

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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

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. In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to your comments being edited, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

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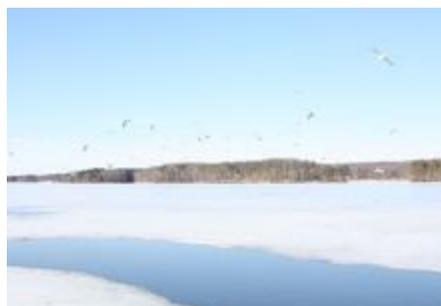
Black Knight Industries, Oil City (www.GammaFishing.com)

Wiegel Brothers Marine, Franklin (www.wiegelbrothersmarine.com)

The Landing Net

by Darl Black

What a week! St. Patrick's Day and the First Day of Spring! The ice on the Allegheny River and French Creek is breaking up, resulting in some flooding. Although the river is high, dirty and partially frozen right now, the day we will be able to launch a boat to chase smallmouth bass gets closer each day. With water levels rising on flood control lakes like Shenango and Woodcock, ice fishing has come to an end. The ice breaker did a job on PIB ice. However as of Tuesday, March 16th there were ice fishermen on Pymatuning and Conneaut. Probably Canadohta and Kahle still have ice, too. However, ice fishing days are numbered. Come on Spring!



Pymatuning Lake near Dam—db photo

NW PA FISHING REPORT FOR MARCH 17, 2015

This report is brought to you by PA Great Lakes Region tourism with additional sponsorship from Wiegel Brothers Marine and GAMMA Fishing.

We answer the question: *“What’s biting in the lakes, streams and rivers of Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties.”*

SPRING NEWS

FROM **VISIT ERIE**: A Fly Fishing Instructional Workshop will be held on March 21 from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Presque Isle State Park Rotary Pavilion. This Workshop is free, but an RSVP to eco1@psu.edu would be appreciated.

FROM **Pymatuning Lake Association**: The date for the **2015 PLA Crappie Tournament** has been set for May 2. And the date for the **2015 PLA Walleye Tournament** will be May 16; there will only be one walleye tournament this year instead of two. Visit www.PymatuningLake.com or email PymaLakeAssoc@windstream.net for information, rules and applications.

PLA’s 2015 Kids Free Fishing Derby will be held on August 1st & 2nd. For information, contact Celene Brooks at kidsfish2015@windstream.net or phone her at 724-927-2578.

FROM **Bassmasters of Crawford County**: The BMCC Spring Bass Classic Team Tournament will be Saturday, May 9, 2015 on Pymatuning Lake out of Snodgrass Launch. For applications, go to www.bassmastersofcrawfordcounty.org.

FROM **PA Fish & Boat**: Shake off the cabin fever. Pa Fish & Boat Commission will hold their annual spring open house at Linesville State Fish Hatchery on Saturday, April 4, 2015, from 11:00 AM to 3:30 PM. For more information, visit www.fishandboat.com.

FROM **PA Fish & Boat**: Mentored Youth Fishing Days have been expanded to all stock trout waters. In northwestern Pennsylvania, the Mentored Youth Fishing Day will be April 11, the week before opening day of trout season. For more information, go to www.GoneFishingPa.com.

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave @ Richter's Tackle Shop; filed 3/16: "Guys are still ice fishing on Pymatuning. The shoreline is a bit soft but the ice out on lake is good. The ones in the know are catching crappies, bluegills and walleyes. And in the open water spot at the Linesville Spillway, they are catching big crappies right now, plus a few walleyes have move in, too. I hear ice anglers are also on Conneaut Lake today."

Patty @ Poff's Place; filed 3/14: "Even though the top of the ice is sloppy, as of today there are still a few guys ice fishing on the lake. Reports of catches are spotty. It's that in between time – waiting on the thaw. We have high hopes for April!"

Hooker @ Hills Country Store; filed 3/10: "I'm just back from South Carolina and we now have the store in full operation for the coming spring. Ice cover on the lake is between 2 inches and 20 inches depending on where you might be standing. Lots of perch and bluegills are being caught by the remaining ice fishermen, along with the occasional walleye. With this stretch of warm weather, ice fishermen should be extra careful. I would not venture out on the ice unless wearing a life jacket at this time of year. Hooker's Fishing Taxi has gone through a winter re-fit and is fully equipped for spider rigging this year. To celebrate the start of our fourth year at the store, we are selling **Bobby Garland Baits**: Buy one, Get One while supplies last."

Rich Sari (Kennerdell); filed 2/22: "I took my grandson Jake ice fishing yesterday. We were out all day. It was the worst day of the ice season. We only got two keepers. This time of year it gets tough. My theory is the walleyes are on the move to stage for spawning. Don't know for sure, but this poor bite happens every year."

Woodcock Lake



Joe Arnett @ ACE Woodcock Lake; filed 3/4: "Another 300 tons of stone were added to Woodcock as part of habitat improvement, placed just east of the boat launch. This is a great time for serious fishermen to take a look at the structures and maybe GPS the piles before we start rising the lake level towards summer pool."

Keith Beamer @ PA Fish & Boat Commission; filed 3/4: "At Woodcock Lake, the PFBC Habitat Division created 20 new humps with about 7 tons of rock in each hump. To create more complex structures, we placed rock around vertical plank structures that we put in with our boats back in June. They are our sturdiest structure and have held up well in other draw down lakes. During some of our electrofishing work in other lakes, we have shocked some impressive bass off them. There are 13 vertical plank structures on the north side of the lake."

Conneaut Lake

Sarah @ Timberland Bait; filed 3/2: Editor's comments: Sarah and Jerry say the Timberland Ice Tournament on Conneaut Lake was a big success. Sarah sent the photos of the winners; posted on Livewell Page. As I recall, they had about 150 participants. I was fortunate to be there when Tom Luck of Bridgeville, PA caught what turned out to be the first place northern pike. The pike was 32 inches long and weighed 8 lbs. 9 oz. This was the first fish Tom ever caught ice fishing! Luck won \$600!



Luck Wins!



Boys from Pittsburg enjoyed minus 27 degrees



Jerry VanTassel—director

Canadohta Lake

*Ben Lipiec (Erie); filed 2/25: Went to Canadohta Lake this past Sunday for crappies. Found them suspended in 10-15 feet over 25 feet depth with soft bottom off spawning areas. Fish were not hard to find; the trick was getting them to bite. Once I figured that out, catching was fairly steady. Moving around a lot didn't seem to help because the fish were not in one spot for very long – just roaming. The best deal for me was once you found an area a group of crappies would pass through occasionally so you were better off waiting them out. This would happen every 5 to 15 minutes; if you waited 30 minutes, it was time to move. Landed 35 fish and kept 12 in the 10" to 12" range – all I wanted to clean. All fish were caught on a **Fiskas Jig** in Glow or Perch color tipped with a minnow or maggot. Fiskas Jig size was 4 mm and 5 mm. Also fish on a 1/50th ounce jig tipped with a waxworm plastic. The faster fall of the Fiskas helped get the bait down quicker for an extra fish or two from a group before they moved."*

Sugar Lake

Bill @ Griffins Bait reports there were two ice fishing tournaments at Sugar Lake recently. Zac Eimer won the gamefish award at the first Sugar lake event on February 21 & 22 with a 39-5/8" northern pike. Bob Keith won the gamefish award at the second Sugar Lake event in March with a 26" northern pike and his son Alex Keith won the panfish award with a 9" perch. Keith's other son Levi Keith won the walleye category at the Canadohta Lake ice tournament back in early February with a 21-3/4 inch walleye.

ERIE COUNTY

Tributaries

Elk Creek Sports and *Poor Richards* are reporting similar situation: Steelhead streams are blown out. Ice jams in the lower section of Elk and possibly other streams. When the jams break, there may be some steelhead fishing opportunities later this week in the upper streams. Right now creeks are dangerously high with chunks of floating ice and debris...

Presque Isle Bay

Jim @ B.A.C.: "A Canadian ice breaker arrived at the Port of Erie on Friday. Shock waves from breaking ice have likely made the ice unsafe in the eastern half of Bay, and may impact ice clear down to Head of Bay. It will not be long until open water and the spawning perch bite in the Bay. Get your tackle ready for open water season, and see us for your live bait needs."

Dean Waldbaum; filed 3/13: "Boredom got the best of me so I went id fishing last weekend for the first time since I was a kid 40 years ago. I went to Presque Isle with a couple buddies with hope of "jumbo" perch. The ones we caught were more like "chipped ham!" We caught around 20 small perch. A few guys were getting bigger perch and we saw one steelhead caught. Our fish came on tiny jigs tipped with either a minnow or grub. Beat the heck of sitting on the couch – but I cannot wait till the river comes down!"

MERCER COUNTY

Editor's Note: On March 14th, I joined the dynamic duo of ice, Mike Kuna and Bob Griffith, on a small Mercer County lake for my final trip of ice fishing season. As usual, I didn't fish – just shot pictures. They caught a nice mixture of big crappie, perch and bluegill. I was surprised when Bob caught a smallmouth bass – that really means spring is here! (See Photos below)



Lake Wilhelm

Vickie @ Fergie's Bait; filed 3/14: "The ice is getting soft and shoreline is opening up – no one out fishing. Things have been quiet for about 10 days, but prior to that ice anglers were catching some nice bluegills and crappies off Launch 3 & 4. We have not heard anything about walleyes."

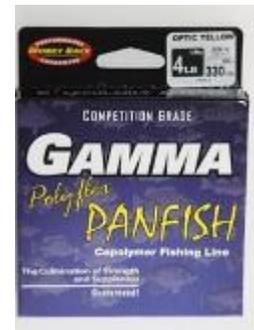
Shenango River Lake: With rising water in the lake, ice separated from shore. Fishing has come to end on Shenango until open water.

Shenango River: Anglers were catching a few walleyes in the outflow area below Pymatuning Dam; however, inland walleye season is now closed. Anglers may still fish river stretch for crappies which tend to congregate in eddies below deadfalls during high water.

VENANGO COUNTY

General Report

Bill @ Griffins Bait & Tackle; filed 3/14: "We have been selling a lot maggots, shiner and fathead minnows, as well as a lot of **Kastmaster Spoons**. We now have **GAMMA Line**. See what our customers have been catching at Sugar Lake during the recent ice tournaments. (See Sugar Lake and Livewell Page)



Allegheny River

Editor's note: The Middle Allegheny is a mess right now. Areas started to open, but in typical fashion the ice jams formed here and there, creating flooding in some areas – particularly downstream around Parker according to today's Franklin newspaper. Between Franklin and Oil City, some areas are ice free, but there is still considerable ice pack on the Oil City pool; the river is running high and flooding remains a concern. The current 10 day forecast does not look promising for getting rid of river ice. When you do go out, BE SURE TO WEAR YOUR PFD AT ALL TIMES.

Kahle Lake



Kahle Lake—MB photo



RJ with jumbo perch

Dan @ Jigger Tackle; filed 3/14: "Wilhelm ice is going downhill quickly. However, Kahle Lake *may* still have fishable ice this week, but it will be iffy. Ice fishermen had a very good year on Kahle Lake."

A promotional poster for the Conneaut Lake Fishing Tournament. The text reads: "Conneaut Lake Fishing Tournament", "Saturday June 06, 2015", and "Bluegill Bev Memorial 4th Annual". It features images of two fish and a boat with two people. Handwritten text includes "Cash Prizes!... Fish Fry! Giveaways!", "more info?", "lobymusic.com", "loby@zoominternet.net", "wicc@windstream.net", and "Loby's Premier Entertainment Walt's Tavern and Outdoor Entertainment Comple".

Conneaut Lake Fishing Tournament
Saturday June 06, 2015
"Bluegill Bev Memorial 4th Annual"

Cash Prizes!... Fish Fry!
Giveaways!

more info?
lobymusic.com
loby@zoominternet.net
wicc@windstream.net

Loby's Premier Entertainment
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The Livewell

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From Recent Ice Tournaments at Conneaut Lake...



Sugar Lake...



And Canadohta Lake



DARL'S FIRST FISH CONTEST

Grease those reels! Spool on fresh GAMMA Line!
Spring is about to break loose!

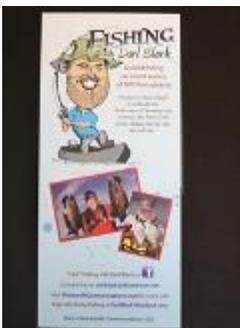
The Allegheny River and French Creek will be the first waterways to be ice free. Inland lakes will be a little slower to completely loose ice. I'm guessing we might be able to launch boats at ramps on Pymatuning sometime during the first week of April...fingers crossed.

So if you have not entered Darl's First Fish After Ice-Out Contest, do it today. Go to www.BlackwolfeCommunications.com, read the content on "Smallmouth Quest" and "Crappie Quest" pages for possible clues, then go to the "Contact Us" page and fill out the required fields. In the body of the email message include your name and your guess in inches to the nearest ¼-inch the length of Darl's First Smallmouth and

Darl's First Crappie of 2015 caught from waters in any of the four NW PA counties covered by the Fishing Report. Include a tiebreaker by guessing the lure Darl will be using when he catches the first Smallmouth Bass and First Crappie.

Only guesses coming from the website email are valid. Contest ends when Darl catches his first Smallmouth Bass and First Crappie. A random drawing from among all correct guesses will determine the winner for each species. Crappie winner receives a packet of crappie baits and Smallmouth Bass winner receives packet of bass baits, as pictured on this page.

GUIDE TRIPS



And if you are looking for a guided trip on Pymatuning for crappies or Allegheny River for smallmouth or Conneaut Lake for bluegills this season, be sure to check out "**Fishing with Darl Black Guide Service**" page on the BlackwolfeCommunications.com for details. Please "Like" *Fishing with Darl Black* on Facebook to stay up on guide promotions, available dates and future contests.



Bass Lure Pack Giveaway



Crappie Lure Pack Giveaway

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Black Knight Industries

Oil City, PA 16301

www.gammafishing.com

www.froghairfishing.com



Gamma Fishing Tips

You can find GAMMA line locally at the following tackle shops:

Consumer Direct Sports – Grove City, PA

Griffins Bait & Tackle – Cooperstown, PA

Hill's County Store – Williamsfield, OH

Dean Waldbaum is the winner of a spool of GAMMA Line for this issue of the Fishing Report.

Please email your shipping address to Darl Black to claim your prize.

GAMMA Tip from Pro-Staff Jim Tutt, FLW Tour Angler: "Since using Gamma Line I have been able to reduce my line weight considerably. In the past where I might have used 14-pound for worm fishing, I now use 12-pound or even 10-pound. Gamma line is the strongest line I have ever used. Dropping down in line size gets more action out of lures and results in more bites. Using a smaller line will force you to check your line more often, make a good knot every time and take your time when fighting & landing fish. All these actions result in more fish in the boat. Do not hesitate to drop down to 8 or even 6-pound line for certain techniques. These size will land very large fish and I am confident you will get more bites."

GAMMA Tip from Dale Black, President of Gamma Line: "While I have fished my entire life, I didn't get into crappie fishing until 3 years at the first PA Crappie Camp. Just as fishing for any species, the right line for crappies can all the difference. That's when I started paying attention to crappie guides, crappie tournament anglers, and the everyday crappie fishermen. They were telling me that GAMMA Polyflex was a great line in terms of strength and manageability. However, whereas bass anglers wanted an invisible line, crappie anglers wanted a line that was highly visible to help detect the extremely light bites. Many crappie anglers believe that crappies will follow a bright line to the bait. After a couple seasons of tweaking the right formula and color, I am pleased to introduce GAMMA Panfish line in Optic Yellow. A very Bright Idea!

