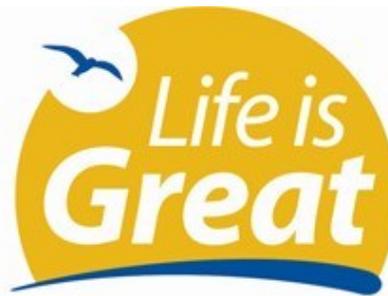


Northwest

Pennsylvania

Fishing Report



Reporting Date:

September 15, 2014

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

The Landing Net

by Darl Black

With few exceptions, it is the same story across the region: poor fishing the past couple weeks. It shows in the low number of positive reports from anglers and tackle shops. Blame it on our stormy summer leading into the fall transition. But water temperatures are beginning to drop. Everyone seems to be looking forward to the “fall bite” which kicks in during October – although the rumors of an early winter may put an abrupt end to open water fishing this fall. On the bright side, the NW PA Fishing Report will publish additional issues during the winter – one a month in December, January, February and March. It was requested by a number of readers who wanted to know what was happening in the winter, and the PA Great Lakes Region tourism agreed it was a good idea to keep readers updated regularly through the winter.



Darl Black with Gamma customer on river

NW PA FISHING REPORT for September 15, 2014

Brought to you by PA GREAT LAKES REGION tourism

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

FRENCH CREEK – flowing through all four counties

Scott Rushe (State College); filed 9/13: "French Creek in Venango is blown out AGAIN...tried Friday for bass and walleye but water flow was too high and too fast."

Dennis Beggs (Franklin); filed 9/7: "My wife and I enjoyed a beautiful day today kayaking on French Creek. We went from Utica to our backyard in Franklin. I fished some, catching four small walleyes in the mid-teens and a nice 23-incher, which is pictured. I only landed one smallmouth. All fish were caught on twister-style jigs. And all fish were released. We really had a fun day!"



Beggs photo

Ed Lawrence (Corry); stream report filed 9/2: "I am catching and releasing a lot of holdover trout in the creeks of NW PA and tributaries to French Creek and the Allegheny River, as well as native brook trout in non-stocked backwoods streams in the hills. The largest native brook trout I've landed this year weighed 2 pounds! We've been catching them over a foot long! Native trout aren't as shy as big wild brown trout and can be caught on spinners, flies and live bait fairly easily. In the larger streams, we've been catching some holdover as well as smallmouth bass. These fish put up a great fight on light tackle. I caught an 18" largemouth bass in Four Mile Creek last weekend while looking for early run steelheads. There are a few steelheads in the Erie tribs with more coming. I should start picking up some big walleye and musky from French Creek soon." (Ed Lawrence photos of wild trout catches below)



Brook Trout



Brown Trout



LMB in steelhead stream

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave @ Richter's Tackle Shop; filed 9/15: "Some customers are reporting walleyes taken on blade baits already! Others are trolling **Hot-N-Tots** in 14' to 18' of water to catch walleyes. A few guys who know what they are doing are catching crappies on deep structure, but I'm not hearing about any shallow crappies. Lot of talk about perch, but all the fish are small. Catfish are still eating. Some of my regular musky customers are back out on the lake, so they must be catching a few – but no reports of

big ones. With the dam outflow running high, there continue to be walleye and a few crappies taken in the Shenango River from the outflow to south of the foot bridge.”

Laurie @ *Duck-N-Drake*; filed 9/15: “My customers have been reporting good success on walleyes by trolling **Hot-N-Tots** in 18 to 22 feet of water. A couple guys have been night fishing for walleye, catching a few in 5 feet of water after dark with jig and crawler. In the North End, I’ve had reports of nice crappies and perch taken on minnows at depths from 5 to 10 feet. And please pass on this announcement: Duck-N-Drake will be closing for the winter this month and will reopen when the ice goes off.”

Patty @ *Poff’s Place*; filed 9/15: “As a sure sign of fall, anglers are starting to catch crappies from the Causeway at dusk until an hour after full darkness, and size of perch being caught is starting to creep upward. I’m hearing from my customers that the better walleye bite is on South End of the lake. The shop will be closed for a couple weeks in late December for the holidays, but will reopen in January.”



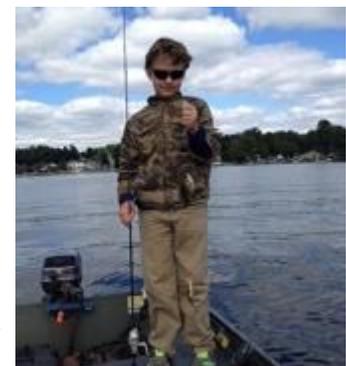
Hooker photo

Hooker @ *Hills Country Store*; filed 9/14: “On Friday, September 12, Ted Yannotti and Ed Agnew met Hooker at Hills Country Store for a morning of fishing on Pymatuning aboard Hooker’s Fishing Taxi. The conditions started out as wet, windy and overcast – so we looked for fish on some humps cresting in 5’ to 9’ of water. With fish starting to transition to fall patterns, crappies are scattered and following baitfish. Humps on overcast days are a good place for predators to ambush schools of bait. We could see the occasional slash and splash of feeding fish. Utilizing **Bobby Garland Swimming Minnows** on very small jig-heads, we were able to coax a few into striking by retrieving the jig just under the surface very slowly. The catch included crappies, bluegills and perch, with most strikes coming around scattered weed clumps. As expected this time of year, the bite changes several times during the day. This was clearly the case when John Braymer fished with Hooker in the afternoon. John came with an open mind to learn the light line technique. The afternoon conditions were entirely different with partly cloudy skies and calmer seas. But before long the wind, rain and cold returned. John learned the value of high-vis **Gamma Line** so he could detect the light bite of crappies – which were now holding near the bottom in 14’ of water. We caught a variety of species before day’s end. Although we did not “fill the buckets” we were able to catch fish throughout the day by adjusting to conditions and playing the hand we were dealt!”

Conneaut Lake

Bob @ *Fergie’s*; filed 9/15: “My most recent trip to Conneaut Lake for bluegills was met with an east wind and the closed-mouth syndrome. We fished hard for half-dozen 5 inch gills. Not like the bite of a couple weeks ago. I did manage to catch a 19” smallmouth bass on a thin 2” jig worm fished for bluegills.”

Jeff Reichel (Meadville); filed 9/14: “Jake and I fished Conneaut Lake today, the 14th, from 9:30 AM to 4 PM. We started out fishing for smallmouth bass on the mid-lake humps – but no success. Then we fished drop-shot rigs for bluegills, boating about a dozen small to medium gills, which we released. In the afternoon, we fished the weedlines for largemouth bass, but only



Jake Reichel with bluegill



landed one about 14" long. I talked to other anglers throughout the day and no one seemed to be catching much. We felt fortunate to have caught what we did."

Darl Black (Cochrannton); filed 9/14: "Don't understand why the big bluegills suddenly got a severe cast of lock-jaw. The first week in September, nice gills were being caught in deep water beyond the weeds. Then on Sunday, 9/7, Marilyn and I failed to catch anything but a few 4" 'gills. On Monday, 9/8, a couple buddies and I got skunked on the bluegills using a variety of larval baits and worms to entice the bluegill schools we mainly could see in 22 to 26 feet of water on the **Garmin echoMAP 70dv**. So with a substantial drop in temperatures in the last few days, on Sunday the 14th, I changed directions and checked on the smallmouth activity. Mike Martin of Cochrannton joined me for

a four hour recon mission. We managed one 20" bronze beauty on a **Get Bit Crawling Tube** along with a half dozen smaller largemouth. No brown bass shallow water action yet."

Canadohta Lake

Jerry @ *Timberland Bait*; filed 9/15: "The shop is closed for the fall until safe ice forms on area lakes, at which time we will re-open."

ERIE COUNTY

Presque Isle Bay

Jim @ *B.A.C. Bait*; filed 9/15: "Weather has been unsettling here lately, so not a lot of guys out fishing. Right now the hot bite in the Bay seems to be perch on North Pier and East Pier in the mornings and evenings. There are some largemouth bass being caught in the Bay, but crappies seem to be on strike. A few steelheads are showing at the mouth of the creeks, but the water flow is too low for them to move upstream."

Thomas Watral (Erie)...

- 9/7: "A customer stopped by for bait and showed me the nice size perch he caught off the Border Patrol Dock – 28 of them between 13 and 15 inches, plus some crappies. The fish were hitting spottail shiners on Subiki Rigs."
- 9/13: "Seems the cooler weather has perch hitting in the Bay on the South and North Pier, and on the docks. Best bait for crappies has been split-tail jigs tipped with a wax worm. My Step dad caught a bucket of perch today even though the Bay was white-capping. He fished the Marina at the Amphitheater, using spottail shiners."
- 9/14: "The Border Dock was on fire today with nice perch taken on minnows and wax worms. Stop in 2407 McKinley Ave for your bait and special rigs."

Lake Erie and Tributaries

Jeff @ *Poor Richards*; filed 9/15: "They are still getting perch in 53 to 63 feet of water straight out of Walnut Creek. Anglers are picking up a few walleye at 65' to 75', although the walleye bite is slowing down as the fish move west. There are some steelhead being caught in the mornings and evenings at the creek mouths. The **Little Cleo** and **KO Wobbler** are used in the surf, while single eggs or minnows are catching a handful of steelhead which moved into the lower portion of the streams."

Dan @ *Elk Creek Sports*; filed 9/15: "We are seeing steelhead move into Elk Creek as far as the boat launch near the mouth, but there is too little water for them to go any further. In the lake, the walleye bite is about done, but the perch should keep feeding through the fall. Right now perch are in 70' to 72'. If we get some rain to raise the streams, I'm looking for a good fall run."

Sandy @ *Trout Run Bait*; filed 9/15: "Perch are in 58/59 feet out of Walnut. Steelheads are showing up at the creek mouths."

Tim @ *North East Marina*; filed 9/14: "Steelheads are just beginning to show up at 16 Mile and 20 Mile Creeks! We need the lake temp to drop 5 to 10 degrees to bring in more fish. Best bite is 1 hour before sunrise using fresh brown trout skein. Stay out of the water so not to spook fish. Fish in front of the fish or use a bobber. Walleye are 55 to 60 feet down (depending on depth of thermocline) over 90 feet of water between Freeport and the W's – fish 5 feet above the thermocline! Perch at 55 feet off Greenfield to Freeport."

Rich @ *Erie Sport Stores*; file 9/13: "As I write this, there are strong northerly winds blowing across the lake. Very few have attempted to go out the last couple days. The time I was able to fish the Lake was Tuesday 9-9-14. Three of us fished in 52' north of Walnut and caught our limits of perch in less than 90 minutes. Best bite of the year! From what I hear, the perch are scattered in small packs, so you have to rely on your sonar to show you where the fish are at. As we move into fall, the perch bite should be at its peak. Let's hope this year is no different from the past. When the lake calms down, I would expect to find perch 48' to 60' between Walnut and Elk Creeks."

Ed Phillips (New Castle); filed 9/9/14: "My wife and I went fishing out of North East Marina on Sunday, 9/7 in the afternoon. Waves were between 2 and 3 feet, but it went down to less than 1 foot. We fished straight out – starting in 95 feet, and trolled out to 110 feet. We zig-zagged in and out, heading east. We picked up 6 nice walleyes in the 3 to 6 pound range. We even picked up a steelhead on a crawler harness. Everything we caught came between 60 to 70 feet down on the riggers or 250 feet back on big **Dipsy Diver** on #1 setting using Fireline. The best baits were green crawler harnesses or spoons. We stayed over and gave it try on Monday. We set up in 90 feet of water, and covered the same area but zig-zagged East rather than West. We found some active fish in 90 feet of water but they were junk fish. When we started working the 100 to 110 feet, we found some walleyes. We caught four 'eye in the 5 to 7 pound class; all came on one Dipsy pole 250 feet back on a green/yellow crawler harness. The only releases on the riggers were junk fish. I've fished this area of the lake for years, and by far this is the best walleye fishing I have seen for years. Watch the weather and get up between storms while you can!"

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Vickie @ *Fergie's*; filed 9/13: "Fishing is still slow at Wilhelm. Few anglers have been out; they are waiting for this series of cold fronts to pass before heading out. Based on what anglers are buying at the shop, I know they are getting ready for the fall bite!"

Shenango River Lake



Shenango fall crappie bite coming soon!

Jon @ *Consumer Direct Sports*; filed 9/15: Launch ramps fees at Shenango have been lifted until next spring. Although no active fisherman report this week, anglers are looking forward to the fall walleye and crappie bite on Shenango.

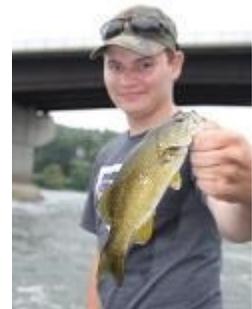
VENANGO COUNTY

Allegheny River

Gene Winger (Oil City); filed 9/15: "Fishing has been slow the past two weeks. I can't wait for the fall bite when things are little more predictable. I'm catching smallies but no real size. I am getting them around the islands in faster moving water using a **Winco River Darter Swim Bait**. Several times last week just before dusk, I did get into some nice smallies (17" to 19" range) stacked up in pockets at the lower end of a few pools using **Winco Predator Craw** and Swim bait. Pockets are hard to find, and fast action only lasts about 15 minutes. Go Pro had dead battery so no pics. On Sunday to avoid tournament congestion, my two sons-in-law and I headed north of Oil City; we boated 15 smallies but no size."

Frank Malek (Oil City); filed 9/15: "Bass are in the fast water and eating crankbaits as well as tubes. The river tournament this past weekend was a bust for me and my partner, but others found good fish."

Mike @ *Jigger Wholesale*; filed 9/13: "No one is fishing much right now – on top of the stormy weather, its transition time. Everyone is waiting for cooler water and a better bite. I hear a few walleyes and smallmouth are being caught in French Creek, and one customer emailed me pictures of big walleyes from the Allegheny River. But that's about it."



Lots of small bass

RJ Graham (Tionesta); filed 9/11: "Thursday evening Darl joined me on the river for a couple hours before the rain came. It was slow at first with a couple small-size smallmouths, but just as it started sprinkling, Darl caught a big walleye on a **Kalin Swim Jig** and I got very respectable smallmouth on a tube. Then, without rain coats, we made for the ramp."

Sugar Creek

Angler Al (Franklin); filed 9/14

- Wednesday 9/3: "I spent the last moment of daylight fishing minnows in a deep hole on Sugar Creek. I picked up 3 small walleyes and one brown trout. Returned again on Thursday the 4th and caught another on a **Rebel Crayfish** and lost two others on minnows."

- Fri- day 9/5: "Shot for our spot on the Allegheny figuring to spend the evening/night for catfish. But weeds were so bad we didn't waste our time."

- Sat- ar 9/6: "As I was driving to town, I went by Red Bridge on Sugar Creek. Jeffery Orr stopped me so I could see the 14-inch rainbow he caught. He said it hit a dead minnow he found on the banks."



Sugar Creek 'eye



Jeffery Orr with trout

Al-

Sug-

The Livewell

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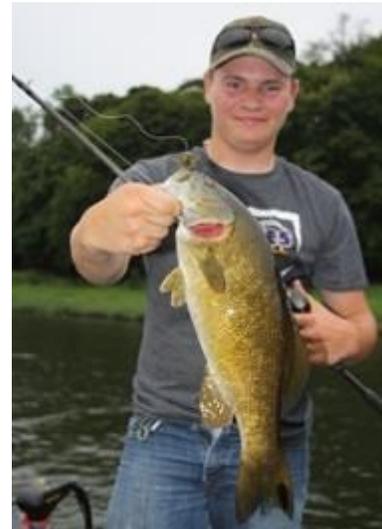


Still time to get a boat for fall fishing!

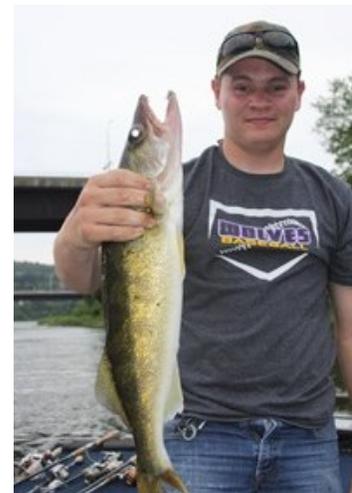


Boat of the Month: Polar Kraft's most popular fishing boat on special at Wiegel's Marine

BIG River walleye photos from Mike at Jigger
(Anglers not identified)



RJ with nice river smallmouth above and walleye below



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Black Knight Industries

Oil City, PA 16301

www.gammafishing.com

www.froghairfishing.com



Gamma Fishing Tip

Darl Black: "I'm sharing this little tidbit about Gamma Edge. I've used 6-pound Gamma Edge on my soft plastic G.Loomis GLX rod for several years. During that time I've never broke off a fish, rarely break a jig off on a snag, and have joked several times I can anchor my boat in the river current when hung on a bottom snag with 6-pound Gamma. Last summer, as part of a challenge, I started fishing 4-pound Gamma on my G. Loomis IMX 721 light jig rod. The first test was a trip to the New River and James River where I used the same tube jig for two days to land numerous smallmouths, including a couple Virginia Citation-size smallies of 20 inches or better. I continued to use that light rod and four-pound Edge as my hair jig rod during the winter and spring without breaking off a fish. Most recently, I landed a 20 inch full-of-fight smallmouth at Conneaut Lake from 18 feet of water with the same spool of Gamma 4-pound Edge. Gamma is incredible and back-reeling is the key to landing fish without breaking line. The NW PA Fishing Report has given away a spool of Gamma Line each month for two years. Now I want to hear about your Gamma experience and I'll run it on this Gamma Page."



"Like" and "share" Fishing with Darl Black on Facebook

You can find Gamma Lines locally at the following NW PA Tackle Shops:

Consumer Direct Sports: www.cdssports.com

Hill's County Store: www.facebook.com/hillscs

The winner of the Prize Pack of lures for this issue of the Fishing Report is Angler Al Bell of Franklin.

Prize Pack Lures are supplied by Bobby Garland; Gene Larew; Get Bit Baits; Lake Fork Tackle, Lindy; Rapala; Road Runner; Scum Frog; Thill; Tru-Turn Hooks; Uncle Josh; Venom; and Yum.

If you are the winner of this issue's Prize Pack of Lures, please email your shipping address to Darl Black to claim your prize.

Tackle Box Forecast...

- Current top selling baits for area lakes
- New lures & presentation tips on old favorites
- The anticipated hot bites for the next couple weeks



Go to www.PaGreatLakes.com for the “Reel It In!” brochure

“Like” and “Share” “Fishing with Darl Black” Page on Facebook to follow weekly tips and check out guide outings for crappies or smallmouth bass.

Best-selling baits at area shops for past week

- Richter’s Tackle Shop: **Vib-E Blade Bait** & **Hot-N-Tots** for walleye
- Duck-N-Drake: **Hot-N-Tots**
- Poff’s Place: Painted jig heads for plastic or live bait
- Poor Richard’s: Crawler Harnesses for walleye; **Little Cleo** for steelhead
- Trout Run: **Little Cleo**
- CDS: **Original Rapala Minnow** for walleye
- Fergie’s Bait: **Vib-E Blade Bait** and **Hot-N-Tots** for walleye; **Strike King Red Eye Shad** for bass
- Jigger Wholesale Tackle: **Mike’s Ants** for panfish
- Hill’s Country Store: **Garland Swimming Minnow** for crappies

Likely Hotspot for the coming week

- Walleye on the Allegheny and Pymatuning – if temperatures continue to cool
- Perch on Lake Erie – if not stormy
- Early run steelheads at Erie tributary mouths – if not stormy
- Crappies and white bass on Shenango River Lake – if lake level remains constant

Get your topwater dog-walking baits ready for early fall smallmouth and blade baits ready for November walleye.

Next NW PA Fishing Report is scheduled for October 6.