

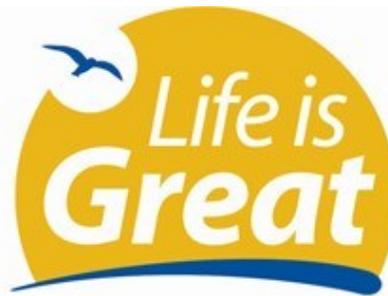
Northwest

Pennsylvania

Fishing Report

Reporting Date:

September 23, 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 your comments being edited, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

The Landing Net

Well, September has turned out to be an exceptional month for fishing. Nice size steelhead are running early in good numbers. Crappies are biting at Pymatuning, Shenango and PIB if you are willing to put in some time to find them. And smallmouth bass! Bronzebacks are going gangbusters in the Allegheny, French Creek, Lake Erie and a few other places (check out the trophy from Justus Lake on Livewell page). On my FB page I had called this the Summer of Smallmouth. Well, Summer of Smallmouth has merged into Bronzeback Fall. Hurry up and go fishing right now through October because the soothsayers are predicting an early winter!

by Darl Black



NW PA Fishing Report for September 23, 2013

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

FRENCH CREEK – Flowing through all four counties

Lou Letterle (Franklin) filed 9/23: "As a truly 'recreational angler' I rarely go fishing for a specific fish species, and sometimes catch two or three different types of fish especially when using live bait as I often do. So a kayak float-fishing trip on the Venango County portion of French Creek a week ago proved to be no exception. While my fishing partner Tim Kier (Titusville) was battling a 14" smallmouth in the ultra-clear water of French Creek that day, a musky grabbed the bass and started towing Tim upstream. The musky was in full view right beneath Tim's kayak. Eventually the musky let go but not before mortally wounding the bass. Talk about your heart racing! I have included a picture of the bass grabbed by the musky as well as a smallmouth I caught." (See Livewell photos)



Mauled smallie/Letterle photo

Angler Al (Franklin) filed 9/21: "On Tuesday the 10th, I hit French Creek for the evening go. Used my little rod with a piece of night crawler to catch what I nicknamed 'tiger baits' years ago. Last Saturday Darl asked me if I ever used 'sand pike' for bait. They're one and the same, and they are one of my favorite baits to use. Caught two smallmouths, and near dark I hooked up with a skinny pike. On Thursday the 12th, I fished French Creek in the late evening during the rain. A set minnow trap provided me with some quick ammunition. Suspended float set-up worked well along the outer edge of the matted weedline. Results: two walleyes and two smallmouths."

Dustin Shay (Meadville) filed 9/20: "I've been catching a lot of creek bait, and using it in hopes of catching walleyes. On the 13th, I caught 5 legal walleyes including one going 22 inches. But mainly I'm catching smallmouth. For example, the other day I had 31 riffle minnows, headed to a walleye spot but could not get the bait to the bottom without smallmouth hitting the minnows – even when I weighted the bait, bass smacked them before the bait made it to the bottom. With 31 riffle minnows I caught 30 fish but they were all smallmouth. It wouldn't be a bad thing except most of the smallmouths were in the 10-to 13-inch range; a couple hit the 17-inch mark. Dad has made a couple trips to the Creek with live bait, too. He managed to catch a couple walleye one evening, but smallmouth took most of his bait. There is a heck of a population of small smallmouth in French Creek."



Chris Wolfgang (Oil City) filed 9/16: "I hit French Creek Saturday morning the 14th from 7:00 to 10:30 am to try some 'new' water. Had my first fish within minutes on the new **Get Bit Stream Tubes** I won from the Fishing Report. Thanks! Going by the marks on my rod, the bass was 15". Had another smaller fish on the tube, plus one on a **Houdini Shad** soft jerkbait. Wish I had more time to pick apart the water but I had a wedding to go to. I'll be tossing those Get Bit tubes a lot more this fall."

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave Richter (Richter's Bait) filed 9/23: "I was away at a tackle show most of the week so I do not have a lot of customer reports – besides there are not a lot of people fishing Pymatuning right now. A handful of guys are picking up a few walleyes in the evening on the **Vib-E Blade** baits; no one is catching numbers but the blade bait bite is just starting and will get stronger as the water continues to cool. One customer reported getting into some big crappies in the deep weeds – apparently the crappies are moving a little shallower. Big bluegills have been caught at 6 to 8-feet in weeds, too. And channel cats are still hitting!"

Chris Hall (Espyville Outdoors) filed 9/22: "There has been very little boat traffic on the lake – hardly anyone on the water in the last couple weeks. When the fall walleye bite gets going strong, I expect anglers to be back."

Editor's note: While many anglers have given up on Pymatuning crappies for the year, Norman "Hooker" Brakeman has continued to catch nice crappies from deeper offshore cover all summer. A significant part of his success is being able to read a quality sonar unit to locate cover and fish. He says utilizing a B'n'M Rod, Gamma Line and Bobby Garland crappie baits are also important. I accompanied him in a separate boat a week ago to shoot photos, and it didn't take long for him to get on the fish – as this string of photos demonstrates.



Hooker (Hills Country Store) filed 9/22: "I had members of the Stephany family out on the 22nd. Ron Stephany, an Iraqi Vet, caught his first ever crappie on a **Bobby Garland 2" Swimming Minnow**." See Livewell for photo

"On Monday the 9th, Hooker's Fishing Taxi had the pleasure of taking Larry Bortz out for an afternoon of crappie fishing on Pymatuning. It started out very slow. The first three spots were similar in nature – offshore humps that topped at 6 to 8 feet. The crappies were not there. Realizing the fish seemed to be starting fall patterns a little early this year, I chose a long point that had quick break at 10 feet before dropping off into the main river channel. After locating what I believe to be a stump located right on the break, I cast a **Bobby Garland Swimming Minnow** and let it sink to the bottom. It never made it. When the line jumped, I set the hook and felt solid weight of nice crappie. When I swung it aboard, Larry said "Man, that's a really big one." But I assured him it was just average size for this lake. I made another cast, had another bite and caught another crappie. Larry was frustrated at first, unable to catch a fish until he started watching his line closely and staying in contact with his jig. Another happy customer!" See Livewell for photo

Conneaut Lake

Steve Hughes (Clarion) filed 9/22: "On Sunday with the cold front moving in, I was fishing for photos with Darl. Bass were not cooperative. I caught several small largemouth on drop-shot rig and two pike on jigs flipped into weeds. Darl had a couple blow up on a **Zara Spook**, including one which was a nice smallmouth. With wind and rain, it was a brutal morning on the water."

Bob Mohra (Fergie's Bait) filed 9/22: "I fished Conneaut Lake on Wednesday the 18th. It was slow in the morning but really picked up in the afternoon with lots of really nice bluegills plus a few bonus perch. All caught on white split-tails tipped with maggots."

Canadohta Lake



Jerry VanTassel (Timberland Bait) filed 9/22: "Last week my son Marshall caught a nice walleye from Canadohta while fishing for panfish with friends. It hit a piece of nightcrawler on a jighead. I had a customer report catching a 20-inch smallmouth from the lake over the weekend. For the fall, Timberland Bait is only open Friday 3 pm to 8 pm; Saturday 7 am to 8 pm; and Sunday 8 am to 3 pm." (Photo left: Marshall VanTassel and his cheerleading squad)

ERIE COUNTY

Lake Erie & Tributaries

Ric Gauriloff (Trout Run Bait) filed 9/23: "Rain this immediate past weekend brought a run of steelhead into the creeks. Fish are now up the creeks past Route 5 in Walnut and past Route 20 in Elk Creek. We have not heard anything of the Mile creeks on the East side at this time. The tributaries were high and dirty on Sunday but I'm sure they are clearing today. Many nice size fish are being caught on a variety of baits and lures. Two steelhead citations were weighed in the store on Sunday, with reports of many like-size fish being caught and released."

Gary Heuble, Jr. (Poor Richards) filed 9/23: "In Elk Creek, steelheads are now from the mouth up to the Legion Hole. Reports are there are fish in the East side creeks, too. It's been too rough on the lake for perch or walleye anglers to get out. The last reports were perch at 55 feet just west of Walnut Creek and walleyes were moving west. Better weather this week may allow boat fishermen to get back out."

Dan Seaman (Elk Creek Sports) filed 9/23: "Although there had been some steelhead wandering upstream, I consider this past weekend the kickoff to this year's fall run. We had 3 inches of rain on Saturday, the creeks went up and the steelhead moved in good numbers up Elk at least as far as the Legion Hole. But with no rain in forecast this week, creeks will clear quickly and drop, making for tough fishing. The best advice when low and clear is to fish the fast water at the head of a pool and the tail-out area where more active steelhead will be – rather than trying for fish in the center of a pool. The fish are of nice size, with 95% of them being males right now; females will follow."

Thomas Watral (Erie) filed 9/23: "I went to Walnut Creek today and slammed the steelhead on **Mini Foo jigs** tipped with crawlers, drifting the bait through the pools. Fishing from 6 AM to noon, I landed and released 20 of them."

Joe Nichols (UndergroundAngler.com) filed 9/22: "Great weekend for fishing. On Friday I fished Erie for smallmouth. The bite was slow, but we managed to catch several 4-pound smallmouth. Check out Justus Lake section to see the big bronzeback I caught there on Sunday!" (See Livewell photos)

David Polovina, filed 9/20: "On September 14, Bill Kokla and I arrived at Conneaut Harbor launch about noon. We had a tip from a charter captain that the walleyes were to the northwest. We ran approximately 8 miles and marked huge schools of fish. We set out line and proceeded to catch piles of white bass and sheephead. We boated 4 'eyes in the first two hours, and then decided to put our lures right on the bottom. Wire line at 300 feet on planner boards with **Rapalas** was the ticket. We boated 14 'eyes within two hours. We were pleased to see different age groups. We kept our limit of 12 fish; we also got 1 steelhead and lost several more – they were as deep as the walleyes." (See Livewell photo)



Paul Stewart (Butler) filed 9/16: "On the 14th I did an evening perch trip on the Danny O with my nephews. It started out slow and we made a couple moves before getting on fish. But as the sun started to come down, the perch turned on fast and furious. I got my limit and my nephews all got half or more of their limits. My biggest was 13.5 inches." (See photo)



Presque Isle Bay

Last minute email from Dave Lefebre – on Monday the 23rd, Dave and a fishing buddy caught 100 crappies in Presque Isle Bay on small tube jigs! (See photo)

Jim (B.A.C. Bait) filed 9/23: "The bass tournament of the weekend was a success, so we know largemouth bass are biting in the Bay. Customers are reporting perch and crappie activity, as well as some steelhead action off the North Pier."

Dave Lefebre (Erie) filed 9/23: "My tournament partner Barry Hohn and I won the Great Lakes Large-mouth Tournament in PIB on Saturday with 4 bass for 12.5 pounds; we also took caught a total of 76 bass, **DT 20** crankbaits, plus a on the Bay with an out-caught 29 largemouth pound snakehead...I mean ping tubes and jigs." (See for details on fishing with



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Thomas Watral (Erie) filed 9/23:

- 9/21: "I checked out the South Pier. Anglers were getting limits of big perch, some in the 13 to 14 -inch range. On the Docks, catching 10 to 12-inch perch on minnows. On 4 Mile and 16 Mile Creeks, they were catching steelhead on sucker spawn."
- 9/19: "I caught 30 nice perch from the Docks."
- 9/17: "I caught 45 perch and four nice crappies on the west side of the Docks. Water temperature was about 50 degrees."

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Special Note: September 28 is a workday for the volunteer project of clearing shoreline to develop additional shoreline fishing areas. Contact Park Manager William Wasser at 724-252-4833 for more information.

Bob Mohra (Fergie's Bait) filed 9/23: "Walleye bite on Wilhelm has been pretty good lately. Some walleyes are being taken on worm harnesses and some on **Storm Hot-N-Tots**. Bluegill fishing off the Sheakleyville causeway is picking up; crappies are moving in just before dark."

R.J. Graham (Tionesta) filed 9/22: "I fished the BMCC club tournament at Wilhelm on Sunday. We fished mostly south of the causeway; catching 2 small bass and losing two nice bass. All our fish came from grass on jigs, spinner-baits and **Senkos**. The tournament was won by Stan Teitelbaum with three bass going 11 pounds; he had lunker with a 6.32 pound largemouth! That fish is also club lunker for the year." (See Livewell photo)



Teitelbaum's 6.32 Wilhelm
LMB/ Eric Marsh photo

Shenango Lake



Shenango Crappie

Laurie (R&L Bait & Tackle) filed 9/22: "Fishing reports from Shenango are sketchy – not a lot of anglers fishing the lake right now. We have been informed that stripers are being caught in the lower portion of the lake near Sharpsville."

Ken Smith (Sharon) filed 9/19: "I fished Shenango on Wednesday the 18th. The crappie bite is still very good and the size is getting better. The 9" black crappies are thin but the white are slim. We're going to have a very good fall bite here as I anticipate these fish will put on another inch before winter."

Shenango River

Editor's Note: The Shenango River Watchers held their fall float from Pymatuning Dam to Greenville on the 15th. Over 150 people participated. Event manager Hugh Clark informed me that a week before the big float, a kayak angler fished this same section of river. Using a fly rod, he caught over 30 smallmouths with the largest going 4 pounds.

VENANGO COUNTY

Justus Lake

Joe Nichols (UndergroundAngler.com) filed 9/22: "Today in the miserable cold, wind and rain, I went to Justus Lake and caught a smallmouth bass over 7 pounds! The fish are definitely feeding up. I caught this trophy on a drop-shot rig, and after taking a photo of it, I released it back into the lake." (See Livewell photo)

Allegheny River

Pete Cartwright (White Oak) filed 9/23: "Why chase steel when you can have Bronze? With rain coming in Saturday the 21st, I decided to go steelhead fishing on Elk Creek. There were lots of people there and the creek was muddy. I grew impatient and decided to head to the Allegheny. We got to Franklin around noon. It was raining and air temperature was cool, but as soon as I got into the water, we were hooking up with bronze. We landed 47 smallmouth bass. The biggest was 20 inches. We lost a few other bass that were at least that big. Most of the fish were 16 inches and bigger. The water level was rising and fish were in very shallow water. All fish came on soft plastics. It was a nice flow but floating weeds were a problem. I had to clean my lures off almost every cast but when catching big smallies it's worth it. Fall always produces good numbers on rivers and streams, and this was one of those days." (See photo)



River SMB in Rain/Cartwright photo

Gene Winger (Oil City) filed 9/23: "On Saturday, September 14, a group of people floated the river from Oil City to Franklin picking up trash and junk. I talked to some of them and I was very impressed with what they were doing. I believe their effort should be recognized as well as the sponsoring organizations. I know Wiegel on the River was one of the sponsors but there were others that should be recognized as well. Please see what you can learn and post it in a future Report. Now here are my fishing reports: Week of September 9: I've been on the river almost every day this week; the bite has been good, averaging 8 to 10 smallmouths on each outing. On Saturday I fished with my son-in-law's father Bill Hay from Somerset, PA. It was Bill's first time on the Allegheny and in a few hours we landed 12 smallies and a nice pike – all on **Winco River Darters** and **Predators Craws**. Bill was so impressed he can't wait to return for another fishing trip.

Week of September 16th: The week started slow, catching mostly dink smallmouths. With the cold front moving in over the weekend, the bite really picked up on Thursday and Friday; landing over a dozen smallies each day, most in the 16" to 19" range – all on **Winco Predator Craws and Tubes**. With the cold front here on Sunday the 22nd, I knew it would be tough fishing. But sticking to deep water and working the bottom slowly with **Winco C.W. Smallie Jigs** I was able to land 5 decent bass." (See Livewell photo)

Angler Al (Franklin) filed 9/21: "With the full moon rising on the 17th, I fished the Allegheny River an hour before dark below the 3rd Street marina in Franklin. Using a small hook and pinch of nightcrawler, I managed to catch baitfish. One of those was a baby rock bass, which produced my only catch of the evening. The hawg river smallie put up a tough battle. Sorry, no picture available."

Tom Ference (Pittsburgh) filed 9/20: "I fished the Allegheny around Emlenton with guide Jeff Knapp on Thursday the 18th. Started cloudy but cleared in the afternoon. We caught 30 smallmouths and one wall-eye on Rapala X-Rap jerkbaits and soft jerkbaits."

David Polovina, filed 9/19: "On September 17, Tom Dunmire and I chartered with Jeff Knapp for an Allegheny River fishing trip. We fished the free-flow water north of Kittanning. The skies were clear and it was about 75 degrees. We fished hard and caught about 30-plus smallmouth bass. A few were 18"; all were released. We used mainly jerkbaits."

Duff Kerle (Clarion) filed 9/17: "Mark Hartle and I fished the Fraternal Order of Police Open on Sunday, the 16th. We caught around 50 smallies with several in the 3-pound range. We fished the stretch from Franklin south pas Belmar Bridge to Kennedale. Most fish were caught in the riffles and just below the riffles. Our lures were **Power Team Food Chain Tubes** and **Zoom Flukes** – fished on braided line with a 16-pound **Gamma Edge** leader. We finished in 1st place with 15.91 pounds for our biggest 5 fish. We also took lunker with a 3.78 smallmouth. During pre-fishing on Wednesday the 11th, we caught two over 4 pounds; picture attached." (See Livewell photo)



Note: There will be another FOP bass tournament on the river on October 13 out of Oil City launch. Contact Eric Heil for information and application at ekaheil@comcast.net.

FOP September Tourney Winners

Dustin Shay (Meadville) filed 9/17: "On Sunday the 16th, I fished with Darl Black below Franklin. We were using riffle minnows I had caught from French Creek. Once we got the boat positioned on the upside of a rock pile, we began catching fish. In roughly 3 hours we caught 20 smallmouths around the rock pile and on a downstream drift in about 8 feet of water for the next 200 yards. Eleven of the bass were between 3 and 4 pounds. Circle hooks kept us from hooking fish deep and we released all we caught. The average size of Allegheny smallmouth is so much bigger than the ones I have been catching in French Creek on live bait."

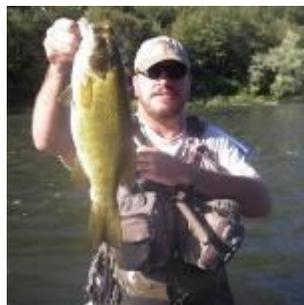
Pete Cartwright (White Oak) filed 9/17: "We fished the Allegheny for two days this past weekend, wading the river for six hours each day. Saturday was clear and sunny; we fished waist deep water catching 8 bass with the biggest going 19 inches. We switched up and went to a back channel and caught 15 there but they were smaller fish. On Sunday I decided to fish a section I had not fished before, but action was slow with 9 bass and the biggest 17 inches. After dinner I went out for the evening bite, hooking 11 fish and landing 8 bass which were all in the 17 to 20 inch range. All fish were taken on soft plastics. (See Livewell photo)

Steve Hughes (Clarion) filed 9/11: "On Sunday the 8th, Ed Fike and I fished out of Oil City. I caught around 20 smallmouths on an **XCalibur X3** jerkbait. The bass were crushing it in the 4- to 5-foot depth below riffles."

Smallmouth bass Livewell Overflow starts here:



Duff Kerle photo



Pete Cartwright photo



Dustin Shay/ Black photo

The Livewell

Brought to you by:



Dustin Shay with very nice Allegheny smallmouth.

Boat of the Month:

Wiegel's Marine currently has two Kingfisher jet boats in stock for a customer who wants to get in on the river smallmouth fishing this fall.

Fantastic Fall Bronzeback Fishing in North West Pennsylvania

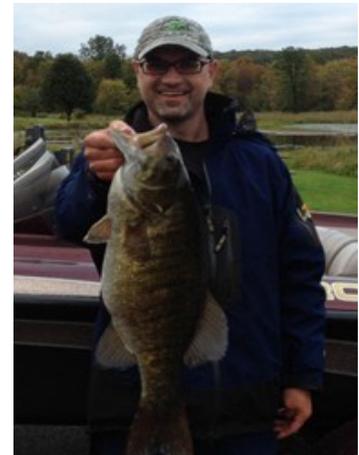
Success of David Polovina and Tom Dunmire fishing with guide Jeff Knapp:



Bill Hay with Allegheny SMB



Lou Letterle with French Cr. SMB



7 lb.SMB from Justus Lake by Joe Nichols

Livewell continues

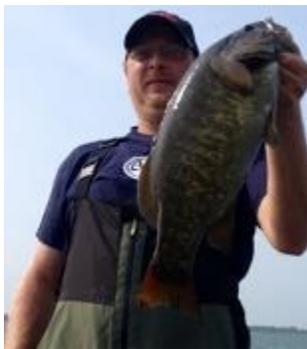
Lake Erie



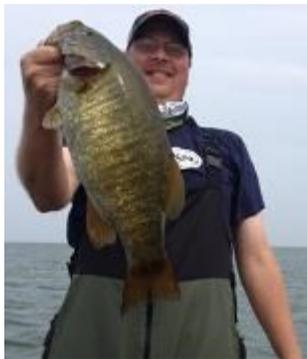
Bill Kokla with Erie 'eye'



David Polovina with Erie 'eye'



Joe Nichols with Erie SMB



Over four pounds each

Dave Lefebre's PIB

Triple Trophies

Column



PIB Largemouth bass



PIB Bowfin

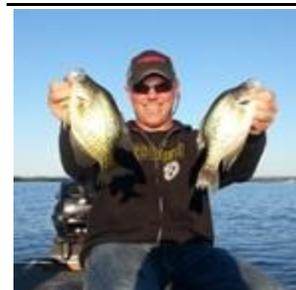
Pymatuning Crappie fishing with Hooker



Larry Bortz



Stephany family



PIB crappies

PROCESSED FOR PERFORMANCE



Gamma Fishing Tips

Gamma Pro-Staff Tip

Dustin Shay is a top stick on French Creek and its various tributaries; versed in artificial lure presentations as well as the use of live creek bait. Here are some of his tips for using live bait for walleye and smallmouth on flowing water. “The best live bait you can use is the indigenous minnows you catch or trap



from the watershed you plan to fish. In the late summer and early fall, riffle minnows (blue dots) and sand pike are a couple of best ones you can use. As the water gets colder in the mid to late fall, creek chubs, stone rollers and shiners become more effective.

I strongly recommend the use of circle hooks for fishing live bait; circle hooks greatly reduce deep hooking of gamefish you intend to release. Don't snap set with circle hook; instead with the fish begin moving away and you slowly sweep the rod tip upward, hooking fish in the corner of the mouth. You always want to present live bait as natural as possible – just the hook and a couple split-shot on line as light as you can get away with. I use Gamma Polyflex line because it is the strongest co-polymer line for the

diameter on the market. During low, clear water conditions of summer, I use 4-pound green Gamma – it is tough and can handle any fish. With larger smallmouth and walleye become active in the early fall as the water rises, I'll step up to 6-pound Gamma green. Then for winter when the water is usually stained and musky, pike and big walleye are active, I jump to 8-pound Gamma.”

Winner of the spool of Gamma Line for this issue of Fishing Report: Paul Stewart

Winner of the Prize Pack of Baits for this issue of the Fishing Report: David Polovina

Lures for the Fishing Report Prize Pack supplied by: Case; Gene Larew; Get Bit Baits; Road Runner; Venom Baits; Yum; Zipper Worms.

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

www.darblack.blogspot.com (See Darl's current blog fishing with Lefebre)

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