration fee: \$15.00

For detailed information, call Timberland Bait at 814-882-8369 or go to timberlandbait.com

Pymatuning Lake Ice Fishing Tournament: February 8, 2014

Sponsored by Pymatuning Lake Association; 7 am to 3 pm; entry fee: \$20.00; applications at Espyville Outdoors, Richter's Bait and at pymatuninglake.com; 724-927-9493

Woodcock Ice Fishing Clinic: February 9, 2014

Sponsored by the PA Fish & Boat Commission; clinic free but must register; contact Chad Foster at 814-683-5126 or online at pfbcc.state.pa.us

Conneaut Lake Ice Fishing Tournament: February 22, 2014

Sponsored by Timberland Bait and Tackle; for detailed information, call Timberland Bait at 814-882-8369 or go to timberlandbait.com

WINTER HOURS: Where to go for ice fishing supplies? Many local tackle shops reduce their hours during the winter. Below are current hours of operation for these shops which contribute to the Fishing Report and provided their info...

B.A.C. Bait & Tackle (Erie): Open 7 days a week

Consumer Direct Sports (Grove City): Open 7 days a week

Erie Sport Store (Erie): Mon- Sat 9 am to 9 pm; Sun 10 am to 6 pm

Fergie's Bait (Lake Wilhelm): Mon-Fri 8 am to 4 pm; Sat/Sun 8 am to 3 pm

Hill's Country Store (Pymatuning at Williamsfield, OH): Open 7 days a week 8 am to 6 pm

Jigger Tackle (Franklin): Open 7 days a week 9 am to 7 pm

Maurer's Trading Post (Franklin): Mon-Sat 9 am to 8 pm; Sun 10 am to 5 pm

Poor Richard's Bait (Fairview): Open 7 days a week



Under ice view with Marcum-DB Photo

Richter's Bait (Pymatuning at Jamestown): Open 7 days a week

Timberland Bait (Canadohta Lake): Weekends only during good ice (Fri 8-5, Sat 7-2, Sun 8-2); by appointment Monday through Thursday; check answering machine 814-649-FISH for changes

Trout Run (Fairview): Open 7 days a week, 6 am until dark.

Wiegel Bros. Marine (Franklin): Mon-Fri 9 am to 5 pm; Sat 9 am to 1 pm

WHERE ANGLERS HAVE BEEN CATCHING FISH

FRENCH CREEK – Flowing through all four counties

Dustin Shay (Meadville) 1/27/14: Dustin does not let a little thing like a frozen French Creek keep him from fishing. During cold snaps Dustin and his fishing buddies were “pushing ice” on the creek to create an open water area to fish. Then any time the weather kicks it up a few degrees and opens some water, he is right at the key spots fishing his hand-tied bucktail jigs. Check out his musky, pike and BIG walleye photos on the Livewell Page to see some of the fish he has caught this winter.



French Creek—DB photo

Angler Al (Franklin) 1/16/14: “Finally found a day this new calendar year to go fishing. With a bucket of live shiners, I head over the hill to French Creek. Temperature hovered around 25 degrees but the sun was out. With a snow storm moving in I figured a bite might occur. Landed 2 nice walleye, lost 2 other at my feet and missed a couple strikes. Not a bad start to 2014!” (see Livewell page)

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave Richter (Richter's Bait) 1/30/14: “They have been catching some nice walleyes through the ice, especially off the swim beach and off Westford. All walleye are reportedly taken on blade baits. There are scattered reports of crappies and perch from the ice, too. And when the discharge is high, a few guys are catching walleye in the Shenango River open water below the dam, along with panfish.”



Pymi Outflow—DB Photo

Chelsea Gault (Jamestown) 1/30/14: “I fish the Shenango River below Pymatuning Dam every day possible during the winter, but this year I've had to set out some days due to really cold weather. I catch perch, crappies and sometime walleyes.” (Pictured to left)

Bryan Stuyvesant (Meadville) 1/27/14: “Trying to survive this cold winter, I bought ice fishing equipment. I only fished Pymatuning one time – last Wednesday, and did not catch a single walleye. I was jigging blade baits.”

Canadohta Lake

Jerry VanTassel (Timberland Bait) 1/29/14: "Things have been little slow over here – bluegills and perch mainly, with the occasional small pike. The big fish are saving their appetite for the Tournament on February 8th! Customers are reporting good success on crappies and bluegills at Lake LeBoeuf and trout at Lake Pleasant."

ERIE COUNTY

Erie Tributary Streams

Jeff (Poor Richards) 1/29/14: "Everything is frozen. Some guys are catching steelhead through the ice in slower water near the mouths of certain creeks, like Elk and Walnut, and in the marina. There are even some guys fishing the near shore ice on the main lake at the mouths! They are catching some – one customer got 5 the other day at Trout and another customer got 3 at Walnut. Minnows and maggot on a jig are best baits."

Dan Seaman (Elk Creek Sports) 1/29/14: "Very little open water in any of the streams. Some guys are fishing on the ice in the streams – not something I would do. I tell them, if you are going to do that, tie rope to a tree on shore and to yourself, 'cause if you go through, you'll be carried downstream under the ice! This is going to be messy spring. Ice is thick and there is ice stacked on shore of streams from previous high water freezes. There will likely be a lot of flooding when things begin to melt."

Ric Gauriloff (Trout Run Bait) 1/22/14: "Streams are all iced up. The last thaw in earlier January was really good on Elk, Crooked, 16 and 20 Mile Creeks – brought in fresh fish. Fish are being caught on jigs, flies and shiners. The lake is frozen and should be fishable. There are plenty of fish around. Trout can also be caught through the ice at the Fairview Gravel Pit, Lake Pleasant and Water Works Pond on Presque Isle. Bay fishermen are reporting decent catches of perch and gills. Minnows and grubs on a variety of jigs doing the job. Best time for perch is right before dark. Plenty of steelhead and browns in the bay; tip up with minnow, or try a black marabou jig about 3 feet down on your ice rod, tip with shiner and let it sit there. Here's a tip: try tying a small black ant or fly a foot up your line from your ice fishing jig. You don't have to tip it, but you can if you want to. Seems to draw more attention and it can be a blast getting a double on an ice rod!"



Ashley's 1st steelhead

Bill Logan (Pleasantville) 1/18/14: "Ideal winter conditions on Elk earlier this month. I caught 2 steelheads on Sucker Spawn and 1 on a Triple Threat Streamer. Only saw 3 fishermen in 5 hours! I also got a nice brown just before New Year."

Presque Isle Bay

Jim (B.A.C. Bait) 1/29/14: "Customers are catching steelhead and a few brown trout through the ice at the Head of the Bay. There have been lots of panfish action in Stink Hole off parking lot #2 and #3, and bluegills in Misery Bay. We've got a lot of ice and you can fish just about anywhere you want to on the Bay."

Thomas Watral (Erie) 1/28/14: "I went out in the cold temps to hit the deeper areas of the bay for perch. I had to do a lot of moving around to find the jumbos, but I found them. I was freezing, but hung in

there. I got 28 big perch by the time I was ready to go in. I was fishing 22 feet of water off of Chestnut Street access. The perch were hitting minnows; I didn't hit any on grubs. The ice was 12 inches thick. Just about everyone I talked to were getting nice perch. Tips: If not catching them at one spot right away, move. If catching smaller ones, just move a little to find the bigger ones. Best baits are minnows, Swedish Pimple tipped with salted minnow. For smelt, a tiny hook with grub under a bobber set for 8 to 10 feet. Also I'm hearing about pike and steelhead at Head of Bay."

R.J. Graham (Tionesta) 1/18/14: "The ice fishing on PIB is on fire. This past week my dad and I fished out in front of the channel to Houseboat Bay; we brought home 59 nice bluegills, crappies and perch. We used small ice jigs tipped with maggots, on Gamma Fluorocarbon Ice line. We caught over a hundred fish al together" (See Livewell photo)



Steve's first PIB ice fish

Steve Chaconas (Alexandria, VA) 1/17/14: "When FLW pro Dave Lefebre asked Jeff Samsel and me to come to NW PA to go ice fishing, I asked him 'How do you keep the cubes on the hook?' Never did give me an answer. Dave picked us up at the airport and took us directly to the PIB ice to fish for crappies, bluegills and perch. Catching panfish with dime-sized lures on 1-pound test line was challenging. The way electronics were employed was a completely different set of fishing skills than I am used to. After two days at Presque Isle, we went to Lake Pleasant and caught trout. It was really a totally focused fishing outing. An eye-opening activity. I hope to be invited back!" (See Livewell photo)

Lake Pleasant

Dave Lefebre (Erie) 1/17/14: "Lake Pleasant was an awesome detour...20 trout and 10 nice perch, all on the **Trigger X Wax Tail Grub!**" (See Livewell photo)

MERCER COUNTY

Shenango Lake

Ken Smith (Sharon) 1/27/14: "I fished Shenango on Saturday. The ice was 6" and wind was blowing 20 mph. Temps were in the single digits. I fished in 11 feet of water over brush. I got 20 small crappies and 'gills. No keepers. Swedish Pimple tipped with either minnow head or maggots got the most fish; rest on plastic. I am looking forward to the warm-up coming this weekend!"

Dan Mansky, 1/27/14: "I fished Shenango this past Sunday. Caught a bunch of small crappies around Golden Run and the Celery Farm; ice was 8 inches. The weekend before, my wife and I had a fun day at Presque Isle; the bite was good in Misery Bay – see the photos of my wife Alicia with her catch!" (See Livewell photos)



Wilhelm marina awaits spring thaw—DB photo

VENANGO COUNTY

Allegheny River

Although shallower, faster moving flows on the river are open, river access ramps and pools pretty much locked up with ice. No reports.

Justus Lake

Mike Horrobin (Jigger Tackle) 1/30/14: "Right now with the River and trout streams covered with ice, the only action is on lake ice. Justus Lake has been producing panfish and trout for some customers."

FEBRUARY'S BEST BETS

Ice Fishing

Bluegills: Presque Isle Bay; Conneaut Lake; Shenango Lake; Justus Lake; Kahle Lake

Crappies: Shenango Lake; Presque Isle Bay; Edinboro Lake; Lake LeBoeuf; Pymatuning Lake

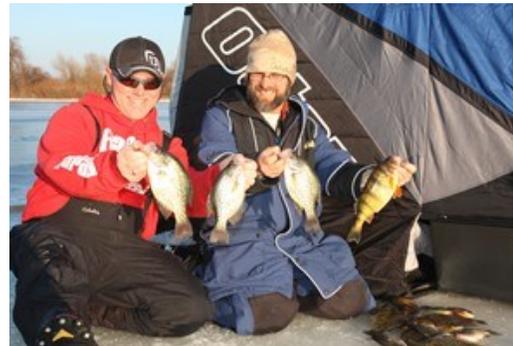
Perch: Presque Isle Bay; Lake Pleasant; Pymatuning Lake; Kahle Lake

Trout: Lake Pleasant; Justus Lake

Walleye: Pymatuning Lake

Pike: Conneaut Lake; Canadohta Lake

Musky: Canadohta Lake; Edinboro Lake; Conneaut Lake



Lefebvre & Jeff Samsel on PIB—DB photo

Open Water

Current opportunities limited to outflow area below Woodcock Dam, Pymatuning Dam and Shenango Dam; outflow areas are best during high water flows. If a warming trend sets, French Creek will open up as well as some Erie Tributaries; likely take a prolong warm period to open the Allegheny.

Woodcock Outflow: walleye and musky

Pymatuning Outflow: walleye, perch and crappies

Shenango Outflow: walleye

French Creek: walleye, musky, northern pike (Flooded backwaters and creek mouths for crappies)

Erie Tributaries: steelhead and brown trout

Bits and Pieces

ITEM: RJ Graham sent this note...

"I have recently started making and selling jigs. My jig page is on Facebook as Graham Bass Jigs. All prices and info will be there. I can make any color you want. All jigs have Owner Hooks and chip-proof paint. Jigs are \$2.50 to \$3.00; I also make tube head inserts and drop-shot weights. Check out my Page and give it a *Like!*"

ITEM: This winter the Habitat Division of the Pennsylvania Fish Commission will be placing about 340 tons of stone in Woodcock Creek Lake to improve fish habitat.

ITEM: The PA Fish and Boat Commission announced a Youth Life Jacket Give-A-Way at the 29th Annual Allegheny Sport, Travel and Outdoors Show on February 15th and 16th. Parents must register their children beginning at 12 noon at the PFBC booth and will be required to attend a short workshop about life jacket safety at 2 pm each day. There will be a limit of 50 youth life jackets available. Sponsors of the

Giveaway are Cabela's, Port of Pittsburgh Commission and the Pittsburgh Safe Boating Council. For more information, visit www.fishandboat.com.

ITEM: On lock down during this brutal winter, Angler Al Bell offers the following...

MOTION TO THE COURT OF
WARMER WEATHER PLEAS

Aside from a few days in January, Judge Old Man Winter has held me on house arrest. I've plead with him to just let me pay the restitution, but he won't tell me what it is. I think he finds pleasure in my squirming about indoor rooms of confinement. Please your honor, I beg of you. Release me of these wintery ankle shackles holding me with and lift this bitter detainer you've got me on. I promise to never again say how ugly cold of a man you are, or that your face looks like it's been frostbitten, or that your just plain cold hearted and brutally mean at times. Look, I'll even voluntarily sign up to do snow removal next year as a community service. Come on Judge. So I can go open-water fishing again, will you strike your gavel for a favorable ruling that you'll end this extreme sentence of cold hard times?

Angler Al

Livewell photos from Lefebre's Ice Force Outdoor Media event held on PIB and Lake Pleasant...



The Livewell

Brought to you by:



French Creek is hot during winter



Angler Al's first walleye catch 2014



Boat of the Month: Just in at Wiegel's—The new for 2014 PolarKraft PK Classic 156T. Deb says this is the perfect all-around fishing boat for area limited HP lakes. "Come down to see it at the shop, or visit us at the Cranberry Mall Outdoor Show on February 22nd and 23rd. This boat is priced to move." Tell

Following a Shay Family tradition, Dustin Shay works wonders on French Creek during the winter. These fish and more taken on hand-tied jigs during January.



No weight taken but said the 'eye was very heavy for 26-inch fish.

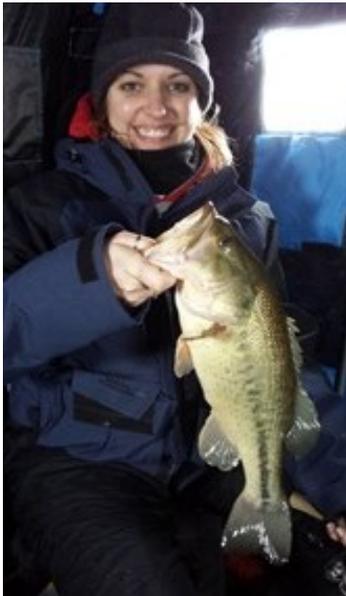


French Creek Musky on Gamma



Musky and big pike back to back

Livewell Overflow



Bowfin through the ice! Ask Kirby how to do it!

Alicia Mansky with exciting catches from Presque Isle Bay



Bill Logan strikes it rich on the Elk Creek in early January



RJ's catch of panfish from PIB



Josh Odell's 16 Mile Steelhead

PROCESSED FOR PERFORMANCE



Gamma Fishing Tips

Gamma Tip this issue comes from Dale Black, president of Black Knight Industries: Although we are in the middle of ice fishing season, every angler I know is sick and tired of winter and anxiously looking forward to spring. Now is the time to start getting ready for open water; ice-out will be here before you realize. In recent years, I've been starting my fishing season on the Allegheny in early March – literally the day the first ramp is free of ice. Area lakes will be ice-covered by the river will be fishable and smallmouth bass and walleyes will be chewing. My recommendations for early spring fishing are hair jigs, tube jigs and finesse jig n 'craw fished on spinning tackle. Which line should you use? Six-pound or 8-pound Gamma Edge is the favorite – super thin and super strong, gets to the bottom and keeps the jig down there.

Of course, if you are getting your river rod ready, you might as well spool all your reels at once. Gamma offers a complete line-up: Gamma Edge (fluorocarbon); Gamma Polyflex (copolymer) and Torque (braid). While braid may not require changing out as often, reels with fluorocarbon and nylon copolymer line absolutely should be re-spooled at the beginning of the spring season. However, that doesn't mean stripping all line down to the bare spool. For reels used for panfish, bass, walleye and inland trout, simply strip off the top 50 to 60 yards, tie a back-to-back Universal Knot, and reel on fresh line. Few freshwater fish will pull 50 yards from your reel, so changing the critical front part of the spool will save money. Change that first 50 yards frequently during the fishing season. However, that connection knot to old line may not be a good idea for steelhead fishing for a fish that potentially strip more than 50 yards from your spool!

Starting in April, a new prize structure of the NW PA Fishing Report will go into effect.

There will be one drawing each week. One week will be for a spool of Gamma Line of your choice, rather than winning a pound-test spool you may not use. The second drawing of the month will be for an extremely attractive lure pack—something in it for everyone. Watch for details in the First Day of Spring Issue of the Fishing Report.

Follow Darl as he fishes with angling experts around the country at

www.darblack.blogspot.com

Obtain the PGLR fishing brochure "Reel It In!" at www.pagreatlakes.com