

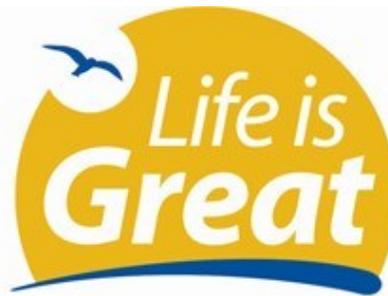
Northwest

Pennsylvania

Fishing Report

Reporting Date:

March 20, 2013



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

It's the first day of spring, but you certainly would not know it by looking outside. Regardless, this First Day of Spring NW PA Fishing Report contains a special Fishing Forecast section.

Also, four area tackle shops are supplying gift certificates for this Special Report. The shops are: **Espyville Bait & Tackle; Trout Run Bait & Tackle; Jigger Wholesale; and Underground Angler.**

Thank you to each tackle shop, please thank them for their support when you stop by. The four contributors whose names were randomly drawn for the certificates are: Trevor Pavlik; Duff Kerle; Frank Malek; and Chris Wolfgong. I'll be in touch with each of you to provide further details.

And if you are wondering where the photos are for this issue, a computer gremlin erased all of them when I was transfer the photo file of downsized images. Never had it happen before, but they all vanished. I apologize to everyone who sent in photos. I'll do my best to see it does not happen again. The next Fishing Report will be on April 8th.

Best “Catch” Opportunities in 2013 for PA Great Lakes Region

By Darl Black

With dozens of natural lakes and man-made reservoirs, trout streams, warmwater creeks and rivers, plus Lake Erie, there is no better place to cast a line than the northwest corner of the state. No matter what species you are interested in – panfish, bass, walleye, musky, pike, catfish, striped bass hybrids or steelhead – you’ll find them all the counties of the PA Great Lakes Region.

PA Fish & Boat Commission’s *Pennsylvania’s BEST Fishing Waters Program*

According to Tim Wilson, Area 1 Fisheries Manager the program is intended to steer fishermen, especially novice fishermen, to waters where they have an excellent chance to catch a particular species. “The listing of water by species is based largely on the data collected from our fisheries sampling conducted through trap-netting and electro-fishing, plus historical data. The resulting list details the best waters in our state for specific species. Program waters will be periodically evaluated and updated. This is a great tool for beginning and experienced anglers wanting to focus on a species in a particular region of the state.”

The complete list of PA’s BEST Fishing Waters can be found on the Fish & Boat website, but here’s the breakdown by species (in alphabetical order) for Erie, Crawford, Mercer and Venango counties.

Bluegill and Pumpkinseed: 7” and over

- Conneaut Lake, Crawford County

Bullheads: 12” and over

- Lake Wilhelm, Mercer County

Channel Cat: 16” and over

- Lake Erie, Erie County
- Pymatuning Lake, Crawford County
- Shenango Lake, Mercer County

Crappie: 9” and over

- Pymatuning Lake, Crawford County
- Shenango River Lake, Mercer County
- Lake Wilhelm, Mercer County
- Kahle Lake, Venango County

Largemouth bass: 15” and over

- Lake Wilhelm, Mercer County

Smallmouth bass: 15” and over

- Lake Erie, Erie County
- Allegheny River, Venango County

- French Creek, flowing through all four counties

Musky

- Pymatuning Lake, Crawford County
- Sugar Lake, Crawford County
- Woodcock Creek Lake, Crawford County

Striped bass hybrid

- Shenango River Lake, Mercer County

Stocked trout water

- Lake Pleasant, Erie County
- Oil Creek, Venango County
- Neshannock Creek, Mercer County

Walleye: 15" and over

- Pymatuning, Crawford County
- Lake Erie, Erie County
- Allegheny River, Venango County
- French Creek, flowing through all four counties

Yellow Perch: 9" and over

- Lake Erie, Erie County
- Kahle Lake, Venango County
- Sugar Lake, Crawford County

The PA Great Lakes Region has waters that hit in 11 of 12 specie categories, missing the mark only under "Wild Trout Waters." However, several species were not included in the program, but those overlooked species all are found in northwest Pennsylvania, including steelhead – found in Lake Erie during the summer and in Erie's tributary streams in the fall, winter and early spring.

Other overlooked species include northern pike, white bass and flathead catfish. Interested in toothy northern pike? Look to Presque Isle Bay, Allegheny River, French Creek, Conneaut Lake, Canadohta Lake or Otter Creek. Want lightning-fast white bass? Check out Conneaut Lake, Pymatuning Lake and Shenango Lake year-round, plus Presque Isle Bay in the late spring. How about the mysterious flathead catfish? The Allegheny River is by far the top producer, and Shenango River backwater above Shenango River Lake is a sleeper for big flatheads.

“HOT BITES” BEFORE TROUT SEASON

During the last week of March and the first couple weeks of April, a number of “Hot Bites” expected to occur.

Steelhead: The Lake Erie tributary streams will have steelhead in them for several more weeks. Fishing for steelhead is permitted until April 11 in allowed tributaries – except where posted as nursery waters – and reopens the first day of trout season on April 13. Check the 2013 PA Fishing Summary for complete details.

Crappie: Some of the most exciting and interesting crappie fishing of the entire season is happening right now. Crappies are moving into backwaters canals, marshy bays and flooded creek mouths off the lakes and reservoirs, plus slough-like areas off Shenango River, French Creek and the Allegheny River. And they will take a near-motionless small minnow or tiny jig below a bobber. At Presque Isle Bay, check out the Sink Hole and the Lagoons for the first crappie movement after ice-off.

Perch: Best shot for perch will be PIB’s Head of Bay area, as well as Pymatuning Lake off the Andover Causeway.

White bass: Sometime in April, white bass will begin moving out of Shenango River Lake up the Shenango River; area between Big Bend and Hamburg is good place to check out.

Walleye: Closed season everywhere except Pymatuning. Waders will be out in the late afternoon and evenings on the points and where small creek feed the lake. The Linesville Spillway will see a lot of shore anglers.

Smallmouth Bass: The smallmouth action on the Allegheny River in the deeper pools has already started. This is catch-and-release fishing. Fish slow with hair jigs, tube jigs and other crayfish-type winter baits. Typically, PIB gives up smallmouth in early April from deepwater breaks, but things may be behind schedule.

Largemouth Bass: Unless we suddenly get a turn-around in the weather with a strong warming trend, the early largemouth bass bites are not likely to materialize. Remember, bass fishing is C&R.

Musky: Every spring, several of the largest muskies of the year will be taken in April by someone fishing from shore at Pymatuning.

NW Pennsylvania Fishing Report: Special First Day of Spring 2013 Issue

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

Dustin Shay (Meadville): Last week before the snow and cold returned, Dustin had been catching and releasing some nice smallmouth that had been feeding on shallow mud flats. He was using hand-tied hair jigs. During periods when the Creek was ice free over recent months, Dustin caught an assortment of species including musky, northern pike, walleye and carp.

Ed Lawrence (Corry): Ed sent in a photo of the 23-inch 5 lb. 1 oz. rainbow he caught on a worm this past year from a tributary of French Creek.

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave Richter (Richter's General Store) 3/19: "The ice is pretty much gone from the lake, although some remains in the southern section towards the dam. There is an occasional walleye reported from the Andover Causeway, but no reports of successful wading anglers yet. With walleye season closed in the river, a couple anglers are catching small perch in the Shenango River below the dam. At the Linesville Causeway in early March during a warm spell, there were several days of impressive crappie catches made by a handful of fishermen– but the fish moved out quickly."

Chris Hall (Espyville Outdoors) 3/19: "I have the shop open, but things are pretty slow. Few perch off the Andover causeway and the usual handful of anglers at the Linesville causeway looking for walleye. I had a report from a customer that he caught walleye and sauger in the Allegheny River – uncertain which section of the river."

Norman Brakeman (Hills County Store) 3/17: "Hi, Hooker at Hills Country Store. I saw an amazing sight while standing on the shore of Pymatuning – a boat with two fishermen reeling a walleye while a guy standing on the ice behind them trying to grab a flopping fish at his feet. Who says you can't make every angler happy. However, today the ice is all but gone – definitely not safe. Some walleyes are being caught at the Causeway and by wading gravel bars at creek mouths – not widespread action yet. Some crappies are being taken on Hooker Bugs tipped with wax worm and fished on a float. I'll be fishing this week, and will let you know how it goes."

Conneaut Creek in Crawford County

Dustin Shay (Meadville) 3/13: "On Monday, I caught 11 steelheads and Dad caught 3 steelheads on my hand-tied green and white raccoon hair jigs. All fish were caught without leaving Crawford County."

Conneaut Lake

Before the ice went out, Trevor Pavlik enjoyed catching largemouth bass and pike on shiners through the ice on Conneaut Lake.

Canadohta Lake

Jerry Van Tassel (Timberland Bait) 2/24: Jerry conducted another successful annual ice fishing tournament on Canadohta in February. The winners by fish category were:

Musky: Harry Hicks with 40-3/4 musky

Northern Pike: Todd Kaufman (12 years old) with 26-3/4 inch pike

Walleye: Kevin Ferrie with 21 inch walleye

Perch: Joe Wailand with 11-1/2 inch perch

Crappie: Ben Fleet with 11 inch crappie

ERIE COUNTY

Presque Isle Bay

Al Nacopoulos (B.A.C. Bait) 3/19: "The ice is off the Bay, but there are dead gizzard shad littering the shore and floating in the water, making fishing difficult and trapping of emerald shiners for our shop impossible. One customer brought in an 8.7 pound brown trout caught off the East Piers. They are catching some perch from the North and East Pier. Fishing should break loose our first warm days in the next week or so."

Thomas Watral (Erie) 3/17: "Went down to one of my hotspots on the Bay to check for perch. I talked to a man at the Docks with several nice perch in the 12 inch range. He was using minnows on a perch rig. Checked mouth of Mill Creek, but no steelhead - just lots of dead gizzard shad."

Erie Tributaries

Jeff Staaf (Poor Richards) 3/19: "The upper portions of the tributaries have hold-over steelhead while the lower parts of the streams closer the lake have fresh-run jacks in 14" to 18" range. We had one customer report catching 30 steelheads from Elk with one going 12 pounds. Steelheads were being taken on single eggs and minnows. But if the stream flow increases with rain and snow melt, expect egg sacks and nightcrawlers to be better choices."

Ric Gauriloff (Trout Run Bait) 3/19 "There has been good fishing the last two weeks. Elk, Crooked and Conneaut – all producing fish. Shiners, single eggs, stone flies – all producing fish. There's a mix of jacks and larger fish in the streams. We have weighed more 11 and 12 pounders in the past two weeks than all year. But this is normal for spring. Weather is driving us nuts – ready for warmer temps and a nice rain that may bring in one more run. Over at PIB, perch and crappies are hitting in the Sink Hole."

Trevor Pavlik 3/10: "This past weekend with the nice weather, I hit Conneaut Creek for steelhead. By end of day, between four of us, we landed 41 fish and lost 10 others."

Bill Logan (Pleasantville) 3/9: "I caught three steelheads from Elk Creek on Friday evening."

Thomas Watral (Erie): During the winter months, Thomas continued to send in reports on the steelhead streams around Erie, including Four Mile. Some days he caught fish, some days he didn't due to water conditions. One day he reported helping some youngsters catch a couple steelheads from Four Mile.

MERCER COUNTY

Shenango River Lake

Laurie Frantz (R&L Bait & Tackle) 3/19: "I opened the Shop on March 1, but fishing has been slow. I've had crappies up to 13 inches reported from the early warming spots. And there was a big pike caught from Shenango near Orangeville before the season closed."

Two of our regular Mercer County reporters have been on the sidelines recently. Ken Smith is in Tennessee on a fishing trip and Kevin Austin is recovering from surgery. Hope to see both back in action by the next report.

VENANGO COUNTY

Oil Creek

Mike Horrobin (CLTackle.com) 3/19: "The Blue Quill hatch will be starting very soon on Oil Creek and run thru the first of April."

Chris Wolfgang (Oil City) 3/19: "I broke out the fly rod the other day – something I have not done in years. I hit Oil Creek on Sunday with my cousin Ed Wolfgang to try our luck in the delayed harvest areas. We fished both the Drake Well and Centre sections. I managed to land my first trout on a fly rod (previously only caught bluegill). I also lost two and missed numerous others. Ed did a lot better landing five trout. All in all a good day for my first outing of the year."

Allegheny River

Gene Winger (Oil City) 3/18: "I fished the Oil City pool for a few hours on Sunday, March 10th and managed to land several nice smallies on Winco 'Willie Wannabbe' and 'Baby Predator Craw' Jigs. The combination of spring like weather and water temps pushing 40 degrees made for perfect jump start to the season. I counted 8 boats out on the river."

Steve Hughes and Duff Kerle (Clarion) 3/11: Duff and Steve caught 7 smallies and one walleye on Saturday the 9th; and 14 smallies and 1 walleye on Sunday the 10th. "Water temp was 37 to 39 degrees – coldest we have ever caught smallmouth. We were using Power Team Lures Food Chain Tubes in green pumpkin and a brown/orange hair jig in 14 to 18 feet of water. We fished on 12 pound Gamma Edge Fluorocarbon." (See Livewell photos)

Frank Malek (Oil City): On March 8th, Frank caught 7 bass, two musky and one northern – all on tube jigs. On March 9th, Frank and two friends tallied 25 smallmouths. On March 10th, Dale Black and Frank Malek landed about 35 smallmouths on tubes and coldwater finesse jigs. All fish were in deep water wintering spots. (See Livewell photos)